

# **How UK and USA Films Represented and Performed Scottishness from 1895 to 1935: With Particular Attention to the Transition to Sound (1927–1933)**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the manners in which UK and USA cinema represented and performed Scottish people's national identity from 1895 to 1935. It starts with the early years of cinema and identifies certain characteristic themes and motifs borrowed from both literature and theatre. Once these themes are established, the thesis moves on through the silent film era tracing developments, or stagnation, in the performances of Scottishness.

The transition to sound is the key period for the thesis and it examines the variety of "Scottish" accents that were heard in cinemas. Performed Scottishness from the USA is explored and the thesis identifies methods by which Hollywood brought "Scottish" voices to the screen. In tandem with this, UK productions at the outset of synchronised sound-on-film are investigated. The most famous Scotsman in the world, Sir Harry Lauder, is analysed both in terms of his performances of Scottishness and the effects of those performances on further representations of Scottishness. That is compared with the work of one of his closest contemporaries, Will Fyffe. Verisimilitude, an attempt to bring reality in representations in narrative drama, is scrutinised in a case study of the 1930 film, *The Loves of Robert Burns*.

The study closes in 1935 by which time fully synchronised talking features had become the staple in the English speaking cinema. The UK straddled the past, with the Scot as a figure to be feared, and the future, with the Scot as a truly modern man. Through the use of dialogue coaches, some USA productions presented vocal performances that distinguished nation from nation. This work enabled the on-screen presence of Scottish characters of significantly enhanced verisimilitude. This thesis makes a contribution through the study of this period for further understanding of the ways in which early cinema and sound film represented Scotland on screen.

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Ava, Daddy wrote this for you. Now, let’s go to the playpark.





## Introduction

This thesis provides a critical examination of the manners in which the UK and US film industries represented and performed the national identity of Scotland (Scottishness) from 1895 to 1935. Focusing in particular on the ways in which cinema conveyed Scottishness during the transition from silent to sound, the thesis will examine whether or not there was a shift from the ways in which these representations had been performed in silent film. It moves on to interrogate if cinematic representations continued to develop as producers became familiar with the new technology and the potential it held. This research offers insights into texts that have been previously deemed to be irrelevant by critical writers and in some cases examines texts that have never been analysed before. The thesis builds through analysis of performances and representations of Scottishness to provide a base for further exploration of playing national identities in film.

This thesis is being written as part of an AHRC-funded project investigating British Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound: 1927 – 1933. The thesis will seek to discover the ways in which representations of Scotland and Scottish people developed during the transitional years. Although the project is concerned with the years from 1927 to 1933 this thesis will include an overview of productions and representations of Scottishness in the early years of cinema and extend to the mid-1930s. Tracking the development of representations will be achieved by referring to performances and the creative inflections of stylistic elements in the films examined.

UK-produced films are included in order to interrogate the methods in which British filmmakers and producers showed Scotland and Scottish people to the world. Films from the US are considered in order to attempt to assess how Scottishness was represented by one overseas territory with a potent, worldwide cultural impact as well. Scottishness from both nations will be examined in terms of language and vocal accents; settings of films and locations of their filming; mise-en-scène and musical scores as well as costumes amongst other elements.

Scotland in film is traditionally seen by critics as a victim of reductive practices by powers outwith her control. The methods and modes employed in representations of Scotland had been so influential and powerful that towards the end of the twentieth

century this culminated with the knowledge that the country was roughly divided between the cinematically stylish and “real” grittiness of fare such as Ewan McGregor in Danny Boyle’s *Trainspotting* (1996) or the romanticised narrative and bombastic posturing of Mel Gibson on a tiny pony in *Braveheart* (1995). Liam Neeson was striding across the glens in tartan as Rob Roy, in Michael Caton-Jones’s 1995 work of that name, whilst Peter Mullan was beginning to finely tune his own Scottish toxic masculinity with help from Ken Loach in *My Name is Joe* (1998). So some one hundred years after the invention of the film camera and the beginnings of cinema, Scotland was either a misty-eyed nostalgia-driven paean to the past glory of the Highlanders and rebellions or Scotland was a place of uncompromising squalor, violence and substance addicts. Scotland, in cinematic terms, could well be seen as being a bit like *Brigadoon* (Minnelli, 1954) only populated by the cast of *Goodfellas* (Scorsese, 1990).

Why was it so? This thesis sets out to establish the formative moments of the representations of Scottish people in film and trace the development of these types across early cinema, through the years of the transition to sound, 1927 to 1933, and then expand its analysis for a further two years up to 1935. As such, this thesis argues that there was very limited development in characterisation but that there are several stand-out films that should be critiqued, examined and in some cases celebrated as moments that tried to break from convention for various reasons.

Representations of Scottishness and critical reactions to such representations in cinema will be examined. The two dominant critical positions that stem from *Scotch Reels* (McArthur, 1982) in relation to filmic representations of Scottishness will be examined in this thesis: Kailyard and Tartanry. Their origins in literary criticism will be examined using work by Nash (2007) and Trevor-Roper (1983) amongst others. Tartanry and Kailyard have been central themes of criticism of Scottishness in film for decades yet the formative critiques based on them are strongly vituperative in their nature.

One of the important elements of the representations to be discussed is the performance of those on screen. Because this thesis is concerned with the era when the Scottish voice or accent was first presented to cinema audiences the beginnings of fully formed cinematic representations of Scottishness can be examined and critically appraised. Various acting codes in the cinema will be examined, following work by Naremore (1988), Pearson (1992) and Lowe (2004, 2007). As this thesis is

concerned with the transition to sound, particular attention will be paid throughout to the use of the actors' voices and accents in suggesting and defining character. However, sound in cinema is not confined to the voice and as such there will be consideration of the use of music and song as signifiers for the audience, as shown by Brownrigg (2007).

It has been noted by several authors that stereotypes abound in cinema. As Richard Dyer (1979, p. 13) notes whilst discussing the "dumb blonde" character, stereotypes become a mode of characterisation in fiction and Scotland and Scottish people at the end of the last century were effectively reduced to being one of the two types mentioned earlier. A Scottish man does not simply wear a kilt to project his nationality and identity any more than an American man wears a Stetson to achieve the same effect. Shorthand signification does not reveal characters; it reduces and compartmentalises them for narrative purposes.

The foundations of these stereotypical representations from both the UK and the US are interrogated and positioned in the opening analytical chapter of the thesis. From the earliest known surviving representation of a Scottish person in film, *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* (Anon., 1895), up to the grand Hollywood interpretation and presentation of *Annie Laurie* (Robertson, 1927), films are examined and the Scottish people's types are identified. Literary influence has already been acknowledged by a number of commentators (McArthur, 1982; Petrie, 2000; Martin-Jones, 2010) but this thesis proposes that in film cultural specificity became convention through the use of repeated shorthand signifiers, such as wearing a kilt. The immediacy of that image laid the foundation for the representations of Scottish men as a part of moving image iconography. This kilted (male) figure is further divided between three character types: highland warrior, military personnel or, not to put too fine a point on it, a clown. Women are nearly always domestic, little more than the property of the men in the narratives.

The findings here are then used as a foundation to track any development in performance styles, mode of characterisation and general representation of the Scottish people through the rest of the thesis. Performance modes here are examined using Roberta Pearson's (1992) codification of histrionic and verisimilar acting. The constituted identity of Scottishness is found to be near universal in terms of the coding of performances in the silent era with one stand out film created by

amateur filmmakers which relies on a naturalistic performance mode, *Mairi: The Romance of a Highland Maiden* (Paterson, 1913).

Having reached the year 1927, my attention stays in the US and its representations of Scottishness during the transitional years of sound, up to 1933. Chapter 4 has a focus on audience and critical reactions to hearing Scottish, or more accurately, performed Scottish voices for the first time in films from the US. This is contrasted with the responses from those of the Irish diaspora through an examination of the filmed versions of the popular comic strip, *McFadden's Flats*. The reception that the diaspora gave to representations of themselves is examined through local newspapers and other archive sources.

Whilst there were a number of "Hollywood Scots," to borrow David Bruce's phrase (1996, p. 176), the majority of cast members, especially leading performers, were American. Therefore this chapter allows for examination of the performances of some of the most popular and rapidly rising stars of the screen with particular attention paid to the performed Scottish accent. Janet Gaynor, the first winner of the Academy Award for Best Actress, plays a Scots immigrant in *Delicious* (Butler, 1931). As is illustrated by examining local press cuttings her oddly-accented performance and the reaction to it suggests that the public were willing to forgive a bona fide star's ineptness in a role. Gary Cooper begins to cement his reputation as a leading man playing a member of the Black Watch regiment in *Seven Days Leave* (Wallace, 1930) yet in a Hollywood power display, his character is relocated from being Scottish to being Canadian, a trait that became the norm for certain stars. John Ford directs Victor McLaglen, in what was one of both men's earliest forays into the talkies, as a disgraced Black Watch Captain who is sent on a secret mission to the Khyber Pass while the rest of his regiment are sent to the trenches of France in *The Black Watch* (Ford, 1929).

Consideration is given to the idea of the "expected" voice that stars experiencing the transition from silent to sound had to face. The use of music as a geographic identifier of location is traced and particularly popular tunes make the first of many appearances. The cliché and stereotypes employed in Hollywood filmic representations of Scottishness become convention through repetition, as the chapter shows. These stereotypes, the clichés of characterisation of Scottishness may be effective for narrative purposes but there is also room for humanity and compassion within the characters themselves.

This is followed by close examination of UK produced works during the transition to sound. Two chapters consider this and are divided in focus between solo performers and ensemble work. The first of these, Chapter 5, employs for the first time a comparative analysis of two of the most popular music hall Scotch Comedians of the time, Sir Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe, to question their popularity, performances and techniques. Regarded by some as the most famous Scotsman in the world at the time (Goldie, 2006, p. 1), and with a body of work in silent film to his credit, Lauder's attempts to cross into sound cinema will be examined. Lauder is considered in terms of his reach to audiences as a star. Contemporary criticism of Lauder is taken into account as a measure of the reaction to his act both in the UK and abroad. Fyffe's work is examined to establish if he has a different performed Scottishness to Sir Harry Lauder. The two may be similar on the surface but their choices of subject matters in their work (their own material) are poles apart. An example of this being Fyffe's composition, *I Belong to Glasgow* being turned down by Lauder due to its celebration of alcohol. Fyffe, unlike Lauder, moved on to become a recognised character actor. Although they essentially perform the same trope of characterisation, the clown, there are notable differences in the execution of the representations they enact. The Scots language becomes a point in characterisation, Lauder staying in character in masterful performances and Fyffe displaying ostensive acting, changing his language and physicality as he segues between characters as part of his act.

Chapter 6 examines Scottishness in ensemble form and analyses the little known 1930 film, *The Loves of Robert Burns* (Wilcox, 1930). This film occupies a pivotal point in the transitional years in the UK as one of the earliest British musicals to be made. Produced in London, with limited location shooting in Scotland itself, the male members of the cast were predominantly Scottish, including the lead performer, Joseph Hislop, an opera star who had not acted on film before. He was a tenor who was cast for his singing abilities rather than his acting skills as the film is built around him singing ballads that Burns was known for. Hislop can be compared to other members of the cast who had already had several years' experience on the stage in the UK, most notably Jean Cadell and the music-hall entertainer Neil Kenyon. The female members of the cast who play the titular loves of Burns were of English origin. A film that has only previously been mentioned in passing by some, this case study analyses it and its history and introduces the concept of diegetic vocal accuracy as a

means of attempting to solidify and formalise the examination of performed accents. Close analysis of the accents used by performers is applied in order to gauge how successful the cast were at representing Scottishness in voice. The chapter proposes that *The Loves of Robert Burns*, regardless of its shortcomings in filmic terms, along with its near disastrous box office record, is a neglected film. It is a film that represents the British film industry during a pivotal time in the transitional years, and one that deserves fuller attention as a document of its time.

The final two analytical chapters are concerned with the years 1934 and 1935 in order to ascertain whether or not the old stereotypes were still employed by filmmakers to identify and locate the Scottish people. Once the technology to produce sound-on-film was more fully understood, did the films present Scottishness in a different manner? Were stereotypical representations still necessary to locate films geographically or temporally?

The first of these final chapters, Chapter 7, examines UK produced films. Two of the films featured in the chapter have already attracted much writing but not in the way that this thesis approaches them. My focus on *The 39 Steps* (Hitchcock, 1935) is concentrated on the established Scottish characters: John Laurie's portrayal of the Crofter along with Peggy Ashcroft as his wife and Frank Cellier who plays the Sheriff. For *The Ghost Goes West* (Clair, 1935) I examine the use of stereotype in comedy as well as asserting that the film contains the first truly modern Scotsman featured in cinema. The other films in the chapter include an early work by Michael Powell, *Red Ensign*, an example of early social realism in film and the light-hearted affair, *The Secret of the Loch* (Rosmer, 1934), in which a London journalist travels to Scotland to seek a scoop on the Loch Ness Monster and falls in love with a beautiful young Scots lass whose father is the 'crazy' scientist who is insistent that the creature is real. The differences of genres in the chapter lead to questions of whether or not convention is now being usurped by the producers and the tones of the films, whether they are pastiche or thriller, are considered. Comedic films require a certain performance style which would be out of place in social realism or a spy thriller and the different Scotlands presented raise points about the representation of the nation. Indeed, sections of this chapter concern David Stenhouse's (2009, p.174) assertion that the banal or kitsch should not be idly condemned as unworthy of criticism as two of the films in the chapter have not previously been analysed.

The final analytical chapter returns to the US to examine three films, two of which, *The Little Minister* (Wallace, 1934) and *What Every Woman Knows* (La Cava, 1934), are based on works by the Scottish author and playwright, J. M. Barrie. The third film, *Bonnie Scotland* (Horne, 1935), sees the biggest comedy stars of the era, Laurel and Hardy, turn their attention to the Scottish military in a pastiche of the popular Gary Cooper film, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (Hathaway, 1935). Unfortunately, as the chapter shows, the use of Scottishness is little more than a prop to allow the duo to peddle their hokum one more time. Reliant on cliché and well-worn gags that guarantee a laugh, even if they have been seen a multitude of times previously, *Bonnie Scotland* is a far from bonny affair. The other two films in this chapter are both based on works by the popular Scottish author and playwright, J. M. Barrie and they both offer evidence of changes in attitude to capturing the real, the verisimilar, by some in Hollywood. These films do not poke fun at Scotland or its people as previous works did; these films present stories that are set in a Scotland that is presented as a real place with real people. An examination of local newspapers unearthed some surprising evidence that underlines Hollywood's attempts to hold a mirror up to nature and the chapter proposes that the supporting players in these films are worthy of consideration as much as the stars themselves. Indeed the chapter opens with consideration of Bruce's "Hollywood Scots," performers who may not have become household names but managed to have long and successful careers in Hollywood.

The thesis shows some progression and development of acting styles and modes of presentation by both the UK and the US over the years it is concerned with. It is across the years of the transition to sound that US performances moved quickest. With only a few months separating two of the films examined here in terms of their production and release dates the change in delivery of dialogue is plain to hear: there is a move from deliberately intoned, slowly paced use of language to make sure that every word is clearly enunciated and understood to a far more natural pace and flow of speech.

## Chapter 1

### Scottishness on Film

#### The Literary Influence

Imagine a silent film. There is no synchronised soundtrack, only the images on the screen in front of you. Four men walk into a bar. How does the audience know which one of the men is Scottish? The greatest probability is that he is the one wearing a kilt.

Scotland, to be frank, has cinematic pedigree. There is a line of actors, directors, and producers; both on-and-off screen talent from Scotland has thrived throughout cinema's history. Household names and icons of cinema stardom have come from Scotland. Scottish writers have provided the inspiration and sources for countless films and filmic adaptations. From the earliest years of cinema, as Richard Butt (2007, p. 55) notes, works by Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and J. M. Barrie account for every filmic adaptation of Scottish literature up to 1922. John Caughie (2018, p. 159) observed that this ready-made stock of narratives was exploited repeatedly by filmmakers. Scotland is seen as being possibly unique in that it is difficult to think of any other small country that has no film industry but is so often represented in film (Caughie, Griffiths, Vélez-Serna, 2018, p. 10).

However, attempts to define Scottishness have become the ground for contest. There are questions of identity, authenticity, veracity and integration. If Scottishness can be said to be anything then it is an expression of a national identity, the identity of those people who define themselves as being Scottish. Ernest Gellner commented on the elusive nature of nationhood by describing nations as a myth (1983, pp. 48-49). Gellner's theory that nations arose out of economic and industrial development shaped the views of cultural critics who saw Scotland as having a 'deformed' culture.

Benedict Anderson developed Gellner's idea of a nation further and identified four criteria that are central to the idea of nationhood. These are that the nation is essentially imaginary; the nation is limited due to its dependence on specific, geographical boundaries; nations require sovereignty and the fourth criterion is community (1991, pp. 6-7). Anderson's definition of nationhood highlights the



elements of visibility, limitation, sovereignty and cohesion as crucial to the strength of the national community. Having a border is important as this allows the idea of Scotland as a distinct, geographical unit. Such a clear limit to the nation's geography may increase a sense of nationhood yet, in the case of Scotland, sovereignty eroded this. Since the 1707 Act of Union, the country had been ruled from Westminster and after the First World War it became common to regard the dominance of English representatives in Parliament as detrimental to Scottish interests (Tange, 2000, p. 34). Richard Finlay (1994, p. 242) notes that prior to the First World War intellectuals accepted Scotland, "as an equal partner with England in the founding and running of the British Empire." The national identity of Scotland was Scottish, but the political identity was British.

Gellner also noted that it has become commonplace to associate nationhood with a continuous tradition, stating that, "culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or perhaps rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce" (1983, p. 37). Anderson defines the nation as 'an imagined political community [...] It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (2006, p.6). In nations people feel as though they have some kind of tangible connection to one another even though in reality that would be impossible. Members of the nation cannot possibly know or have daily, real-life interactions with every single other member of the nation, but they imagine connections between each other because of the shared language of the mass media. Anderson saw the novel and the newspaper as providing the "technical means" for representing the nation although others widen the definition to "literature" allowing poetry, drama and short stories to be included (1991, p. 25). Art remains a product of its time. Texts are subjective yet also hold value as historic documents. Literature, representations, *texts* can be seen as embodiments of culture as they are reflections of their producers.

Stuart Hall (1994) is cautionary regarding the interpretation of this produced meaning. He prefers to see this as "the re-telling of the past" which he equates with a form of "imaginative rediscovery" (1994, p. 393). This is what he calls the, "production of identity," as opposed to the, "archaeology of identity." The past is distanced temporally but the reimagining of the past is current and creates the

produced identity that is seen in filmic representations of nations and their people. Yet Hall speaks of identity as belonging to the future as well as to the past: "Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power.... Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (1994, p. 394). In her description of the origins of the British identity, Linda Colley (1992, p. 314) claims that the sense of a common identity did not come into being because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead the idea of Britishness was superimposed over a variety of internal differences. These differences, such as between the English and the Scottish, are more strongly foregrounded when the uniformity of the common identity is compared (Andrews, 2006, p. 75). The community of people in a geographic region that imagines itself as Scotland is only a nation 'because it fits and makes sense of the social realities as people see and live them' (McCrone 2001, p.52). Because it is the civil society that people encounter on a daily basis people experience Scotland as a nation, more so than they do Britain.

Identities can therefore be said to be received as they are performances which are to be interpreted. McCrone defines the workings of this as 'a complex matrix involving how actors define themselves, how they attribute identity to others, and how, in turn, they think others attribute identity to them' (2001, p.153). Identity involves not only how one perceives oneself, but also how one perceives others and believes others to perceive him or herself. McCrone cautions though that when speaking of national identity, the focus is often placed more on national and less on identity. This points to an assumption that national identity has been fixed whereas, as McCrone illustrates with the shifting nature of Scottish identity, identity changes with different historical contexts. Moreover, while imagining the nation relies a great deal on establishing differences, for McCrone this is not so much about real differences than 'the mobilisation of those which the actors believe to be salient' (2001, p.50). It is more about who is using which differences for what reason in the way that the imagined Scotland is reproduced. Framing Scotland as a nation and framing Scottishness as an identity can only be based on people defining themselves as such. For McCrone, Scotland is a nation in Anderson's sense of imagined community but it is the representations of the imagined community, the narratives of

the past that proved the fodder for the ire of the cabal of the most influential critics of the representations and performances of Scottishness.

Scottish critics of the 1980s, led by the contributing authors to Colin McArthur's edited collection, *Scotch Reels* (1982), railed against the presentations and representations that they feel they were subjected to yet they offered no solutions. They sniped and complained that what they were seeing and hearing was simply not real. The real conditions of their existence were not reflected in the shimmering light of the screen. Their parents and forebears were never shown as they actually were. The fictionalised accounts of lives were not only inaccurate but also taken to be insulting. Most problematic of all for these critics was the notion that like begets like – to some of them this was the creation of an endless cycle that was condemned to repeat itself *ad infinitum*. There was no hope of redemption, no hope of salvation and no hope of good humour being applied to anything that they saw and suffered their way through. There is an inherent problem, namely that the discourse of representation assumes there is verifiable and uncontested existence of the object or people that is then represented. However, as Julian Go (2016, pp. 118-119) notes this assumption can never be accurate because there is a reality outside this discourse and due to this any attempt to represent reality will be incomplete. The reality of the social world is not wholly knowable within the terms of any single conceptual apparatus, whether it be the novel, a painting or a filmic representation with the simple effect of rendering realistic representation as nigh on impossible to achieve (Go, 2016, p. 192).

There are factors regarding the vitriolic state of the critical nation in the early 1980s that require consideration. Firstly, the creed of writers and critics that was condemning the creative talents and repeated, cyclical performances and stories were caught up in their own, unnoticed cycle. They were inspired by those that came before them, as they in turn were inspired by those that came before them. A direct line could be drawn from the first voluble and volatile critic of Scottish culture, Hugh MacDiarmid (who was as much a performer as those he denigrated, even resorting to using a pseudonym instead of his given name, Christopher Murray Grieve), to the next voice in the cycle of disapproval and bile all the way to these new critics of the 1980s who inherited the mantle and mind-set of disapproval and attack. These were critics who aimed to set the heather alight. Some three decades after they set out on their brave new quest the heather is still smoking quietly. McArthur, Craig and

Caughie, in *Scotch Reels*, began to open up an interdisciplinary approach and melded some theories of film with theories of literature in order to cursorily examine the texts that they so roundly and openly hated. Two ideologies were recognised and discussed – Kailyard and Tartanry – and they were disliked from the off. Was full consideration given to those ideologies? The answer, in short, is no. Their critical inspirations did not like them and denounced them as worthless and the critics of the 1980s followed without question.

A newer, more open field of criticism would develop that would question those that had gone before. Duncan Petrie's work *Screening Scotland* (2000) provides an historical overview of Scotland on film and includes several works that *Scotch Reels* chose to ignore. In addition to looking at works without *Scotch Reels* dominant ideology, Petrie examined the position of the documentary in the canon of Scottish film, a form that *Scotch Reels* roundly ignores. The startling idea that certain texts could be re-appraised or even appraised for the first time came to light. *Scottish Cinema Now* (2008) includes Jane Sillars chapter which is a call for critics to reappraise texts that have previously been deemed unworthy. The fake Scotland which the 1980s young firebrands of criticism reacted to could be examined and deconstructed. The ideologies that were once espoused could be reconsidered – other writers appeared and suggested that some of the original texts, performances and authors should be hailed and celebrated. Some of the performers were global stars of their time. Not all of the names are known today. Certainly at least one of them - Sir Harry Lauder – may well provoke reaction from people dependent on their age. A large part of the new attitude to criticism was to try to understand the influences and reasons behind not only the texts that those previous critics had spurned but also the epoch in which they were produced.

But there is still the question of how a film can be defined as Scottish: is it enough to have a director or star who is Scottish? Well, no, as otherwise every Sean Connery film is therefore Scottish and every Michael Caton-Jones film is therefore Scottish, to use but two examples. Whilst it is worth acknowledging that there may never be a definition that is absolute, Janet McBain (1990, p. 233) offered criteria that may be seen as serviceable and this thesis follows her suggestion. Her criteria are: Scotland used as an identified setting or backdrop; Scots characters either at home or abroad, playing a central role in the narrative. Scottish authorship is not deemed to be worthy of inclusion and she recognises that this creates a dichotomy where

versions of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson and loosely based on the story of Deacon Brodie of Edinburgh cannot be included but that *The Kidnappers* by Neil Paterson can be included as it reflects the experience of the Scottish diaspora. As John Caughie (2018, p. 150) puts it, Scotland was, “small in size but disproportionately large in world literature, within an internationally shared reading culture,” and the works of Scottish writers, particularly J. M. Barrie and Sir Walter Scott are amongst the most produced films of early narrative cinema.

Trevor Griffiths’ 2013 work, *The Cinema and Cinema-going in Scotland, 1896-1950*, provides an historical overview of the early days of cinema in Scotland. Beginning in 1896, the year that the Cinematograph debuted in Edinburgh, his work documents the cinema-going habits of Scotland from cinema’s earliest days up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Griffiths points out that Scottish subject matter was rarely produced *in* Scotland and that that inevitably imposed interpretations and representations of Scotland from an external position, whether that be England or a foreign nation (2013, p. 7).

According to Griffiths, audiences in Scotland on the whole preferred imported, American films to those made in the UK (2013, p. 198). As for films produced in Scotland, he notes that local, topical films were known to be one of the best ways of ensuring an audience from the earliest days of cinema but that narrative films often faced difficulties (2013, p. 280). The example of *Rob Roy* (Vivian, 1911) a production made by United Films, Ltd of Glasgow is used to show that there were a variety of factors working against Scottish productions in Scotland from the start: firstly, the English based company, Gaumont, had its own production of the Rob Roy story that was released at almost the same time; and, secondly, the picture house managers were either reluctant or contractually unable to hire the Scottish version (Griffiths, 2013, pp. 282-283).<sup>1</sup>

There was also very little made in Scotland in terms of narrative films, especially during the period this thesis is concerned with. The recently published edited collection of essays, *Early Cinema in Scotland* (Caughie et al, 2018) covers the years from 1896 up to the arrival of sound in the late 1920s. It reflects on

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<sup>1</sup> The story of the film of *Rob Roy* is expanded upon by Caroline Merz in her chapter, Britain’s First Feature Film, in *Early Cinema in Scotland* (2018). Merz examines the production of the film as well as its impact on the international circuit.

distribution of film, the production of films in and about Scotland but has a dominant focus on the social experience of cinema and cinema-going. Whilst it provides detailed accounts of aspects of the early cinema era, the book has little to say on any performances in the films due to, as Caughie (2018, p. 147) phrases it, “the problem of survival.” The films that can be proven to have been made no longer exist to be viewed and Caughie’s attention turns to scenic films rather than narrative dramas and fictions.

Of narrative films that were made, Trevor Griffiths’ remarks on one Scottish production company, Scottish Film Productions (1928) Ltd, indicate that whilst there was great ambition in the company there was very little in terms of actual films produced and of those narrative fiction films that were produced none can be traced. That company suffered the aforementioned issues regarding the public actually seeing their films (2013, pp. 291-292). There was though, vibrancy in theatre and writing in the early 1920s but this was found to be difficult to transfer into the productions of films in Scotland – certainly there are few records of any attempts during the period I am concerned with. Even when The Scottish Film Council was set up in 1934 it was unwilling to enter film production and was regarded by exhibitors with little faith (Scullion, 1990, p. 48). There was almost no integration of film culture in to Scottish life which could only mean that representations of Scotland were not going to be produced in Scotland by those that felt that they were the people who could achieve this and effectively represent ‘real’ conditions of existence (Scullion, 1990, pp. 48-49).

### Twa’ Beasts: Kailyard and Tartanry

It is the representations of Scotland and Scottishness in film that encouraged deliberately provocative, reactionary criticism of “Scottish” cinema. For the 1980s critics who brought the plight of Scotland in cinema to the fore, the most powerful influence was Tom Nairn’s *The Break-Up of Britain* (1981) in which Nairn argues that the Scottish national culture is, “cramped, stagnant, backward looking, parochial” (p. 131). As one of those critics, Cairns Craig, comments, “Nairn’s ideas helped shape the agenda of the Scotch Reels event...and the volume of essays which emerged from it” (2008, p. 62). *Scotch Reels* is a landmark in Scottish film criticism. The book was edited by Colin McArthur and coincided with the event of the same name at the

Edinburgh International Film Festival. *Scotch Reels* identifies the historical presence of Tartanry and Kailyard in portrayals of Scotland on screen. These are found predominantly in works from Hollywood or non-Scottish based British cinema. One of its most damning arguments is that such portrayals of the nation and its culture have been repeating for such a length of time that these discourses inveigled their way in to the minds of home based filmmakers and became irrevocably present in their works.

*Scotch Reels* has had an impact so great that it is often taken as the starting point for discussions in other major works (such as Dick, 1990, pp. 10-12; Petrie, 2000, pp. 5-8; Martin-Jones, 2010, pp.4-7; Murray, 2012, p. 400) and has been revisited by several of its contributing authors. Criticisms levelled against it point to the deliberate ignoring of specific directors and films that simply did not fit its remit. Sarah Neely points out that there is no mention at all of the work of experimental filmmakers such as Margaret Tait (2008, pp. 153). Eddie Dick notes that the judgements offered regarding the representations of Scotland that were chosen were ultimately dependent on the predetermined positions of the writers who were writing from a politically charged position (1990, p. 10). John Caughie (one of the original contributors) noted that *Scotch Reels* had a limited lifespan and that only eight years after it was published he felt it was no longer adequate as a way of thinking about cultural representations of Scotland, admitting that *Scotch Reels* had a reductive, structuralist approach with a desire for neatly categorised topics and had, much like Hugh MacDiarmid, little time for texts that did not fit its agenda (1990, pp. 17-18). *Scotch Reels*, rather than joining a debate attempts to present a solution for the issues of representations of Scottish culture in the past from a self-appointed panel of escapees from the Scottish culture of its time.

However, the debate that *Scotch Reels* instigated continues even some three decades after its publication. Duncan Petrie suggests that *Scotch Reels* should be taken and used as a starting point for critical debate of Scottish films but without using the viewpoint that is inherent in the original work (2000, p. 8). Any history of Scottish film (and indeed critique of new works) should be treated with more sensitivity and aim for inclusiveness as opposed to the exclusiveness of the *Scotch Reels*. In addition to this, popular films should also be included in any serious work. McArthur has defended *Scotch Reels* claiming that it is not about Scottish film culture but about the influence of Scottish culture on film (2003, p. 12). Cairns Craig, another

of the original contributors to *Scotch Reels*, has argued that filmic representations of Scotland have inherited misrepresentation current over the last two hundred years and that ultimately the movies represented a “real” life that rendered actuality of Scottish life unrealisable due to the confines of any creative process (2008, pp. 62-69). Craig feels that the past has too strong an influence on the present and that any filmmaker will copy what they have seen before. Craig suggests that his position as a native critic of such representations will be biased towards a negative view whereas an audience or critic who are not indigenous to Scotland will, in the process of watching a film representation of Scotland, be in a world of escape (2008, p. 69).

*Scotch Reels* often reads as if it set out to castigate portrayals of Scotland that are seen as involving Kailyard or Tartanry. Cairns Craig asserts that filmic representations of Kailyard existence are typified by the inhabitants of the Kailyard being unaware of an external observer holding them in disdain and viewing them as absurdly parochial (1982, p. 7). There is recalcitrance in Kailyard inhabitants, a determined rejection of the wider world and any influences it may have. Craig posits that the humour of the Kailyard is dependent on the author and the reader sharing the same sophisticated view of the wider world and that the inhabitants of the Kailyard are to be pitied for being unconscious of the values and mores for which they are being judged and found to be comic (1982, p. 8). McArthur argues that in moving picture representations of Scotland Tartanry and Kailyard are presented in symbiosis as a hybrid stating that representations of Scotland on screen, “offer tartan exteriors and Kailyard mores” (1982, p. 41). Enric Castello, Nichola Dobson and Hugh O’Donnell (2009, p. 470) make the point that despite the fact that the bulk of the Scottish population now lives in large towns and cities, this discourse remains very much alive in the production of television texts, citing *Monarch of the Glen* as a prime example although given that the series is based on the works of the late-period Kailyard writer Compton Mackenzie the content and subject matter of the programme should hardly be surprising.

It should be noted though that the concept of the Kailyard is not as simple as may be inferred from reading *Scotch Reels*. Whilst its literal meaning is, “cabbage patch,” the word has come to be central to the cultural vocabulary of Scotland (Nash, 2007, p. 11). Kailyard has transformed from a noun into an adjective and is employed in qualitative judgement of works. Andrew Nash suggests that the term transmogrified after being applied to three writers (J.M. Barrie, S.R. Crockett and Ian



Maclaren) working in the 1890s to defining a tradition that originated some seventy years earlier. Nash has the origin of the term in 1895, attributed to the critic J.H. Millar, writing on J.M. Barrie (*ibid.*, p. 12). Other authors wishing to emulate Barrie's success followed in his literary footsteps and flooded the market. This is what led to the critical assault on Kailyard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Kailyard writing had become formulaic. Ian Campbell (1981, p. 11) sees literary Kailyard as having a tacit acceptance of a narrow range of character and activity within which to present the "real" Scotland. Gillian Shepherd identified the formula in literature as requiring amongst other elements a rural setting, an imprecise chronology, a Free Church minister and/or a lonely schoolmaster (1988, p. 310). In literary circles, Kailyard sums up what critics have always taken to be the wrong way of representing Scotland whether in terms of style, content or outlook on Scottish life (Nash, 2007, p. 14). The most important point regarding this is that what was being objected to was not the realism of the works of the authors. Rather, it was the status of that realism as being representative of Scottish life. To Scotland's nearest neighbours, the English, Kailyard presented a fictitious Scot. One who was untrustworthy, unmannerly, overly religious and miserly to an extreme (Findlater, 1899, p. 92). The Kailyard school of writing became seen critically as descending directly from the identification of Burns' poetry as *the* meaning of Scotland. Yet, according to Nash, the writers of Kailyard seemed unabashed by the criticism. Whilst the Kailyard may have a formula that was adhered to it also has a number of qualities for a writer: it is easy to produce; it sends up the Scottish people in a light-hearted manner for the financial gain of the author; it employs cosmetic use of dialect; there was a ready concession to the market and it appealed to a metropolitan audience. In short, Kailyard fiction provided a relatively easy way for writers to earn quickly with little effort.

The critical resentment of Kailyard literature was so vigorous that in 1922 Hugh MacDiarmid called for a Scottish Literary Renaissance arguing that writers such as J. M. Barrie would have to be dispensed with and ignored not because they were poor writers but because they represented an older generation (Goldie, 2006, p. 3). Kailyard novels and novelists were condemned from that point on as being parochial, narrow-minded and sentimental. One of the consequences of this has been an over-riding hatred of the form amongst critics of representations of Scottishness (Cairns Craig, 1996, p. 12). For MacDiarmid, Kailyard writing led to the

greatest misrepresentation of Scottish life ever known: that the real Scotland had never been realised and that Kailyard was a false tradition that perpetuated the subjugation of the people (Nash, 2007, pp. 207-208). Yet MacDiarmid used the term Kailyard to refer to any Scottish writing of which he disapproved (Goldie, 2006, p. 1). It was his construction of Kailyard as a false tradition that affected the structuring of the subject in four distinct ways. Firstly, by associating Kailyard with commercially successful and popular cultural works there was a link forged between the term and popular representations of Scotland. Secondly, by labelling much of the Victorian era as Kailyard the agenda was set by which that period would be understood by literary and cultural critics. Thirdly, MacDiarmid's labelling of Kailyard as fake and false meant that emphasis on authenticity came to the fore regarding works of Scottishness and finally, by locating and identifying Kailyard as an invention of North Britain, MacDiarmid set in place the political emphasis that still characterises debates over the provincialism of Scottish culture.

Jane Sillars (2008, p. 129) suggests that Kailyard should be reassessed as it has a demonstrably powerful hold over the Scottish psyche and also points out that Scotland is not unique in its production of its own, local narratives. If, as is suggested, the local is only good enough to communicate within its own borders, then how could the popularity of Kailyard stories outside those borders be explained? Perhaps they are stories that communicate more basic facets of humanity and compassion than some critics deem worthy of attention. One of the strongest points in her argument is that Kailyard appears to promote a critical culture where a work that shows Scotland's faults is generally deemed to be worthy by critics yet a work that shows levity in its treatment of Scotland is not worthy of consideration (Sillars, 2008, p. 132). Escape from the Kailyard is longed for but is almost unattainable, verging on an impossible dream. The parochial nature of the Kailyard and its inhabitants neatly mirrors the parochial nature of the critics writing from within Scotland – the Kailyard – itself. Sillars's main point is that by re-examining the critical relationship with Kailyard it is possible that previously dismissed texts may prove to offer a lot more to Scottish culture than once thought. It may prove illuminating to examine some of the earliest representations of Scotland and Scottishness on film with Sillars' open-minded approach to the texts to be examined.

Kailyard has its origins in literary criticism and, to return to Anderson for a moment, it can be argued that the visibility of the nation is central to the imagined

community. One of the best ways to make a country more visible, both to itself and other countries is via the promotion of certain images of the nation. Tartan, particularly the wearing of the kilt, acts as a signifier of identity that is most closely associated with Scotland. Tartan makes Scotland unique. After all, no other country has such a distinctive and variable cloth (Riach, 2010, p. 115).

The discourse of Tartanry begins conceptually after the second Jacobite rebellion of 1745-1746 and regards the defeat of the Scots by the English at Culloden as a loss that is both tragic and noble (Craig, 1982, p. 10). The discourse remains rooted geographically in the Highlands of Scotland, deliberately ignoring the Central Belt which holds not only the two largest cities in Scotland but is also the area with the largest population concentration. Tartanry disseminates a Romantic, idealised “Scottish” world that is held temporally in a pre-industrialised age. Cairns Craig (1982, p.9) identifies the work of Sir Walter Scott and J. M. Barrie as the major contributors to this discourse. Colin McArthur (1982, p. 41) also noted the contribution of MacPherson’s *Ossian* to Scotland, particularly the imagined Highlands, becoming the geographic and historic Romantic domain. It was the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, masterminded by Sir Walter Scott, which not only sealed tartan into the popular cultural imagination but also led to a proliferation of novelists that composed histories of tartan and Highland dress (Hugh Cheape, 2010, p. 17).

Scotland, or rather an image of Scotland, was first presented to the world by Sir Walter Scott (Pittock, 2010, p. 34). Scott made Scotland instantly recognisable yet he essentially confined it to the past (Tange, 2004, p. 36). Edward Said (1993, xii) noted of the novel that, “the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.” Scott was the most popular and widely read novelist of his time and his narratives brought Scotland to the world. In his novels Scotland was divided between Highland and Lowland, the nation split and then further split between Catholic and Presbyterian (Tange, 2004, p. 34). The advent of industrialisation added a gap between the industrial Central Belt and rural Scotland during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Scott’s novels did not reflect this, the “real” conditions of life in Scotland (Tange, 2004, p. 35). Rather, Scott’s novels have Scotland dominated by majestic highland landscapes and are positioned by some

critics as the beginning of Tartanry in literary fiction, with Alan Riach (2010, p. 119) declaring Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817) as the foundation.

The cloth itself is seen as the product of urbanism and lowlandism in both its definition and its exploitation (Goldie, 2010, pp. 232-233). The provenance of tartan, particularly the kilt, has been the subject of dispute. Hugh Trevor-Roper's highly influential *The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland* (1983) places the invention of the kilt in the early eighteenth century by an Englishman. He goes on to suggest that clan tartans were an even later invention. Critical reaction to this work has pointed out that Trevor-Roper has done little more than echo Samuel Johnson's views regarding Highland illiteracy and cultural deprivation (Ferguson, 1998, p. 183); that Trevor-Roper's argument that as an Englishman invented the kilt the kilt is therefore English is inaccurate as the kilt was merely an adaptation of clothing worn in the Highlands anyway (Brown, 2010, pp. 98-99). The strongest argument against Trevor-Roper is that the historical inaccuracy of such invented traditions constitutes an obstacle to any actual understanding of the past (Cheape, 2010, p. 29). The categorisation of tartan as merely an invention of the Romantic era negates the historical significance and cultural resonance of tartan and directs criticism away from any meaning that it offers.

That this should have occurred is perhaps not overly surprising. Quite apart from the use of tartan as costume the kilt and the wearing of tartan was already associated with Scotland in the mind of the world. This was not only due to tartan's place in the historical fictions mentioned by Goldie, but also through its association in the popular imagination with the Highland soldier. That association was notably executed in two well-known paintings of the nineteenth century: Gibb's *The Thin Red Line* (1881) and Lady Butler's *Scotland Forever* (1881). As Hugh Cheape remarks, "the quintessential image of a Scottish national dress and identity is that of the male kilted Highlander" (2010, p. 17).

Tartanry itself then, whether in film or in real life, is seen by some critics as something that belittles and denigrates Scotland and Scottishness. Tom Nairn views Tartanry as a sub-cultural phenomenon, and much like Hugh MacDiarmid does with Kailyard, he uses the term pejoratively in order to dismiss any aspect of Scottish life that he disapproves of. Tartanry, or its impact on critical writing and the ways in which national identity is projected and discussed, may then provide a base for the examination of other cultures.

Tartan on film is historically confined to act solely as a signifier of identity and nationality. It is a costume that immediately positions the character wearing it in the mind of the audience. There is no need for dialogue or any further exposition. Tartan, especially the kilt, *means* Scotland. However, Richard Butt, writing in *From Tartan to Tartanry* (2010), offers a different view of the history of tartan on film. He begins by reflecting on the use of Highland dress noting, as so many others have done, that it had always been a distinctive part of adaptations of Scottish Literary classics. The repetitive cycle of the creative works extends to the costuming of the characters as well as their mores and situations. However, Butt veers away from the norm by paying particular attention to the different uses of the cloth depending on the gender of the wearer. He notes that the meaning of tartan is not always exhausted by its narrative function. Butt advocates the re-examination of Tartanry, concluding that tartan need no longer be a signifier of endemic Scottishness. More importantly, Butt makes the point that the audience, whether critical or otherwise, make assumptions about characters based on the costumes worn (2010, p. 166). This, Butt feels, can disturb the progression of the narrative at the expense of the superficial yet it must be acknowledged that there is the possibility that the film is purposefully positioning its characters through the use of costume.

Whilst there may have been a fragmented tradition of filmmaking in Scotland, David Stenhouse (2008, p. 171) argues that this does not mean that there was a scarcity of films about Scotland. Yet, as *Scotch Reels* goes some way to proving, it is the films about Scotland that have been exposed to the harshest criticism. He argues eloquently that there is a “Wrong Type of Scottish Film” and that this is an historical situation, suggesting that *Annie Laurie* (Robertson, 1927) may have begun this reactionary stance in the 1920s amongst both critics and audiences alike. He notes that Forsyth Hardy, the eminent Scottish film critic, was particularly angered by the loose approach to Scottish history in the film in which the heroine of the poem is shown as having been present at the massacre of Glencoe and then, later in the film, is serenaded with a song written a number of years after her death (2008, p. 175). Stenhouse, in much the same way as Sillars, is advocating a critical rethinking of films about Scotland and Scottish filmmakers who work outside Scotland. The simple fact that the romantic or those others that became traditional representations of Scotland have survived in film for so long suggests that the ideas contained within are so attractive to non-Scottish people that they are constantly drawn to revisit and

rework them. This in turn, according to Stenhouse, should lead to the conclusion that there is no monopoly of ownership or any form of privileged position that allows critics to decide what is acceptable as representation in fictions (2008, pp. 182-184). That the converse should be the default reaction suggests an unwillingness to accept that films about Scotland could be seen as the rest of the world paying tribute to an endless fascination with the nation. Scotland's cinematic history is unquestionable. The means with which it has achieved its pedigree continues to be a site of debate and this thesis will attempt to trace the performance of Scottishness through the years of the transition to sound. After all, popular opinion is that when sound came in it changed *everything*.

### Sound in the cinema – voice and music

Over the last thirty-five years, sound studies has addressed the prevailing critical deafness to sound in general and worked to advance the consideration of formal audio-visual relations (Gorbman, 2014, p. 8). Gianluca Sergi (1999, p. 135) noted that the adjective 'film' does not just relate to a style of acting, but rather it speaks to us as a structuring element indicating relationships at the heart of the acting effort, one of the key factors of which is the use of the voice. It is the ability of an actor to adopt a specific national or regional accent can be placed within what Paul McDonald refers to as, "the spectacle of prestige performance," and the, "show of actorly craft" (2013, p. 223). But the role of the human voice is still seen as an underdeveloped area of research (Lowe, 2011; Spring, 2011; Gorbman, 2014; Garvey, 2015). This is surprising to an extent, given that one of the prevailing critical attitudes to acting and vocal technique was expressed by Kenneth MacGowan (1956, p. 289) when he stated that, "almost anyone could be made reasonably effective as an actor in silent pantomime. Acting with the voice was another matter." This can be complemented with John Harrop's (1985, p. 235) observation of American actors, who suffer from the, "inability to characterize, the lack of proficiency in the use of the voice and movement, are notorious deficiencies of American acting."

Contrastingly, writing on sound in early cinema is a burgeoning field with a number of authors turning their attention to Hollywood studios and the transitional period in the US and other territories (O'Brien, 2004; McGucklin, 2013; Slowik, 2013; Platte, 2014). There are few writers who have attempted to analyse the films of the British transition to sound years although this is a growing area of interest within the field. Scant attention has been paid to the productions of the years from 1927 to 1933

and this thesis is hoping to plug that gap in the knowledge. Due to the lack of writing on those key years in the UK this section provides an overview of the available literature and notes where it can be applied and adapted to this research.

## Voice

It is the work of Michel Chion, particularly *The Voice in Cinema* (1999), which is most often cited in the field. Chion charts avenues of exploration of the voice in the cinema from a predominantly psychological analytical perspective. He writes persuasively about the thematised voice – the power of the mother’s voice, the power of the unseen voice, characters who do not speak and those who will not speak. Indeed, he asserts that cinema is primarily concerned with the voice as our perception singles out the voice for attention above other elements of the soundtrack (1999, p. 5). This positions the voice as the primary point of aural identification for the audience at the expense of other audible factors such as music. In his words, cinema is a “vococentric” medium. However, his work gives incomplete consideration to accents other than in a brief discussion of dubbed, imported films and audience expectations of what a specific actor *should* sound like.

The value of Chion’s work though is not so much in the neologisms he introduces but in the new ways of thinking about voice in the cinema that he foregrounds. However, like so many other authors in this section, Chion remains silent on the transitional years and gives no consideration to UK productions of that time.

The transition to synchronised sound in cinema is popularly seen as having changed everything about cinema from the way films were made to the ways in which they were viewed. There are several historical accounts of the transition to sound that provide comprehensive details regarding the technological change and effects on the industry (Altman, 2004; O’Brien, 2005; Springer 2011). As this thesis is concerned with representations through performance (amongst other elements) there seems little point in writing an historical overview of the technology employed in production of film so my attention is directed to the performers, the sounds that they made and the music that was used in these films. However, critical writing on silent cinema has to be examined in order to establish the state of the cinema before the introduction of synchronised sound.

Disparity stems from the interpretation of the word “silent”. “Silent” is problematic. Michel Chion (1999, p. 8) suggests that the performers on screen in silent films were, in fact, positively chatty such was the animation of their performances. One of the key conceptual shifts in the field was provided by Rick Altman (1999, pp. 2-5) with his idea that the spectator was transformed from interlocutor to voyeur as a sense of spectacle was introduced to cinema going, particularly in the larger cinemas, from as early as 1910. As one of the leading writers in the field, Altman argues that silent cinema was never silent (2004, pp. 194-195). Cinema was accompanied, in its earliest years, with a narrator, sometimes known as a lecturer or with musical accompaniment. This musical accompaniment could be one man with a piano or, in larger cinemas, could extend to being a full orchestra playing with the film (Abel and Altman, 2001, p. xiii). Orchestra is not defined by Altman’s study, which again is centred on the US, but elsewhere, Jon Burrows (2012, p. 119), provides illustration of what an orchestra in the UK picture-houses would have likely been composed of: typically five to seven instruments made up of any combination of violin, cello, piano, drums, organs, flutes or clarinets.

In sound cinema everything—narrative development, mise-en-scène, editing, other sounds—is normally organised around the voice (Gorbman, 2014, p. 8). The voice is not confined to just speaking words. The voice, as seen by Gorbman, can “scream, cough, laugh, cry, sing, growl, and moan, and they carry distinctive accents, pitches, timbres, and rhythms” (ibid., p. 8). The importance of an actor being able to use the voice in its various forms convincingly is huge. The audience for early sound films absolutely had to be able to understand what was being said and cinema was constructed in order to privilege the voice above all other elements (Chion, 1999, p. 81).

It is not overstepping the mark then to say that the voice is one of the most important elements of performance. Stanislavsky believed that the voice was the pinnacle of the actor’s craft, and that memorable acting was created with modifications of the actor’s voice (Stanislavski, 2003, p. 100). Barthes wrote about the “grain of the voice” in a frequently cited essay of 1972 in which he celebrates the sensuality of voices moulded by the body. Yet he was writing about the singing voice as opposed to the speaking voice. Of those who write about cinema, James Naremore’s *Acting in the Cinema* (1988) does mention the voice but falls short of giving a full appraisal of the ways in which actors speak their lines or the accents that are employed in their performances.



A useful framework for vocal analysis was developed by Pamela Robertson Wojcik that considers the constituent parts of voice, speech and delivery. She suggests that in order to fully analyse vocal performance there are three key components to be considered: rhythm of speech; the grain of the voice and how it relates to expectation and conceptions of the speaker and how the accent functions as a part of both performance and type (2006, p. 72). Wojcik's components could also each be attributed to musical performance: rhythm being a fundamental musical principle, the grain of the voice being the instrumentation used and the accent being the inflections in the playing of the instrument. However, in terms of the voice in cinema, it is Sarah Kozloff's *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (2000) that set out to provide an explanation of the structural, aesthetic and narrative functions of movie dialogue by analysing a number of genres.

As with so many other works, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* is concerned with films made in the US. Kozloff considers dialogue in the context of its vocal performance and synthesizes the range of possibilities brought by an actor's voice to the interpretation of the script. She insists that there is a difference between dialogues as they are written and as they are delivered that is dependent on the performer, "the results represent the unique alchemy of *that* script in the mouth, mind, and heart of *that* actor" (2000, p. 92).

Where *Overhearing Film Dialogue* is of great use to this thesis is in its attempts to identify and highlight the importance of American performers' use of accents in their roles and the ways in which accents were used to denote character traits. However, there is little comment by Kozloff on non-American actors' uses of accents. For example, Greta Garbo was cast in a variety of European roles in US films as her Swedish accent marked her out to producers and audiences as being not only non-English but also non-American (ibid., p. 80). Chion playfully points out that when Garbo began to talk in films she was robbed of all voices but her own as the audience no longer had to imagine what her voice may sound like (1999, p. 8).

The introduction of voice to cinema meant that the performer ceased to be a shadow on the screen and became a person (Highsmith, 1970, p. 196). Watching a silent film in the sound era has the effect that the actor's speech is separated from the image of their body. Mary Anne Doane (1980, p. 47) suggests that sound (voice, music and effects) is something that is added to the image but remains subordinate to it: sound acts as a silent support. But she leaves no room for consideration that sound in film can give structure to the image and make the image more powerful.

The process of the recording and reproduction of these elements – sound and image - has been questioned by Marcello (2006, pp. 59-70). He argues that in relation to films from the US, that it is due to the number of factors involved in recording and replaying the soundtrack alongside the image, that it cannot be maintained that only one person (the actor) is solely responsible for the creation of the sound. This argument is predicated on Rudolf Arnheim's notion that sound film is technically perfected theatre (1997, p. 37). This proposed that as sound is recorded separately from image and the two are synchronised later this then allows a more natural and realistic mode of speaking for the characters on the screen than a theatrical performance would. However, Marcello does not consider either that all performances are inherently unnatural or that in the earliest sound films the method of production was to record the voice as live with any music that was in the scene played live in the studio as the actors were performing (Jacobs, 2012, p. 24). Another possible argument against Doane is that sound created the verisimilitude that the image needs as the image on its own lacks depth (Sinclair, 2003, p. 18). However, in the earliest sound films voice and image were recorded at the same time.

As the technology advanced so too did the techniques used. Katherine Spring (2011, p. 296) elegantly shows that in early sound musicals of the US there was a great deal of manipulation of the vocal performances in post-production. What the audience saw and heard was synchronised yet no longer necessarily recorded together. Familiarity on the part of the engineers meant that there was greater scope for manipulation in order to perfect the film. It was this combination of image and sound that induced belief in the audience (Spring, 2011, pp. 285-299). The voice became one of the most vital elements in the construction of character and development of narrative.

Voice is localised geographically. Accents make the viewer aware of the performed aspect of the voice which for Catherine O'Rawe (2017, p. 167) serves to remind that, "the official voice is the voice without any accent." The difference between accents of characters in films and what that signifies is further highlighted in Kozloff's analysis of the Western genre: there accents, dialects and language can be used to differentiate and provide contrast with the speech of the hero (2000, p. 151). The hero is set apart in terms of his voice and the language that he uses. Kozloff extends her analysis of this form of dissociation in an examination of US produced

melodramas of the 1930s. She shows that British actors and British accents are legion in these productions yet the characters do not lapse in to dialect or demotic, informal speech unlike upper-crust American characters in screwball comedies (ibid., p. 241). The British accent along with the formal patterns of speech used sets those characters apart from the others. The sensation of the otherness of these characters is thus strengthened in these films.

The voice is fundamental to this thesis for a number of reasons. As Victoria Lowe (2004, pp. 203-204) pointed out, different historical and cultural conditions bring different meanings to the voice as an element of the soundtrack. During the key years of the transition to sound filmic practices were being transformed and re-structured and the voice became a site of contested values. Dialogue was a matter of concern for a number of commentators in the early days of the talkies particularly regarding British actors who, “rely almost entirely on the voice, using the bare minimum of movement and gesture as a means of expression,” (Marshall, cited in Petrie, 1999, p. 162). The debate regarding the use of the accent known as Received Pronunciation, as opposed to dialect, being employed by performers and directors was prevalent in the press (Lowe, 2004, p. 205). In relation to British films, Duncan Petrie (1991, p. 166) refers to, “verbal primacy” which characterises film through dialogue.

Sandra Pauletto (2012, p. 131) argues that in cinema the sound of the voice has to be appropriate for the body that is producing the voice in order for the audience to accept the image as a whole. Actors’ voices located the characters in both social class and geographic locations for the audience. This would result in the audience feeling either incorporated into the text or excluded from the text: the voices they heard from the actors would either be familiar to them or alien to them, they were either “real” or “fake” and the audience would react accordingly.<sup>2</sup> Robert Murphy (2012, p. 131) and Adrienne Scullion (1990, p. 44) demonstrate that there are more layers to audience acceptance than the solely visual image provides.

The voice in early British sound film is examined by Murphy (2012) who sets out the historical background as a starting point before moving on to consider the social stratification that existed in the country at the time. Murphy, writing in 2012 (pp.

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<sup>2</sup> This reaction is generally one of suspicion directed towards the ‘impostor.’ In general terms there is an immediate awareness when a native accent is being imitated or a non-native voice is heard using the same language as a native, see Karen Schairer (1992, p. 318).

538-539), notes that critical examination of the early sound years of British Cinema had so far been neglected. Examining a variety of films from the early sound period. Murphy begins to explore the tensions caused by British actors' voices in the UK where the upper class, Received Pronunciation accent that was presented on the screen was resented in the stalls (p. 552). Yet performances *per se* are not interpreted or examined in his writing.

In Scotland, audience reactions to films with the "posh" English voice is highlighted by Adrienne Scullion who quotes a letter from *Kine Weekly* of 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1932. The letter explains why Scottish audiences were not flocking to films with English accents: "the reason should be obvious to anyone with a grain of intelligence: the filthy language." (1990, p. 44)

Victoria Lowe (2004) also considers the use of sound and voice in British sound cinema, notably the mid-1930s, and pays great attention to the actor Robert Donat. Much like Murphy, Lowe addresses the diversity of classes and professions that would have been attending the cinema and suggests that in the 1930s, "the sound of the actors' voices was crucial in both reinforcing and challenging national [and] regional identities" (2004, p. 207). Lowe proposes that one reason for the dominance of American films in the UK was that the American accent meant that films were free of the social and cultural associations brought by the British voice. However, Lowe continues to suggest that Robert Donat – who had elocution training - was the unifying voice that the British public adored. This would go somewhat against Murphy's (2004, p. 183) examination of audience tastes and audience reactions at the time yet Donat was one of the most popular stars of the 1930s and successfully managed his career, including several years of working in Hollywood.

By the time Donat arrived in the US it could be said that a career in Hollywood was nothing new for a British actor. Since the boom years of the late nineteenth century there had been a steady influx of talent from the UK to the US. Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel, James Finlayson, Eric Campbell and many others plied their trade in the Hollywood studio system (Street, 2006, pp. 61-69). There is scope for much more to be done on the early sound period of film in Britain, as the majority of the authors – the select band who do write about UK films anyway - cited in this section pay scant or no attention to films from before 1933.

## Music

Writing on film music is divided into two camps: either from a cultural studies approach within film and related disciplines or a compositional approach from within music studies. Film music can be analysed in musicological terms, in relation to the images it underscores (Donnelly, 2001). The field can be explored in terms of function, psychoanalysis, spectatorship and film history (Dickinson, 2002). Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* (1987) relates music to narrative (pp. 11-31) and, through an analysis of the Classical Hollywood model of Max Steiner's compositions for films of the 1930s, begins to provide both a critical terminology and an analytic framework for film music (pp. 53-70). She is of the opinion that music behaves synergistically in films and must be initially studied in relation to the other elements that compose the film.

Music has an ambivalent function that is possible because music can move back and forth across the film's narrative boundaries. The narrative functions of film music have been divided by Johnny Wingstedt (2008, pp. 63-65) into six categories: emotive function; informative function; descriptive function; guiding function; temporal function and rhetorical function. These categories may also be applied to sounds that are not music such as dialogue and sound effects. He posits that narrative music tends to be transparent and is often processed by the audience on an unreflecting level that seems to actively contribute to how meaning is constructed from a multimodally told story (2008, p. 90). Gorbman (1987, p. 11) described it several years earlier: "[the music] guides the spectator's vision both literally and figuratively." This suggests that what the audience sees has meaning added by what the audience hears. This is comparable to Chion's idea of empathetic music where the music used directly expresses its participation in the feeling of the scene (1994, p. 8).

This thesis is concerned with the effect(s) that music used in the films of the period covered has on the representation of the national character. My focus is on the uses and repetitions of musical pieces to the point where their use no longer simply suggests, but states, this is Scotland. Although the structural composition of the music is not being analysed there are key musical concepts that are necessary in order to analyse how music works in film. These include instrumentation, rhythm, duration and tone (Claydon, 2011, p. 64). Of these, instrumentation can be said to provide the most immediate signifier to the audience. Burnand and Sarnaker (1999) examined music in narrative film as a code for geographical location as well as ethnic

and racial characterisation concluding that there are numerous ways in which music is used to evoke identity. They offer the example of the Native American in western films predominantly being accompanied by music that features tom-tom drums.

Mark Brownrigg (2007) shows how music can evoke a sense of location in film whilst noting that films are often set in places that they are not filmed in. The score as a whole needs to be considered but the use of bagpipes on the soundtrack has the effect that, “Scotland is instantly brought to mind” (2007, p. 319). He goes further to note that in filmic representations of Scotland there is one other device that is commonly employed: the ceilidh. The ceilidh is a Scottish social event featuring music, dancing and invariably the consumption of whisky (Rodrigo, 2001, p. 6). The cinematic ceilidh uses traditional Scottish instruments, often played by genuine musicians and features traditional Scottish tunes and dances. For Brownrigg, the use of the ceilidh telescopes almost all conventions of film music in one place – location is established, the social status of the characters is established and the film may be temporally located as well.

The majority of the writers mentioned so far though are either discussing the use of music in films from after the time period or from without the territories that I am concerned with. Their contributions to this thesis work in an analytical frame as opposed to an historical one. To contextualise the time period and changes that were brought by the transition to sound there has to be a brief précis of the technology and its adoption by the industry as a whole. Popular opinion is that early sound cinema broke from the silent era by featuring a “realist” aesthetic. Emphasis was placed on presenting sounds – including music – that had a recognisable source in the image on screen (Gorbman, 1987; Brown, 1994).

The vast majority of literature on this topic is focussed on production in the US. There the transitional years are commonly seen as 1928 to 1931. From 1928 to 1931 the emphasis in sound recording practice was on production sound. The rationale that the sound of the film should be recorded and reproduced as originally performed was held over from radio. As previously mentioned, Lea Jacobs examined early sound films made in the US and notes the difficulties encountered by studios in production that led to background music only being used when the narrative situation strongly required its presence (2012, p. 14). In narrative film background music was generally limited to transitions and montage sequences. Part of the reason for this was that in order to have music on the soundtrack along with dialogue meant having the music played live alongside the actors. Rebecca Swender notes that the aural

separation of vocalists from accompaniment appears to have been achieved through microphone choice and placement and the setting of levels on the sound stage as would have been the contemporary practice for radio broadcasts of live performances (2008, p. 23). These two factors can be applied to the analysis of the films I will examine in later chapters in order to ascertain if the production values of the US were applicable in the UK as well.

Strategies of film music in Hollywood productions of 1927 to 1933 were analysed by Michael Slowik (2013) who noted that over that period there was what he terms, “diegetic withdrawal.” As stated, films originally featured music with an explicit source in the image before, according to Slowik, drifting towards music that was either ambiguous or non-diegetic (p. 4). This resulted in music that seemingly emerged from the diegesis rather than from an external non-diegetic narrative force. Music was being used in film to manipulate the audience emotionally. By having music enter and leave the soundtrack of a film the audience became more aware of the presence of the music but also its absence (Platte, 2014, p. 318). Slowik (2013; 2014) though, like so many others, is solely concerned with films from the US. There is a tangible hole in research that this thesis will be able to fill regarding UK productions during the transitional and early sound years in cinema.

## Acting, Performance and Interpretation

Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke point out, in the introduction to *Reframing Screen Performance* (2008, p. 1), that acting is a subject in which everyone is either an expert or has strong opinions. Acting, whether on stage or screen, can therefore be a divisive topic for an audience. At its most basic level it can be essentially reduced to a simple statement on the part of the audience: “I believe.” The myriad elements of cinema combine to create characters that are presented to the viewing public as a *fait accompli* and, as Tzachi Zamir (2010, p. 228) insists, that audience then holds all of the power in its hands when it either believes the performances, the representations in front of it, or it does not believe. Zamir sees two levels to this: firstly belief in the actor in the role they are playing and, secondly, as a

validation of the reality presented (2012, p. 117).<sup>3</sup> What is certain is that the audience and the critical audience will have an opinion concerning what they have seen and will most likely have something to say as well.

Such opinions divided critics as, as Pamela Wojcik (2006, p. 71) noted, performances in early silent films were not always considered to be “real” acting due to their differences to the established mode of theatrical acting of the time. Another early critic who had strong feelings about actors was Lev Kuleshov who decreed that, “apart from montage, nothing exists in cinema,” and that, “the work of the actors is absolutely irrelevant” (1935, p. 192).<sup>4</sup> At its most essential level, the practice of acting is seen by Tony Barr (1986, p. 113) as having a simple function, that is, “to communicate ideas and emotion to an audience.” John Caughie noted that there is very little written about what actors actually *do* when they act and he divides the response in academic criticism of acting into two camps. The first he sees as a school of criticism that was content to use the humanist and moralistic vocabulary of honesty, truth and courage to describe acting, and the second was a rigorously academic school that tried to explain and analyse acting with language that strangled it. In Caughie’s view, the analytical school utilised a semiotics of gesture and movement in which the actor becomes part of a system of signs and signifiers (2000, pp. 143-144). This led to the analysis of acting being perceived, if I can borrow from *Macbeth*, as simply being a tale told that signifies nothing. James Hamilton (2013, p. 46) attempted to burst any bubble that surrounded lengthy examinations of the

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<sup>3</sup> The separation of actor and role is seen by Naremore as problematic due entirely to the star system exploited by studios. Almost from the beginning of film, stars were viewed as aesthetic objects rather than artists which, according to Naremore, contributed to an overtly antimimetic conception of acting (1988, p. 102).

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the (in)famous ‘Kuleshov experiment,’ where Kuleshov showed a still image of a face with different images inserted and noted that audience reaction projected meaning onto the actor dependent on what the other image showed: if it showed food, he was hungry; if it showed a wild dog, he was scared and so on. The still image was the pre-Revolution Russian film idol, Ivan Mozhukhin and it was Vsevolod Pudovkin, the director, who credited the editing with commutation of meaning. Kuleshov himself conducted further experiments in 1916 or 1917 with another film idol, Vitold Polonsky. Polonsky proposed that an actor would have different reactions to different stimuli. So, a hungry man shown a bowl of soup would be happy but the performance of that happiness would be different to that of a man in jail who is shown an open door and told he is free. Kuleshov shot both of these scenes and then cut the two performances so that the bigger reaction (freedom) followed the soup. He decided that the two starts of joy were rendered unnoticeable by the montage but that there were noticeable differences in Polonsky’s performance outwith the montage. He attributed the differences in performance not to his editing but to the skill of the actor involved (Baron and Carnicke, 2008, pp. 34-36).



nature of the “truth” of acting when he cheerily suggested that quite simply, “acting is a kind of pretending.”

Attempts to explain and define acting are not always successful or by any means simple undertakings. Michael Kirby attempted to establish a quantitative method to gauge success in performance. His measuring scale of acting ranged from, “not-acting,” to, “complex-acting” (1972, p. 8). By his own admission, in every performance the performers are performing in some way or another thus rendering his work essentially redundant. It is the distinction between performing and being that presents problems. Accepting that actors, when being watched in a film, on television or on stage are performing even if they are simply standing still in the background is key to the beginnings of analysing their work.

Paul McDonald (2004, p. 32) suggests that a starting point for the study of film acting is the analysis of voice and body in moments where actions and gestures of the performer, “impart significant meanings about the relationship of the character to the narrative circumstances.” He infers that close analysis of acting on film can provide not only an emotional point of view but also provide a base for a cognitive appreciation of character and performer’s work in creating the character. He sees the cognitive effect of imparting knowledge pair with the affective realm of emotional meaning as fundamental to achieving identification (2004, p. 39).

The standard work in the analysis of cinematic performances is James Naremore’s *Acting in the Cinema* (1988). This represented a major step in the development of critical discourse surrounding the contribution of the actor and the ways of evaluating and critiquing performance in the cinema. It is an attempt to identify and analyse the conventions of filmed performances and highlight performance techniques that are less obvious (Kirby’s problematic “not-acting”) due to their apparent naturalism.

Naremore was the first to address the variety of complex issues with which theoretical interpretations of performance must come to terms and attempt to resolve in terms of cinema acting. These include such problems as distinguishing performance both on screen and off from the normal, everyday life of the audience (pp. 22-23), as well as addressing the question of defining performance space on the screen, and attempting to make a distinction between “actor” and “character” or even “star” (p. 71).

In his examination of the constitution of the basics of screen performance, Naremore turns to theatre in the US in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The influence of François Delsarte's system of expression is discussed in relation to the way in which it influenced US actors in particular through a number of instruction manuals for actors. Roberta Pearson (1992, p. 23) notes that the majority of such manuals appear to have been strongly influenced by (if not just outright plagiarised from) the work of Delsarte. A similar vein of research was conducted by Chris O'Rourke (2014, pp. 84-105) who shows that in the UK there was a proliferation of manuals for the aspiring actor to learn their craft from.<sup>5</sup> These began as early as Leopold Wagner's *Cinema Acting as a Profession* (1915), with more than twenty similar publications appearing by the end of the silent period.

The rigidity with which inexperienced practitioners followed the instruction manuals provides Pearson with the insight needed to fully codify and track the use of a particular, identified style of acting to its demise. Conversely Cynthia Baron in her consideration of screen acting manuals available to be bought, notes that working actors felt that the fundamental difference between the disciplines of stage and screen was merely a quantitative adjustment made to performances dependent on the medium of the production (1999, p. 35) If it is as simple as there being a quantitative change in performance between theatre and film, then it is the actor's ability to perform at the correct pitch, volume and timbre that was so earnestly sought by studios regardless of their location (Hewett, 2013, p. 337).

Yet in criticism it was Naremore who was the first to attempt to fully define and interpret the stylistics of screen acting. He analyses films ranging from the 1910s to the 1980s, each of which has a recognisable star name in them, and also examines ensemble acting in two films, *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1954) and *The King of Comedy* (Scorsese, 1983). It is in these last two sections that Naremore presents assessments of individual performances based on textual analysis and his own judgment and tastes yet he pays no attention to either the historical or sociological

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<sup>5</sup> O'Rourke (2014, p. 88) also examines advice columns from fan magazines and popular volumes on cinema. He notes that the qualifications for screen success included, "mobile, expressive faces, and good, clear-cut features," whilst observing that as films grew in popularity these kinds of advice columns spread into magazines in general, specifically those targeted at young women. To exemplify the standard of training given by such manuals and advice columns, O'Rourke quotes *A Guide to Cinema Acting and Course of Training* (n.d.) which includes the sage advice, "when you get home, put yourself in the part of the star and go through what you consider to be the most difficult part of the plot."

context of the films or audience reactions to the works. He does manage to emphasise one of the downfalls of interpreting screen performance in text – the fluidity of the performance is lost. In his analysis of *True Heart Susie* (Griffith, 1919) he employs a series of still frames from the film to illustrate the acting style but the effect is that the actor, Lillian Gish, merely appears to be executing quite impressive facial gymnastics. Naremore thus appears more interested in providing a descriptive rendering of the film than in questioning any meaning of performance gestures.

Naremore's work remains the base for a great deal of writing concerning film acting. Andrew Klevan (2012) turns to him as the foundations of his analysis of film. Covering a number of films, including *It's A Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946) and *The Music Box* (Parrot, 1932), Klevan takes specific, sometimes tiny movements in moments, and interprets them as good performance. He feels that good performers are alive with meaning and alive to meaning and that the viewer is living with these meanings (2012, p. 35). This is an effort to highlight the less obvious aspects of acting that contribute to the naturalism of on screen performances through examination of fluidity in performance. While he does offer very reasoned and illuminating thoughts on the scenes chosen he does not at any point consider that some of what he has seen is not pre-planned by the actors in question. There is the possibility that the performances that have been recorded contained moments of improvisation by the performers or the possibility that the performers have reacted to their scene partners naturally thereby allowing the performances and the scene to have integrity.

Directly influenced by Naremore, Roberta Pearson's *Eloquent Gestures* (1992) attempted to categorise and codify acting in the Biograph films of D.W Griffith produced between 1908 and 1913. Jettisoning overused words such as "melodrama" or "melodramatic," noting that their original derivation came from 18<sup>th</sup> century French theatre, Pearson recognised that the terms had become meaningless through misapplication by a plethora of writers across media (1992, p. 9).<sup>6</sup> Instead, she identifies two codes of acting based on the physicality of the framed actors: the histrionic and the verisimilar. The histrionic code is a heavily stylised form of acting, reliant on expressive gesture and grandiose movements that are held in isolation. For

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<sup>6</sup> Jon Burrows (2006, p. 163) suggests that melodrama is perceived as, "an aesthetically and morally impoverished genre."

Pearson, the code is recognisable as it is a segmented form of communication that is similar to speech. Actors struck attitudes through posture and held that form until they had been “read” by the audience. Excessive movement could cause confusion and the removal of small, fidgety gestures would bring the physical equivalent of silence. This, in turn, resulted in movements and gestures of the actors having “the discrete, discontinuous elements and gaps of digital communication” that speech exemplifies (Pearson, 1992, p. 25).<sup>7</sup>

Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs’ *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (1997) responds to Pearson’s work, suggesting that early twentieth century “concepts of realism did not preclude an emphasis on attitudes and posing” (p. 101). They note, through a study of a number of European films featuring famous stage actors of the era, that these works, rather than being simplistic recreations of the stage performance they are actually aesthetically rich and sophisticated texts that employed gesture as part of a near universal code of communication through pictorial tradition. It was, they conclude, the advent of longer films that permitted and encouraged a qualitative shift in the duration and complexity of the gestural movement actors employed: “actors in the one-reel film were given many fewer opportunities to dwell on situations, to hold poses or develop elaborate sequences of them” (1997, p. 108). Where Pearson sees extended gesture as a result of stage practices, Brewster and Jacobs see development of stage practice for camera. Individual creative licence was being taken with what on the surface appears as impersonal conventions of theatre performance style.

Barry King (1991, p. 129) suggested that audiences of the time would have recognised the coded meanings of the poses used and would not have expected verisimilitude, rather they would expect there to be consistency in the relationship between signifiers and signified. This near universal physical language theory is borne out by Jörg Schweinitz (2011, pp. 63-67) who noted that in early German cinema film acting was reliant on standardised poses that reduced complexity of meaning whilst still being a highly stylised means of communication. Yet there is a challenge presented in the interpretation of this style of acting, as, as Brewster and

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<sup>7</sup> Adriano D’Aloia (2012, p. 97) reminds us that the boundary between functional movement and expressive movement is subtle, yet decisive in reading meaning.

Jacobs note, the style of the early twentieth century performances is quite remote from that of present-day film acting (1997, p.99).

The verisimilar code is seen by Pearson as being more naturalistic. However, verisimilitude should not be equated with reality: verisimilitude is dependent on public opinion and acceptance of the presentation received in a culture's coded expectations of artistic representations of reality (Pearson, 1992, pp. 26-29). The verisimilar is viewed as the abandoning of the lexicography employed by the histrionic. Gestures were not used in the same manner although they were still employed. There was a greater flow to performances viewed and Pearson provides detailed analysis of the construction of the image seen and the ways in which it develops in the narrative, along with an illumination of the intended meaning presented to the audience (1992, pp. 39-44).

Whilst there is a marked shift in the style of acting used in the films Pearson analyses, the use of both codes is evident throughout the five-year period she is examining (1992, p. 52). The strength of her argument is that by the end of the period there is almost no use of the histrionic code in Griffith's films. There is, though, an assumption that this change in style of acting was purely due to the efforts of the Biograph company players under Griffith's tutelage and not due to any working experiences they may have had with other film or theatre companies. Misreading may occur when interpreting the filmed performances as there must be due thought given to gestures used as conveyors of emotion and meaning because such gestures are not universal but are culturally and geographically specific (Baron and Carnicke, 2008, p. 173). Pearson's critiques do not consider the full history of the texts, choosing solely to concentrate on interpreting what is presented on screen. This is highlighted by David Mayer (1999, p. 15), who says of Pearson's work on *A Drunkard's Reformation* (Griffith, 1909) that, "this is a substantial misreading of Griffith's film." Indeed Mayer in *Stagestruck Filmmaker* credits Pearson as providing a "serious but flawed study" before entirely dismissing her along with Brewster and Jacobs as mere critics of late-Victorian stage acting who "have no idea why acting was gestural" (2009, p. 22).

The influx of actors from theatre to film is not perhaps overly surprising. Skilled workers are always needed and Robert Murphy (2012, p. 538) notes that stage actors were successful in the early sound era in gaining employment on screen, mostly due to their ability to learn and deliver the dialogue as required. Skills that

were learned and honed in the theatre were sought by studios, especially Hollywood studios, which hoped to naturalise sound in the talkies (Grainge et al, 2007, p. 150).

An historical overview of developments in the flow of labour and cinema acting techniques is provided by Cynthia Baron (1999, pp. 31-45). Concentrating on Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s she discovered that actors working in Hollywood films integrated techniques gleaned from silent film with principles and practices brought from individuals working in theatre in America who were influenced by the works of Stanislavsky (ibid., p. 31). There was a flow of labour from theatre to film studios in the US and it was normally the actors who had experience and prior training that became successful quickly (ibid., pp. 32-34). Baron, given the period being examined, uses newspapers and trade press of the period to show that theatre actors were playing a central role on the production of the new sound films, paying particular attention to the *New York Times* critic Otis Skinner's claim of 1929 that the traditional, theatrically trained actor was perceived to be the dominant type at the time (ibid., p. 33).

The body of literature concerning acting and the sources of actors in sound films is, akin to the body of literature regarding sound in early film, mostly set in the US. UK produced films are not as prolifically covered in academic output but the corpus is growing. Jon Burrows *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films, 1908-1918* (2003) provides an examination of a similar time period to Pearson's work and is directly concerned with the flow of labour from stage to screen. Burrows sites his argument in defining the legitimacy of performing in early cinema. From the basis that the London (West End) theatres are the proper, legitimate theatre, Burrows shows that stars of the stage did transfer to cinema. This had the effect of increasing not only the popularity of the cinema as an attraction but also making cinema more acceptable to critics of the day. Burrows sketches out conventions of stage acting during the period and attempts to link these to the developments in film acting and performance using trade press and personal journals. An interesting point of reflection is that a number of commentators he cites regarded theatrical pantomime as the most appropriate model of acting for the medium of cinema to borrow from (2003, pp. 54-57).

Pantomime itself was, in its earliest form, a performance that was similar to dance but had developed separately from drama (Vicentini, 2012, p. 21). As a form of dance, pantomime was reliant on gesture and mimicry to communicate. Aristotle

noted in *Poetics* (Butcher, 1902, p. 109-111) that the ability of the earliest pantomime performers to mimic allowed them to depict character, experiences and actions. Burrows cautions however, that pantomime in the Edwardian era was more likely to be viewed by critics as Continental pantomime. This Southern European form is characterised by a rapidly flowing series of gestures, the intention being that each word of a script would have an intentional or explanatory gesture to accompany and highlight it to share meaning with its audience. This was a silent form in which emotions and ideas were signified entirely by gesture as opposed to the more traditional British Christmas pantomime that Burrows traces to originating in the Victorian era (2003, p. 55). This in itself was distinct from the traditional British theatrical style. The nineteenth century saw British theatre actors develop performances that combined gesture, movement and speech with song or accompanying music in a rather grandiose manner in order to communicate meaning (Bratton, 2014). Following Naremore, Burrows cites Charles Aubert's manual of pantomime acting as the text best used for interpretation of performances in films of the period (2003, p. 55). British theatre, according to Burrows, had, in some cases, introduced realism as early as the 1860s (*ibid.*, pp. 30-31) and there was a shift in the style of stage acting by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century towards this new realism in opposition to the heavily stylised, pantomimic tradition.

Burrows shows that styles of acting were forced to change in order to adapt to the medium of film and tracks some critical reactions to this shift in the process of acting. Times change, as do critical tastes. Burrows cites the performance of Johnston Forbes-Robertson in the filmed version of *Hamlet* (Plumb, 1913) in which the actor adopted a realistic style of performance. Forbes-Robertson was heralded as being one of the greatest portrayer of Hamlet of his age and had played the part to packed houses for several decades. He was not given to theatrical, grand gesture on screen and the result was that his performance was not accepted by the critics of the time as being suited to the cinema (*ibid.*, pp. 133-137). William Brown (2012, p. 107) however shows that recent experiments in cognitive neuroscience indicate that perceived realism on screen comes from actors minimising the amount of visible acting that is happening. Brenda Austin-Smith moves this concept of invisible acting further and writes on the inwardness of performance: the psychological decisions taken by characters. These are the choices that actors have taken in an instant within a scene and the effect that these decisions have on the audience's interpretation of

the diegesis and the character's place within the moment. Austin-Smith is in agreement with Naremore that bad acting is visible but good acting is invisible (2012, p. 20).

Christine Gledhill's *Reframing British Cinema 1918-1928* (2003) examines what she sees as the aesthetic of restraint in performance in British silent cinema. Gledhill argues that British silent filmmakers did not simply fail to emulate the techniques of editing, innovative use of mise-en-scène and the star system of the US as much as they actively resisted these modes, preferring to employ their own principles of style and performance. Oppositional values of performances are explored. She identifies that English actors displayed restraint in performance which led to accusations of repression from sections of the press, feeling that English characters (and by implication, English actors) were unable to express feeling particularly in comparison to the performance mode used by US actors in the films that were so popular with large numbers of the UK audience (2003, p. 63). English actors were known for stillness in performance, Gledhill sees this as underplaying, and views it as part of a sociological change in values and mores to bring a class-defined sense of what can be deemed appropriate behaviour in given circumstances. This contrasts with American naturalism, a mode of performance which rejected repressive control and rhetorical display in order to convince the audience of, "the illusion of the first time" (ibid., p. 67). Gledhill notes that this led to the embracing of Stanislavsky's system in the US more than in the UK, the identification between actor and part that maintains the illusion of the first time, when the audience hear the actor speak as the character they are hearing the character speak those words for the first time ever, thoughts are vocalised and made real through speech. She posits that, "visible acting produced bounded roles and personae through which dramatic interchange between socially demarcated protagonists can take place" inextricably placing the UK as a class based society in opposition to the more egalitarian ideal of the US (ibid., p. 73). There is the suggestion that UK based actors used their bodies to authenticate a social type, that, "under the camera the film actor produces less intimations of the soul than signs of social position and identity" (ibid., p. 76). But she is solely referring to portrayals of Englishness, not Scottishness, and has no Scottish performers in her work. The near obsession with the class-based system of performances of Englishness neatly misses the point that Scotland's history, according to Craig (1996, p. 102), is characterised by the absence of class conflict.



Gledhill's work, whilst offering some elements for further use, is predominantly merely concerned with English actors playing English characters yet it attempts to situate itself as straddling boundaries of cultural difference in performances.

There is still one area that has blurred boundaries and that is whether or not actors and stars can be examined in tandem. Certain performers whose work is examined in this thesis can be classed as stars, and although this thesis is not primarily concerned with star studies, writings in that field can illuminate some of the creative decisions taken in the production of texts interrogated. The cinema star is a product of his or her environment, a construction of the studio system that is predominantly concerned with reaping financial gain for the studio (Dyer, 1987, pp. 2-4). George Toles (2012, p. 88) placed a definite boundary between actor and star when he suggested that stars should not try to act at all but should simply ensure that they, "do enough" to remain in work.

It is though Richard Dyer's *Stars*, originally published in 1979, which is the most influential work on the subject of screen stardom and the construction of what is referred to as the, "star image." Dyer's work was a key influence on Pearson's *Eloquent Gestures*, Pearson even going as far as using Dyer's definition of performance as the basis for her work. Dyer is concerned with the ways in which cinema circulates the images of performers and how these images can affect the way the audience think of the performers and themselves.

Dyer posits that the star system is entirely a construction of the early age of cinema without considering that, as others have alluded to, the cinema took its lead from theatre and the music halls. Robert Sarlos and Douglas McDermott (1995, p. 233) note that analysing the star system in American theatre of the 19th century leads to three points that are applicable to Dyer's view of film stars: the star was isolated from the supporting players (the star was often brought in from outside to what was essentially a repertory company and did not form a close working relationship)<sup>8</sup>: the star was also separated from the audience (the star was geographically transient and the audience did not get to know them) and finally the

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<sup>8</sup> This ties in with Richard deCordova's (1990, p. 113) point that the player's identity could not be understood through only one viewing of a performance by the audience hence the repetitive consumer behaviour of going to see every film that the star was in in order to get to 'know' them. The 'real' lives of the screen actors took on as much importance as the films they were seen in (Wilson, 2010, p. 26).

auditoria were increased in size to maximise revenue giving the effect that the star was then physically further from the audience. This meant that the star would give their own performance of the piece with the supporting cast doing little more than providing cues.

The relationship between the star and the actual work done by the star is often overlooked. Paul McDonald (2012, p. 182) argues that star studies have paid little or no attention to acting and that acting is the principal labour of the stars. For McDonald, in order for a fuller understanding of stars there has to be analysis of their labour. This disparity between acting and stardom is reflected upon by Victoria Lowe (2011) using Robert Donat as example of the machinations of studio economics versus individual artistic freedom and happiness. Lowe's essay is predominantly concerned with power and the rising star's attempts to wield power for the good of their career whilst outlining specific performance codes that are distinct from the norm for US cinema. Lowe (2011, p.13) asserts that Donat's performances, his acting, bears the marks of the theatrical tradition from which he came, involving disguise, role-playing and even doubling of parts.

Acting is increasingly viewed as an element of cinematic style and should not be simply regarded as the representation of a possible person (Taylor, 2012, p. 13). The voice, movements, rhythm, expressions and gestures of the film actor are as central to a film as any other constructing principle (Sternagel, 2012, p. 93). Andrew Klevan, one of the pioneers of close textual reading of actors as elements of mise-en-scène, in his work *Film Performance* (2005), attempts detailed explanations of actor's movements within the frame moment by moment and relating them to other elements of film style. This approach is also used by John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (2005, pp. 111-113) in their essay on *Bonjour Tristesse* (Preminger, 1958) who note that detailed criticism must be attentive to nuances of action, performance and setting. Further they advocate close reading of the drama in which tone, vocal inflection, gesture and posture combine with words spoken and the multiple elements of mise-en-scène. They are very much inspired by V.F. Perkins, who in *Film as Film* (1972, p. 79), stated that in order to comprehend full meanings, "attention must be paid to the whole content of shot, sequence and film." Examining not just the physicality of performance but also the relationship of the performance to other elements of film style allows a fuller appreciation of the actor's labour (Raeburn & Shingler, 2013, p. 388).

The depth of close reading employed by Paul McDonald (2004, pp. 39-40), in his comparative analysis of Gus Van Sant's 1998 remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film, *Psycho*, led him to conclude that, "it is only in the details of the actor's voice and body that the meaning and significance of acting's contribution to film can be found." McDonald does caution that in order to become an established aspect of film analysis, close reading of actors work, the reading of the body and voice, even as elements of film style, must contribute to a wider understanding of the text in question. Sharon Carnicke (2006, p. 21) added to this that any reading of work will only be widely persuasive if the tendency to descriptive, subjective passages is avoided.

Carnicke contends that close analyses of actors as elements of *mise-en-scène* are overly reliant on descriptive passages of the type that she suggests avoiding (*ibid.*). Her work with Cynthia Baron, notably their 2008 book *Reframing Screen Performance* (2008), emphasises new methodologies of interpretation of screen performance by utilising works and theoreticians who had previously been seen as the domain of theatre studies. This work is the most important in the field since Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema*. The theoreticians used by Baron and Carnicke in their separate analyses are Stanislavsky, Delsarte and Laban and the authors stress throughout their work that the actors are making choices in their performances that these theories can assist in interpreting (2008, p. 165). It is an attempt to further substantiate the idea that film acting is a vital component of film that can be interpreted and understood in the same ways as theatrical performance instead of the more traditional semiotic or humanistic interpretations of film acting. This work moves the discussion of screen acting, the performance of actors on film, into new realms of discourse. Providing the means to analyse the conceptual logic of performance decisions marks the work as a milestone in the field and one that will surely be cited as often as James Naremore's work that this section began with. Baron and Carnicke are taking ideas from theatre studies and acting techniques as taught to actors and attempting to apply them to the interpretation of performance in film.

## Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine three main bodies of literature that are of concern for this thesis. Scotland on film and its critics; the voice and sound in cinema and finally, acting and interpretation of performance on screen. The section on Scotland raised questions of identity, reactionary diatribes and the inspiration behind the force majeure of critical work. The 1982 work, *Scotch Reels*, was so provocative that, as seen, it is still regarded as essential as a starting point for discussion of Scotland and Scottishness in film. The two ideologies of Kailyard and Tartanry will, somewhat inevitably, be of great importance throughout the rest of this thesis and their origins were examined in order to allow a greater understanding of the wider critical world's reaction to them as well as the application of theory to my following analyses of texts. The call for a reassessment of texts and, in some cases, a first assessment, is crucial to this thesis.

The section on sound highlighted the lack of writing on my specific research subject. There is work that considers similar periods of time but nothing that immediately matches my work. As the US has been the dominant global force in cinema it is not overly surprising that so much of the literature should be concerned with productions from that country. However, as shown, there is a growing body of work that is opening up avenues of exploration of UK produced films yet still nothing covering the period I am concerned with. There is an apparent lack of interest in films from before 1933. Critical writers pay greater attention to audience reception or stars and stardom than to questions of national identity and performances of those – this thesis will address the question of performance head on but will also garner information from reception of films.

Acting in the cinema and the interpretation of it has been shown to be a divided field of study. There are two dominant foci and it appears to have ever been thus. The landmark work of James Naremore opened the gates for deeper, more critically focussed work on the work of actors in film. The last twenty-five years or so have seen rising interest in the work of actors and this is now seeming to be moving into a new, cross-disciplinary realm.

The three fields that have come together in this chapter form the base of the rest of the thesis. The following chapter is my methodology and subsequent chapters will analyse a number of films from both the UK and the US in order to ascertain the

ways in which Scotland and Scottishness were represented and performed before, during and immediately after the transition to sound.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology

My approach to the topic of this thesis is to synthesise textual analysis with historically informed accounts of the films discussed. This thesis crosses boundaries: it sits within both performance analysis and film history. Common methods of performance and representation are identified and tracked across the period. Whilst the two geographic regions being examined are treated separately the analytical chapters follow a similar pattern: films are introduced in chronological order of release, with historical information intended to provide context before they are analysed. Analysing the films chronologically allows me to identify, establish, track and trace developments (or the lack thereof) of the performances and representations of Scottishness. In sum, this thesis is based on historically informed background and textual analysis of performances of a national identity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the criticism of representations and performances of Scottishness in cinema has not only been culturally biased but also has not been fully historically informed. Douglas Gomery, in 1976, pioneered work in the field of cinema histories and showed how fresh historical information could reverse thinking (Kuhn & Stacey, 2005, p. 3). His call to researchers was to not simply trust old sources or faulty information but to seek new evidence wherever it may be (1976, p. 40).

In that spirit the methodologies used in this thesis can be listed as follows: archive research, textual analysis and comparative analysis. Janet Staiger (2004, p. 127) argues that there is not a single research question that benefits from a singular approach as film history is not solely film history but rather, media history. For this reason there must be consideration given to economic and sociological events of the period being examined. This, in Staiger's view, allows both the researcher and the audience for the research to have a fuller understanding of the intentions and impact of the films studied. Annette Kuhn notes that many studies have been concerned with moving beyond the text to examine the social, economic and cultural forces that shaped the manner in which audiences came to see the films and the impacts that the films had on them (2002, p. 3).

Historically, in film studies, the context of film's production has been largely ignored. The cultural, historical and industrial factors are not generally considered

which, according to Kuhn, means that analysis is incomplete. Whilst this thesis is primarily concerned with the performance of Scottishness the three aforementioned factors have important influences, particularly given the historical nature of this research.

Kuhn (2004, p. 1227) noted that research methodologies in cultural studies, where not underdeveloped, are complicated, expensive and time-consuming and invariably yield disappointing, superficial findings. She argues that film studies scholars have been adapting methodological protocols from social histories of media to pursue innovative and distinctive lines of historical inquiry. Kuhn later observed that mixing and matching methods of inquiry prevails in work in the field (2007, p. 283).

### Archival and Nonfilmical Research

Part of the methodological challenge presented by this work is the use of archives. Sarah Street predominantly employs archive research in her work and advocates that there are a number of factors that must be considered by the researcher. Street's *British Cinema in Documents* (2002) provides a basis for examination of archival material. Her aim is to illuminate the ways in which such material that may have been previously regarded as extraneous can in fact contribute to a greater understanding of film in its historical and cultural context (p. 5). Street notes that the archive itself can also include materials such as oral histories, memorabilia, stills and posters for the films being examined which may prove useful to the researcher (p. 2). She advocates that in archival research there are a number of factors that must be uppermost in the researcher's mind. These include the type of document; authorship of the document and agency involved in it; the context and impact of the document; the relevance of the document to others of the time and the interpretive significance to the researcher (pp. 6-9).

The term "nonfilmical" is borrowed from Allen and Gomery's 1985 work, *Film History: Theory and Practice*. They suggest that for certain kinds of research film viewing is not necessary and that nonfilmic evidence can be used in order to outline the subject researched (1985, p. 38). I am adapting their idea slightly, in that where copies of films are missing, believed lost, I use archival material in order to illuminate the film's place in the period researched. Archives used include the National Library of Scotland, Moving Image Archive (NLSMIA) which holds a number of playbills,

private correspondence, promotional materials and oral histories amongst other sources, as well as the British Newspaper Archive. Further archival sources include biographies and autobiographies of some of the talent involved in the production of the films analysed.

In line with Allen and Gomery's suggestion trade magazines and newspapers of the period will also be examined (ibid, p. 41) sourced from other libraries, archives and collections. Annette Kuhn's *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, a study that covers a similar period to my work (the 1930s), emphasises the use of the popular press as a source, particularly contemporaneous publications that are concerned with film such as *The Film Weekly*, *The Picturegoer* or *Film Pictorial* (2002, p. 249).<sup>9</sup> These magazines offer information on films that were popular with the critics and to some extent cinema-goers, along with information regarding the stars working at the time.

As previously mentioned there is a methodological challenge posed by some of the films from my period which is that some are missing and others which are held are, for a variety of reasons, not available for screening. There are different methodological solutions in the absence of the text to be analysed including Sarah Street's ideas. Close archival analysis allows the researcher to build a picture of a film's history. However, an abundance of sources and documents relating to a text may only give the appearance of adding up to a coherent and fully formed picture of the film in question. Street therefore suggests utilising an approach that is dissective rather than accumulative: knowledge that can be used for cutting to the heart of the matter.

Archival research of this dissective kind in the absence of the text itself is used in various disciplines. Jason Jacobs 2000 work, *The Intimate Screen*, investigates British television drama from 1936 to 1953. In his words this is a, "a period for which virtually no retrievable examples of drama productions exist" (p. 1). Jacobs solved this problem using the BBC Written Archives along with previously published anecdotal and interview-based writing. A similar challenge was faced by Thomas Hajkowski, whose 2010 book, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-1953*, takes broadcast programmes as its subject and applies a historically informed

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<sup>9</sup> Kuhn's use of the word 'popular' relates to circulation figures. She states that the three periodicals named above had a combined indicative weekly readership in excess of one million.



analysis of their content. In the near complete absence of existing recordings of programmes Hajkowski also used the BBC Written Archives along with publications such as *Radio Times* and *The Listener*.

The dissective nature of this kind of research is supported by John Caughie (2018). Noting that not only was there the problem of absences of the filmic texts from the early cinema period but also that the formal practice of film reviewing or criticism was not yet established, he suggests that his knowledge of the films he discusses stems from what he refers to as “remote reading.” This term means the use of trade press and occasional local press articles regarding the showing of the films in the very early years of cinema. However, he cautions that most of these “reviews” were authored by exhibitors for potential audiences (ibid., pp. 147-148). The arrival of publications such as *The Picturegoer* and *The Film Weekly* allows a certain amount of distance from dedicated trade press reviews which, by the 1930s, are still notably concerned with potential audiences for films, as can be seen in Chapter 6.

Gledhill’s *Reframing British Cinema* (2003) provides useful support for the archival research method employed here. The exhaustive examination of primary source documents is used to flesh out and provide evidence for her contentions. A notable point regarding the similarity between her work and this work is that there are few people who will have seen all of the films discussed in this thesis. Occasional density of description and synopsis of films allows for a fuller picture to form around the texts, as Gledhill neatly shows.

## Selection of Texts for Analysis

In selecting films for analysis my approach follows Janet McBain who compiled a list of nearly 350 titles that were released between 1898 to 1990 that were categorised as “Scottish Films” dependent on two criteria: firstly, Scotland used as an identified setting to the story and, secondly, Scots characters playing a central or significant role in the narrative (1990, p. 233). The location of production is not important to McBain as it is the inclusion of Scotland as a location or Scottish characters in leading roles or a combination of the two that grounds a film as Scottish in her list. Whilst this approach may have its limitations it is intended in this thesis to be functional and serviceable rather than absolute.

My selection of texts to be analysed follows these criteria with the significant difference that I am restricting myself to films produced within two geographical areas, namely the UK and US. The selection of the individual films was subject to several other factors, chiefly their availability. Some are included owing to their generally attested positions of importance within film history yet others are included as they have been previously overlooked by scholars.

There are also some films I am analysing that McBain does not list: these include the Welsh-Pearson produced *Sir Harry Lauder in A Series of His World Famous Songs* (Pearson, 1931) and *Elstree Calling* (Charlot, Hulbert, Murray, 1930) a revue style film in which Will Fyffe appears. My work therefore expands the boundaries of McBain's list to include short films, such as the Lauder releases and one of the earliest Laurel and Hardy shorts. Lauder's work examined in Chapter 5, is in non-narrative film. This is included to reflect the impact and scale that this single performer had on the global view of Scottishness

Some films will be dealt with in more detail and depth than others. This is a necessary and valuable approach as that makes it possible to perform detailed analysis while retaining coverage of a reasonably wide and representative body of films.

None of the films to be analysed were fully produced in Scotland itself because initial research showed that there are very few available texts from the period I am investigating. This research, undertaken at the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive indicated that there were several films made in Scotland during the key years I am examining. Scottish Film Productions Ltd (1928) was a Glasgow based production company operated and managed by Malcolm Irvine who also directed their films. Irvine invented his own sound recording and reproduction system and by 1932 had completed four talkies, *Diplomacy*, *The Prizeman*, *The Scottish Italian* and *Nae Luck*. None of these films either appear in Gifford's *British Film Catalogue* or are listed by the BFI and it would appear that their sole proof of existence is the press cutting in the NLSMIA (The Sunday Mail, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 1932, 'A Glimpse Inside – Scotland's First "Talkie" Studio'). Trevor Griffiths (2013, p. 292) also refers to the press cutting as the sole source of information on the films. Of other press sources, Irvine rarely appears. Yet he does in *Film Weekly* (1932, May 6, p. 6) in an article about a studio he has built near Loch Lomond to produce a, "full-length all-Scottish talkie" in which readers are assured that, "the characters, with possibly one or two exceptions, will speak with a universally intelligible English

accent.” Of greater consequence for this study is that my preliminary research indicated that whilst there ostensibly was a burgeoning film industry with a body of production in Scotland during the years I am examining there are very few surviving films that can be viewed. Given that it is impossible to fully analyse films without seeing them, I decided to include films that were produced within the US during the period to be examined, although there are still very few from the key years of 1927 to 1933. In addition to this I felt that there would be value in examining the methods by means of which Scottishness was represented by foreign producers and so films from the United States of America are to be included. This allows for an examination of the manner in which the major global force in cinema production and distribution represented what was to them a foreign nation.

### Textual Analysis Approaches

Colin McArthur noted that, “no act of criticism is innocent,” (2003, pp. 2-3) yet Jonathan Murray suggested that there has been a tendency in Scottish film criticism to suggest that in the critic’s views, “no act of filmmaking is innocent,” (2006, p. 42) as the films and performers have rarely been viewed favourably by the majority of writers discussing them. However, rather than attempting to adjudicate between right and wrong ideas and interpretations as, after all, what critical agreement there has been has comprised of the condemnation of the representations and performances, I am concerned with recognising and tracing the methods and styles used to introduce and establish the representations and performances of Scottishness in cinema. As Mark Brownrigg (2003, p. 20) so eloquently phrased it, “The inspiration for the convention may come from elsewhere, but the enshrining of the convention emanates from rapidly standardised film practice,” and this thesis will scrutinise whether or not there was standardisation of the representations and performance of national identity.

I am concerned with performance in film which for the purposes of my thesis is the actor’s work, their performances. Performance theory and acting theory are separate fields yet they share a common terminology that may lead to confusion. Performance theory, most closely associated with Schechner (1988) and Turner (1988), is concerned with the performative nature of society, the manners in which ritual and events are governed by codes of behaviour and the generation of meaning to those involved or observing. Acting theory is concerned with the performance of an

actor in an unreal situation that is intended to pass as real for an audience. The audience know that they are watching an artificial reality yet there are signifiers of reality, such as costume, that aid the dissemination of meaning.

Placing the actor in the centre of the frame positions this thesis within the growing body of work that is reacting to the marginalisation of the performers on screen. Some of the methodological concepts to be employed here may be more comfortable sitting within analysis of stage acting where the actor's work may be more easily identified and certainly where some of the terminology I will employ and the ideas I will explore are more familiar.

The methods that will be employed to analyse the performances in the films are varied. Baron and Carnicke's 2008 book, *Reframing Screen Performance*, devotes a chapter to using Stanislavsky's method of physical actions in order to assess character interactions in film. There is, unfortunately, no suggestion of the limitations of using this method not only as a performance tool, but also as an interpretive one (pp. 208-219). It falls instead to Charles Marowitz (2014, p. 211) to suggest that amongst the limitations of Stanislavsky's method of physical action is that the cognitive process is preferred to instinctive behaviour by the actor and any spontaneity or truthful reaction is therefore at risk of being negated. Marc Silberschatz (2013, p. 20) also notes that the use of the method of physical actions can lead to a choreographed structure in which planned actions of one actor are met with the planned actions of another actor and therefore the scene being played has no integrity. One other pitfall of actions is that in their purest form they only have two perceptible movements: one intended to provoke a reaction and one resulting from the reaction (Spatz, 2014, p. 92).

Another note of concern, particularly for the analytical chapters of this thesis, sounded with using Stanislavsky is that Sharon Carnicke has also suggested that in some cases these may not always be the best tools. Carnicke introduces Coquelin's theory of acting and suggests that it may be of more use to non-actors in order to understand what it is that is being done by actors (2012, p. 186). She provides an overview of Coquelin for the non-actor and raises several interesting points. Coquelin realised that the use of naturalistic illusion to create character can lead to the individual not being recognised as an artist as they can be so convincing in the role that the public cannot dissociate the performance of the character from the reality of the person (Carnicke, 2012, p. 186). This is remarkable in its similarity to some of Stanislavsky's thinking, that the problem for the actor is essentially that if they are too

good or too bad at what they do then they cease being an actor (Kornhaber, 2011, p. 246). Carnicke utilises three of Coquelin's insights in her analysis: actors adjust to the conventions of the medium that frames their performance; naturalism is a style of acting as conventional as any other and, finally, actors use themselves as the material from which to create their characters (2012, p. 187). She suggests that naturalism in acting is entirely unnatural no matter the framing medium, be it screen or proscenium arch. However as for the question of actors playing themselves, in Coquelin's terms they do: in the same way that a musician plays an instrument, the actor plays their body and is fully engaged in the performance.

Yet there is one aspect of performance that has to be mentioned and that is the voice of the actor. Michel Chion (1999, p. 5) argued that the significance of the voice in film is due to human nature, our perception singles out the voice for attention above other elements of the soundtrack. This positions the voice as the primary point of aural identification for the audience at the expense of other audible factors such as music. However, as Victoria Lowe (2004, pp. 204) pointed out, "different historical and cultural conditions bring with them different meanings and emphases to the voice," as an element of the soundtrack yet the voice is fundamental to this thesis for a number of reasons. The transition to sound represented the first time that the Scottish voice was heard on screen. During the key years of the transition to sound filmic practices were being transformed and re-structured and the voice became a site of contested values. The debate regarding the use of the accent known as Received Pronunciation, as opposed to dialect, being employed by performers and directors was prevalent in the press (Lowe, 2004, p. 205).

The actors' voices located the characters in both social class and geographic locations for the audience. This would result in the audience feeling either incorporated into the text or excluded from the text: the voices they heard from the actors would either be familiar to them or alien to them, they were either deemed to be real or fake and the audience would react accordingly.<sup>10</sup> But, certainly in the case of Scottish characters in film, not all of the actors who were playing Scottish characters were Scottish natives and by definition did not have natural accents. Given though, that there are distinct differences between the accents of natives of

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<sup>10</sup> This reaction is generally one of suspicion directed towards the 'impostor.' In general terms there is an immediate awareness when a native accent is being imitated or a non-native voice is heard using the same language as a native, see Karen Schairer (1992, p. 318).

Edinburgh and Glasgow, let alone Dundee and Aberdeen it cannot truly be said that there is a singular Scottish accent so in what way could the accents that are being heard in early sound film be qualified?

I will attempt to evaluate performance in terms of accuracy of production and reproduction by utilising a simplified form of phonetic analysis. This will be employed across the performances of the actors in ensemble pieces in order to establish continuity of accent. In sociolinguistics a sample of a population is taken and given a number of words to say. These are recorded and then analysed in order to discover similarities and differences in pronunciation and in this way accents can be placed geographically.<sup>11</sup>

For my purposes, differences in commonly used words in scripts on the sound tracks of the films will be noted and compared. If the diegesis of the film were to be regarded as the population under survey then it could be said that characters whose accents are noticeably different from others in their locale were not performed accurately. As an example of a text to be analysed in this manner, *The Loves of Robert Burns* (Wilcox, 1930) is predominantly set in Ayrshire, with some scenes taking place in Edinburgh. The Ayrshire characters should have similar accents, they should pronounce the same words in the same manner. There should then be a noticeable differentiation in accents when the character of Burns goes to Edinburgh; Burns should stand out in those scenes not only because he is the lead performer but also because he has crossed the country and is mixing with people of a different social class and accent to that heard in rural Ayrshire.

This method of diegetic accuracy is not only reproducible across all films to be analysed in this thesis but can be applied to all films in order to ascertain the diegetic accuracy of the accents performed. However, Sarah Kozloff notes that in narrative film there is often a differentiation between the lead actor and the supporting cast in terms of voice and accent (2000, pp. 93, 151). Yet as long as this is borne in mind then the supporting actors' accents can be analysed to assess whether or not there is continuity and uniformity in performance.

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<sup>11</sup> This methodology underpins almost all phonetic research, see Van Els, T., & De Bot, K. (1987, pp. 148-150); Schairer, K. (1992, p. 310); Foulkes, P., & Docherty, G. (1999, pp. 7-13) and Kriengwatana, B., Terry, J., Chládková, K., & Escudero, P. (2016, p.3)

The final aspect of film that is to be examined in this thesis is the music employed in the films. David Burnand and Benedict Sarnaker's (1999, p. 7) use of music in narrative film as code for geographical location as well as racial and ethnic characterisations will be applied as opposed to extensive discussion in musicological terms of the music that is employed in the films. As film scores are notoriously difficult to obtain there will not be in depth consideration of these (Brownrigg, 2003, p. 16). However, the conventions Mark Brownrigg's established in his 2003 doctoral thesis, including instrumentation, will be considered. He proposes that conventions are amplified and sustained from film to film, and that is through the use and repetition of the elements of musical construction and instrumentation that these conventions become the norm in specific genres (2003, p. 20). This standardisation of representation in musical terms may also be applied to the national identity in film. As Nichola Wood (2012, p. 197) argues, most commonly acknowledged Scottish musical traits are linked to particular uses of instrumentation, language and melodic and rhythmic styles. The use of the bagpipe for example in a film score, whether diegetic or non-diegetic, is most closely associated with Scotland.

As the chapters build the conventions of performance and representations will be established and commented upon. Throughout the thesis these conventions will be examined in order to discover if they are sustained and amplified by successive film-makers and if there are differences in their performance across the geographical areas under consideration. The standardisation, or otherwise, of the performance of Scottishness will be identified by this thesis.

## Chapter 3

### More Than A Kilt? Scottishness in Early UK and US Cinema

This chapter is concerned with representations and performances of Scottishness in early UK and US cinema, from 1895 to 1927. In common with the other analytical chapters in this thesis, there are some well-known films that will be discussed and others that can be deemed to be more obscure, either featuring unknown performers or being incomplete. Some of the films have no available information about credits and where this occurs that is noted in the heading of the relevant section. The films are investigated in chronological order with the intention of identifying commonly employed tropes in the representation of the national identity. Newspapers and trade papers are used to present a historically informed account of the reception of some of the films. This reception is considered in tandem with analysis of the performances of Scottishness.

The question posed in Chapter 1 is worth repeating here. In a silent film, how does the audience know which of the performers is playing a Scottish character? The answer: “he’s the man wearing the kilt.” The reduction of Scottishness to costume as sole signifier of nationality is reviewed in this chapter. My framework for the analysis of performance in the films interrogated here is based predominantly on Roberta Pearson’s 1991 work *Eloquent Gestures*. In this book, Pearson identifies and codifies styles of acting in silent films of the Biograph Company, the studio of D.W. Griffith. My intention is to ascertain whether or not these styles of acting can be identified in films from other producers and establish if there was a difference between the performances in UK produced films and those from the US.

Pearson’s system is binary. Actors either follow the histrionic or the verisimilar code. For her, histrionic acting is dependent on posing and the holding of that pose for long enough to register meaning with the audience. The performers would use a range of conventional gestures and postures that were struck in isolation. This style of acting, the declamatory nature of it, was suited to articulating narrative events but inadequate for expressing the character’s inner thoughts and motivations (Swender, 2006, p. 7). The gestural palette could only accent the drama as it was taking place. Characters would remain very much two dimensional to the audience even though the audience would be highly aware of the meaning of the poses struck by the actors



on screen due to the frequent and standardised use of them. The histrionic code, derived from the work of Francois Delsarte, was based on a moral-philosophical form of self, inspired by Lavater's theory of physiognomy (Walker, 2006, p. 618). Physical gestures were codified by Delsarte in terms of meaning in order to isolate and convey the expressive mechanics of the human body as his essential belief was that every movement and gesture materialises inner thought (Szaloky, 2006, p. 200; Duckett, 2015, p. 29). Delsarte expected his students to be able to flow from one expressive posture to another, although the posture and gesture had to be held for long enough to convey its meaning to the audience (Kirby, 1972, p. 57). His method was so influential that in the early twentieth century significant numbers of audience members could have been expected to understand the poses and gestures with ease (Walker, 2006, p. 626). From 1870 to 1923 his training method for actors was the most popular in the USA. Indeed it was Delsarte's student, Steele MacKaye, who founded the first US professional acting school (Kirby, 1972, p. 55; Marsella et al, 2006, p. 3; Hetzler, 2007, p. 6; Caughie, 2014, p. 145).

The heightened sophistication and understanding of filmmakers in the creation of narrative fiction has been deemed to have exposed the limitations of solely employing the histrionic code (Burrows, 2003, p. 154). This expansion of cinematic techniques, specifically the use of the close-up shot, suggesting limitation in performance styles glosses over Delsarte's inclusion in *System of Expression* (1887) of a series of aesthetic exercises based around the components of the face in order to convey meaning.<sup>12</sup>

As production of moving pictures evolved, the apparent stillness of the histrionic code was superseded by the motion of the verisimilar. The verisimilar code is seen by Pearson as the rebuttal of the histrionic code and the introduction of realism into performance (1992, p. 30). There are no conventional gestures which are held in pose, rather the actor flows in order to express emotion. By ceasing the grandiose, gestural, theatrical performances in films, screen actors became less easily readable and the audience became more involved in lives of the people they

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<sup>12</sup> Delsarte has lessons and exercises on, amongst other facial features, 'The Active Agents of the Eye' – exercises which, if followed, would simply not be seen by the majority of a theatre audience. The close-up in cinema would, of course, allow every audience member to see if the performer was following Delsarte's instructions.

saw on screen (Burrows, 2003, p. 155). The effect of the new code was that characters in performance became not only more individuated but also more alive.

However, according to Pearson the shift between styles was neither consistent nor rapidly adopted. During the transitional period there were performances that would weave between both codes, regardless of the genre or character type being portrayed. As will be seen there are also examples of both codes being utilised in the same scene but by different actors.

### *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots (1895) and Dewar's Whisky (1897)*

These first two films were produced in the US. The earliest example of a Scottish story to be made into a film was *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* (Anon., 1895). The film was produced by the Edison Company in 1895 and is notable for several reasons. It is the earliest surviving representation of Scottishness in cinema, it includes one of the earliest effects shots when Mary's head is cut off and it was made in the USA. Beyond these three facts though, there is nothing within the film to suggest Scottish nationality or identity. There are no immediate signifiers used, such as tartan for Mary's clothing. None of the other actors who appear on screen are clad in tartan, although given that Mary was executed at Fotheringay Castle in Northamptonshire, England at the instruction of the English Queen, Elizabeth I it is unlikely that English soldiers would be dressed in tartan. This, if nothing else, suggests an attention to historical accuracy but the film is Scottish only in its title: there is nothing otherwise to link the characters with Scotland in any way.<sup>13</sup>

The second film record that survives from this period is an 1897 advert for Dewar's Whisky, which by this stage of the nineteenth century had successfully exported itself to the USA as one of the most popular brands of Scotch whisky. The advert is based on a print advertisement that Dewar's used, "The Whisky of His Forefathers" (Lockhart, 2011, Chapter 7, para. 27). In the print campaign a

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<sup>13</sup> The film is available to view online both from the NLSMIA (available at <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/4413>) and the Library of Congress (available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/00694120/>). Comparing the two prints of the film it can be said that the version held in the USA is of better visual quality but the most striking element of the comparison between the two is that they are mirror images. The USA held version has Mary approach the executioner's block from the right, the UK version from the left. The film may well have been put in backwards in its transfer from film to digital by NLSMIA.

gentleman is seen, wearing a kilt and pouring himself a drink. As he does this, the paintings on his walls, his ancestors, spring to life to get a drink as well (3.1).

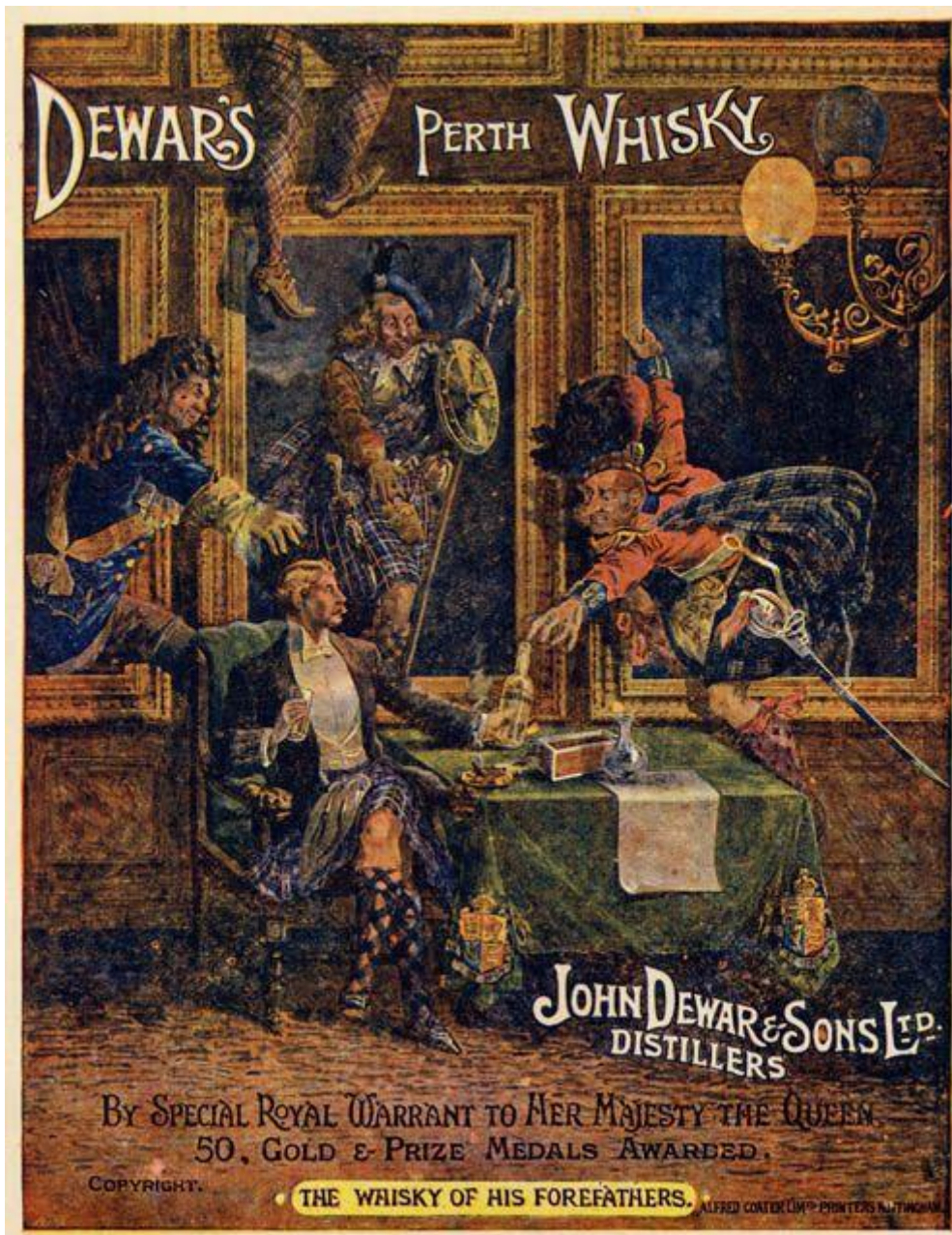


Figure 3-1. Dewar's Whisky: The Whisky of His Forefathers.

As with *the Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, this is a film that was produced in the USA, in this instance made by The International Film Company<sup>14</sup>, yet in this interpretation of Scottishness everyone is wearing tartan. This advert is significant for two reasons: firstly it is believed to be the earliest cinema advert made and secondly it is the first known use of tartan on screen to denote national identity

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<sup>14</sup> This is the only credit that can be sourced for the film. The actors are unknown, as is the director.

(Musser, 1990, pp. 169-170; Dixon, 2010, p. 77). The advert, viewed at NLSMIA, has a total running time of thirty-six seconds. It features three men prominently and a fourth man who appears in the edge of the frame on occasion. The action begins as the men are leaping to their feet to perform a stylised Highland fling. The paintings of the forefathers from the advert have come to life. Due to the different eras of the ancestors, the men that can be seen are wearing differing styles of clothing. One wears a tuxedo coupled with a kilt and sporran, he is the Scottish aristocrat of the print advert. Of the actors portraying the characters from the painting, one is dressed in a manner that suggests he is a Highland hero in the style of Rob Roy. He is holding a targe, a small Scottish shield, and wearing an unfortunately obvious wig. The third is dressed in a manner to suggest that he is in the military of the late nineteenth century. He wears a Busby hat with an army jacket and a kilt that stops half way down his thighs with a cutlass on his side. This tableau presents three images of Scottishness: the ordinary, middle-class whisky enthusiast; the romantic hero of the fiction of Sir Walter Scott and military personnel. The men dance their fling and move to sit down again as the film ends. As one of the earliest surviving records of Scottishness in film it can be said that the ideas of representing the nation were already following the popular notions of Scott's fictions and the ideology of Tartanry, as evinced by the marketing of Dewar's whisky. Scotland, as a visual conception, was already packaged for sale and this film does just that.

#### *Macnab's Visit to London* (1905) - no credits

Moving forward to the early twentieth century the next surviving film to be analysed is *Macnab's Visit to London* (Anon., 1905). This short film presents the Scot as a comedic figure, an alien presence that causes chaos and upset in the refined setting of London. The film is described in the database of the NLSMIA in a manner which leaves no doubt as to the nature of the representation: "Macnab, a comic caricature...after a display of 'characteristic' Scottish meanness in failing to tip the station attendants he arrives at his cousin's house where...he proceeds to destroy the drawing room with a golf club."

The character of Macnab reminds us that the Scot is identified as belonging to one of three categories in early films: in this case he behaves as one of the tropes yet he is clothed as one of the others. His first appearance on screen shows him wearing clothes that are reminiscent of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders service

dress. His first action on screen is to seek assistance in hailing a cab and at one point during the scene the actor playing Macnab stops and looks towards the camera: nods and moves further into the frame. He has been receiving direction from someone off screen, clearly he has been told he is moving too far and is going out of shot yet he makes no attempt to mask this in his performance. The other characters who appear are not dressed like Macnab: two men wear suits and straw boaters, one is dressed as a porter and the cab driver wears a black suit and top-hat. Almost immediately, Macnab's differentiation is emphasised through costume. He is out of place but he also functions as the focal point of the story: as the lead character he is clearly different from those who surround him. He also carries with him another item that can be seen as a signifier of Scottishness, his golf clubs.

Macnab's difference is emphasised even more strongly as he meets his cousin. Upon arriving at the house he is shown in by a maid and proceeds to wipe his face clean on his kilt before greeting the lady of the house. With no indication or direction to the audience to explain why he behaves this way he then stands with his female cousin and takes golf clubs from the bag. Before he has swung the club he has knocked over a table and smashed the vase that was on it. The Scotsman, whilst played with comic intent, is little more than a destructive force in the civilised society he is visiting. He smashes a ceiling light during his swing and whilst searching for his ball he uses a brief look direct to camera, along with a raised hand of triumph, to show us he has found it. The action proceeds to show him smashing through a wall above the fireplace in the room and climbing in after his ball. As he does so, the lady of the house holds on to his kilt in an effort to stop him yet all she manages to do is remove his kilt as he slips into the chimney breast.

The film cuts to a new scene with the intertitle, "He Scares the Maid" and we see a kitchen. The maid is sitting screen left and a policeman appears at the window screen right. As the maid is giving the policeman a cup of tea she hears something from the chimney breast and turns to it, then turns to address the camera to allow the audience to know that she is scared. Macnab falls down from the chimney and lands in front of her. The policeman clambers in through the window and gives chase to Macnab. The rest of the household come in to attend to the maid, the man of the house picking her up and carrying her out in his arms.

The final shot, preceded by an intertitle which reads, "Scotland For Ever", ends the film. Macnab runs down a path from the house, without his kilt but carrying his

golf clubs, pursued at a distance by the policeman and the household. A man appears with a wheelbarrow and Macnab is bundled into it by the policeman. The film finishes with the London household waving their goodbyes to him. Throughout the film the intertitles are written in English, not Scots. There is no dialogue presented by the characters thus the intertitles are merely introducing and setting the scenes as they occur in a manner similar to the Kailyard novelists use of the two languages.

Throughout the film the actors' performances are different dependent on their social classes. Macnab, the porters and the maid and policeman all use Pearson's verisimilar code. They do not use excessive posture or grand gestures to convey information, they are simply being. It is only Macnab and the maid that use direct address to convey information. The London household, the affluent middle-class, use their arms, moving them from the shoulder as stage actors would do to convey their emotions during the film. This film does not separate characters geographically through its use of performance codes but it does separate them by class: Macnab is military personnel, a working class man, whereas his cousin has travelled to London and found his fortune, becoming middle class.

The Scotsman in *Macnab* is an anarchic, destructive force. Macnab is presented as a threat to polite, refined society. Whilst he is dressed as the military figure, a figure that the UK was in a number of ways reliant upon for service in the protection of the Realm, as shown in army recruitment statistics in the First World War where some thirteen percent of the population of Scotland signed up to protect the nation (Colley, 1992, p. 316), this representation of Scottishness is little more than the untamed Highland savage let loose in the city. *Macnab* therefore combines two of the tropes of Scottishness in one character for the first time, yet still portrays a character that can be viewed as dangerous.

### *Auld Robin Gray* (Trimble, 1910)

There were two filmed versions of *Auld Robin Gray* released before 1927, of which only one, the 1910 Vitagraph Company production, is available to view. This film is a US production, the other version was produced in the UK by British Ideal and made in 1917. Both films are based on Lady Anne Lindsay's romantic poem of 1772 in which a young couple are deeply in love (Millgate, 2007, p. 423). The man, Jamie, is poor so he sets off to sea to make his fortune in order to return and marry his

sweetheart. He is thought to be lost at sea at about the same time as the female narrator's father has his arm broken on the farm they own. The broken limb leaves the father unable to perform his physical work and the mother is taken ill yet the character of Robin Gray appears and suggests he can make the family financially secure if the young woman marries him. She does so, only to discover that Jamie survived the shipwreck and has returned to wed her but she refuses as she is already married to Robin Gray. To then think of her former, true, love would be a sin against God and so she stays faithful to her husband as, as she says in the poem, "I'll do my best a gude wife aye to be, for auld Robin Gray he is kind unto me."

The poem proved to be popular and was set to music in the early nineteenth century by the Reverend William Leeves. The ballad is included in the Library of Congress's, "Popular Songs of the Day" section across a range of dates, from 1798 to 1874. Lady Lindsay was inspired to write *Auld Robin Gray* while separated from her sister and set this lament for a girl caught in a loveless marriage to a traditional song she and Margaret used to sing together. It became a cultural landmark, being passed down orally until – towards the end of her life – Sir Walter Scott identified her as the author and arranged its publication. William Wordsworth (1851, p. 285) called it one of "the two best ballads perhaps of modern times." The continuing popularity of the poem can be seen in *The Bioscope* review of the 1917 version, in which the source material is described as, "so well known that any great liberties with the text would be impossible."<sup>15</sup>

However it is the American version of 1910 that was produced by the Vitagraph Company and starred Florence Turner as Jenny, the narrator of the poem, and William Shea as Auld Robin Gray that will be analysed here.<sup>16</sup> Turner was amongst the first instances of film stars, she had not made her reputation on the stage prior to working in film, and was the most popular actress in the Vitagraph studio. Indeed her popularity in the USA was such that in a 1912 poll to find the most popular screen actress she garnered nearly 100,000 votes.<sup>17</sup> William Shea was a Scotsman, born in Dumfries in 1856. He moved to America and found work for the

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/tradepress/1235/> for full review.

<sup>16</sup> See NLSMIA record for *Auld Robin Gray*, available at: <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/4429>

<sup>17</sup> See the Women Film Pioneers Project from Columbia University at <https://wfpp.cdhrs.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-florence-turner/>

Vitagraph Company where he appeared in 176 films. The film is mostly considered as an early example of new framing shots of actors. As Eileen Bowser remarks, the film, “used a cut from stage distance to a shot of the actors at their waist level...modern day audiences are unlikely to notice them, but they were probably more striking then” (1990, p. 95). *Moving Picture World* on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1910, reviewed the film stating that it was, “a simple love story that has charmed the hearts of thousands...The Vitagraph Company has acted it with sympathy and the operator has secured excellent photographic quality. The picture will arouse the emotions and lead one to consider. The company deserves commendation for the excellence of the interpretation” (p. 996).

The film runs for just under nine minutes and uses intertitles taken from the original poem, left in the Scots it was published in. In keeping with the source text there are only three named characters in the film: Jenny, Jamie and Auld Robin Gray



Figure 3-2. *Auld Robin Gray*: Gray arrives.

himself. The opening scene shows Jamie meeting Jenny’s parents. Their home is simple, a spinning wheel sits by the open fire and Jenny’s father sits in a rocking chair smoking his pipe. Jamie wears the plaid over his shoulder, Jenny’s father wears a checked shirt and a tartan waistcoat. The tartan is simple and serves to

identify the men by nationality and social class. However, there is another element that is noticeable in the costume choices in the scene: it is only the men who wear tartan. When Auld Robin Gray appears he is voluminously wearing tartan (3.2). Compared to Jenny’s father the contrast is stark. Gray is opulent, his clothes shine where the other man’s are dull and lifeless. Gray is clearly wealthier than the people he is visiting and uses his clothing to let it be known.

An interesting point in the film’s performances comes in the scene where Jenny’s mother lies in bed with Jenny beside her and a doctor examining her. This scene highlights the similarities and discrepancies between performances in US studio films. There is nothing in the location, the bedroom of Jenny’s parents, to denote Scotland or Scottishness. The room is sparsely decorated and has only one



picture above the bed, of a shepherd tending his flock. The performances of the actors though follow an established template of the Biograph films' death scenes (Combs, 2012, p. 95). The mother is still, the doctor turns and is seen to say something to Jenny. Jenny's reaction leads the audience to think that the mother has died. She rises and stretches her hands towards the doctor then covers her mouth with one hand (3.3, 3.4). The doctor shakes his head and rises to leave as Jenny comes around the bed to him. She stands with her left hand supporting her face, her right hand in a fist against her left wrist. A baleful look is on her face and the doctor soothes her by placing his hand on top of her head, shaking his head again and leaving. Every gestural impression of this performance suggests that death has occurred.



*Figure 3-3. Auld Robin Gray: Jenny rises to the Doctor.*



*Figure 3-4. Auld Robin Gray: Jenny covers her mouth in shock.*

Turner is performing the physical equivalent of a psychological process: shock on hearing the news followed by denial and finishing with sorrow. Her performance straddles both the histrionic and verisimilar and, as such, is intended to signify

meanings to the audience. The meanings though are confused. The histrionic interpretation of the poses that Turner uses leads to the assumption that the mother has died but she has not, she is merely unable to work through illness and is resting in bed. The performance suggests that death has occurred but the narrative context reveals that it is worry and fear that is intended to be shown. Jenny is aware that her father cannot work as he has broken his arm and now that her mother cannot work either it is entirely her responsibility to keep an income flowing. Turner does not hold her poses for a full histrionic performance but instead has a fluid, graceful flow. This is problematic as even with the flow the suggestion is clear that a death has taken place. It is only when Jenny holds a mug to her mother's mouth that her mother stirs and it is made clear that she is alive.

Turner continues to use histrionic codification in the film. As Jenny discovers that Jamie's ship has been wrecked she clasps her hands together outstretched in a suppliant gesture, her eyes cast to the heavens (3.5).



Figure 3-5. *Auld Robin Gray*: Suppliant prayer pose.

Her clasped hands are brought to her chin and then pushed away from her as she realises the magnitude of the news. She swoons, one hand raised to her brow and she falls into the waiting arms of Robin Gray (3.6). The performance is large and the meaning is clear to the audience. Jenny is heartbroken at the loss of her love yet Gray is there to catch her as she falls.



Figure 3-6. *Auld Robin Gray*: Jenny Swoons.

After the wedding, Jamie returns to see Jenny and the excessive gesture and posturing of the histrionic code is utilised again. Turner's performance is near exquisite in this final scene. She shows disbelief that Jamie has returned and mixes this with fear and

joy. There is one outstanding moment of histrionic performance where she clasps a hand over her face and raises her head skywards before bringing her head down and away from him. This is the moment of her dreams becoming reality but also the moment her betrayal of Jamie becomes apparent. Jamie in this scene reacts in a similar performance style only when he is



Figure 3-7. *Auld Robin Gray*: Jamie's histrionic pose.

told that he cannot marry Jenny. This is the only histrionic moment by any man in the film. He turns away from Jenny and brings his left arm up across his face to hide his eyes behind his fist and holds this pose (3.7). He cannot bear to look at her or to be seen by her. This one movement shows a man broken and bereft. This difference in the performing styles of male and female actors is not unique to *Auld Robin Gray*. Male characters do pose but they do so in a manner that shows that their performances are not designed to communicate to the audience through a series of poses, but rather their performances interweave poses into moments of dramatic action. When males pose the purpose is to emphasise an emotion that is externalised as opposed to an internalised state of being (Swender, 2006, p. 11). Jamie leaves the scene and the film finishes with a heartbroken Jenny sitting on the porch. Robin Gray comes from behind the door and holds her close to him. He has heard their conversation and knows that Jenny will not leave as Gray, “is a guid man to me.” Jenny may love another but she has married Gray so she will not leave him as to do otherwise would be an abomination before God.

As a popular parlour ballad of the time there is little doubt that the majority of the audience knew the provenance of the story (Caughie, 2018, p. 149). Yet Scottishness in *Auld Robin Gray* is presented within parameters of costume to identify location. What is intriguing about the film is the decision to leave tartan as predominantly male clothing; Turner, as Jenny, only wears it once, whereas the men establish themselves through the cloth. The absence of tartan after the marriage to Gray suggests that the filmmakers decided that there was no longer the need to emphasise the location of the story, but rather allow the story to unfold to its finish without excess use of the signifier.

## *Mairi: The Romance of a Highland Maiden* (Paterson. 1912)

*Mairi: The Romance of a Highland Maiden* was produced in 1912 in Scotland, by Scottish talent. It is an amateur film and is believed to be one of the earliest narrative films to have been made in Scotland. The story is a tale of a young girl who is in love with a Revenue Officer who is caught up in a fight to catch smugglers and the film is notable for an early use of special effects in the scene where the male protagonists fight on a clifftop before one of them tosses the other off down to the rocks below.<sup>18</sup>

Were the film to be viewed without the knowledge of its setting then an audience could be forgiven for believing that they were watching a film produced in England or the USA. There are no gaudy tartan costumes, there are no landmarks that are easily recognisable. There is nothing, other than the subtitle of the film, to suggest any connection with Scotland at all. Yet the film is the only example of its kind that survives and it shows that these amateur filmmakers were more concerned with narrative structure in their story than in stylised, theatrical performances. They wanted to tell a story and were not reliant on props or costume to aid them in doing so. The location of the film is never given but it could be set anywhere there is a coast. In fact, the cast as well as the film's director, Andrew Patterson were known around Inverness as performers with local dramatic societies.<sup>19</sup>

*Mairi: The Romance of a Highland Maiden* is a remarkable achievement. There are no examples of histrionic acting within the film. In Pearson's terms of the transition from one code of acting style to another this places this amateur film as being far ahead of the change. The company were not concerned with overtly posing and using gesture to convey the meaning of their performances; rather they used the verisimilar, the realistic form of acting to serve the narrative's needs. None of the characters fall into the stereotypical traps so far seen in the foregoing performances and representations of Scottishness. None of them are caricature, they are people living and behaving in their fictitious situations as realistically as possible in the medium at the time. This is an amateur film that ranks alongside and even surpasses

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<sup>18</sup> More information on this can be found at <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/1331>

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.patersoncollection.co.uk/silent-film-mairi/>

professional productions in terms of techniques of the performers. A measure of the film's strengths and potential appeal to mass audiences is that it was acquired by Gaumont London for exhibition purposes.<sup>20</sup> For this narrative, Scottishness did not have to be emphasised in order to create interest in the film. This film stands out in the thesis as intriguing: it defies identification in terms of the established tropes of Scottishness yet it also has the unique position of being the only film created by amateur filmmakers.

### *Adventures of "Wee Rob Roy" No. 1 (Speed, 1916)*

This animated film of 1916 was directed by Lancelot Speed and runs for just under three and a half minutes.<sup>21</sup> Produced in the United Kingdom, the film is available to view in its entirety through NLSMIA<sup>22</sup> and it returns us to the notion of the Scot as a nuisance, a pest and an anarchist, much like the character of MacNab.

The stereotypes of Scottishness are abundant from the beginning of the piece. Wee Rob is wearing a kilt and a tartan tammy whilst playing the bagpipes. The film, in keeping with Kailyard structure, uses the Scots language in its intertitles (Sillars, 2009, p. 123). Rob's mother tells him to, "Stop that row", and, "awa' wi' ye." As Rob leaves he calls for his dog, Jock, to follow him and he embarks on his adventures. He commences by shooting a bird with his pellet gun which results in the bird falling from its perch in a tree. Rob then shoots the head of a man who is dozing by the tree and moves on to shoot a rabbit that is perched on the side of a well.

The action moves on to show us the second stereotype in the film: a bearded, kilted man playing golf, his caddy beside him wearing a Tam O'Shanter hat. This man serves no purpose other than to show that all men in Scotland dress in tartan kilts and play golf. Wee Rob continues his disregard for society by stealing a car and running over a policeman, knocking down an angler and pushing a tractor off a bridge before he loses control of the vehicle. In the closing scene of the cartoon, Rob has been captured by natives in Africa and is sent home by being shot out of a cannon. Lest there be any doubt as to where he lands we are provided with another

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.patersoncollection.co.uk/silent-film-mairi/>

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b9eeb2fd3>

<sup>22</sup> See <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/0635>

two signifiers of Scotland on his arrival. Firstly, he lands on thistles and secondly, there is a Kirk in the distance. This can only be Scotland.

Although an animated film that is intentionally showing the Scot as a comedic figure, *The Adventures of Wee Rob Roy* further reinforces the idea that the Scotsman is recognisable through his clothing and his behaviour. The difference of the Scottish people is underlined by the use of Scots on the intertitle cards. This would be easily recognisable to the majority of audiences due to the global popularity of Kailyard novels (Nash, 2004, p.132). Wee Rob stands out as a person with no respect for authority or indeed possessing any morals. He gleefully engages in wanton destruction and acts of violence and criminal damage with no rebuke from anyone other than his mother who, at the very beginning of the film, told him off for playing his bagpipes. The Scot here, much like Macnab, is little more than a threat to polite society.

### *Bunkered at Blackpool* (Lauder, 1917)

*Bunkered at Blackpool* was produced by and starred Harry Lauder.<sup>23</sup> The film is believed to be not only incomplete but also rarely to have been shown to the public and it can be viewed only on site at NLSMIA. Throughout the film, Lauder is performing as the *character* Harry Lauder. Performers have a range of performance signs, a repertoire that is unique to them, and which is systematically highlighted in films, which has been referred to as their “idiolect” (Naremore, 1988, p.4; Drake, 2016, p. 9). I would argue that *Bunkered at Blackpool* is the first true example of Lauder’s idiolect on film, the signs that are most closely associated with him as a performer.

*Bunkered at Blackpool* combines the tropes we have seen so far: Tartanry, a lack of respect for the environment, the Scot as a comedic anarchist and golf. However the film also uses its intertitles to show the difference of the Scots language to Standard English: scenes are introduced in English, but when Lauder is seen to speak the intertitles are in Scots. Scots can be viewed as representative of the nation

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<sup>23</sup> Lauder did not become Sir Harry Lauder until 1919, when he was knighted in recognition of his fund-raising efforts during World War I (Huxley & David, 2012, p. 19).

as part of a wider discourse that features language as a medium of not only tradition but also self-presence (Hames, 2013, p. 209). Corey Andrews (2006, p. 62) notes that in the late eighteenth century Scots was not regarded as a language but only as a mere local dialect. Andrews suggests that Scotland reversed the normative process of language and national identity formation; language becomes an instrument of national cohesion as over time a close link is established between a polity and its common language. In Scotland's case, the Scots language seen in poetry, novels and now on intertitles in films is a non-national language that is used to articulate and perform national identity (Andrews, 2006, pp. 64-65). Lauder's Scottishness is deliberately underlined through this use of Scots in intertitle cards.

The film opens with Lauder, wearing a ribboned coat and feathered bonnet, standing before a tartan backdrop. He plays up to camera by nodding and winking. He smokes his pipe and is coming across as a convivial Scotsman. The costume and backdrop leave no room for the audience to think he is of any other nationality. His use of direct address at the beginning of the film creates an immediate air of intimacy with the audience (Brown, 2013, p. 13). This is the character Harry Lauder, the popular music hall entertainer, looking each member of the audience directly in the eyes simply by looking into the camera. The nodding and winking are performative elements that allow a visible difference between actor and character as from the outset of the film Lauder's character is presented as honest, friendly, and trustworthy, but most of all for the audience he is familiar, a known entertainer (Clayton, 2012, p. 51).

The film takes two distinct tones: the first part of the film is the journey from the hotel to the golf course, the second is the events on the course. The journey to the course sees Lauder and the rest of the cast enter their car and drive through the streets. Crowds are everywhere and Sir Harry makes sure he is seen shaking hands and being a gentleman.<sup>24</sup> His kilt is only briefly glimpsed as he walks to the car through the crowd. Once in the car, Lauder is not obviously Scottish. He is seen from

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<sup>24</sup> An intertitle announces during the journey, "Passing wounded soldiers, Lauder greets the boys." For all of Lauder's reputation of thriftiness he is never anything but generous with his time for soldiers. Throughout WWI, Lauder was passionate in driving recruitment for the armed forces and set up the Harry Lauder Million Pound Fund to raise money to assist injured service personnel. Lauder's commitment to this extended through the rest of his life. This film was made only a few months after Lauder's own son was killed in action during WWI.

the waist up wearing a waistcoat, tie and jacket along with a Homburg hat. One element of Scottishness is foregrounded by two of his companions. These men were credited in the titles as “2 Kilties,” the term simply meaning a man serving in a Scottish regiment in the British Army: they are in the rear of the car wearing glengarry hats.

The arrival at the course allows us to see the Kilties are in full military uniform. From this point on the film changes tone to become a comedy. Lauder is now the clown, no longer the great benefactor of the service personnel. The intertitles start to use a spelling that suggests Lauder’s voice: “Whare’s ma caddie?” introduces a sequence in which the men approach the tee and take their shots. Lauder is the chief clown, addressing the ball and taking his swing whilst still wearing a set of golf clubs, one of which is comically long. Naturally he misses the ball completely on his first attempt, much to the amusement of the crowd. As he returns to address the ball once more the next intertitle gives away the joke before the audience see it: “I’ve lost the head o’ ma club.” This very short sequence sees Lauder beating his caddie with the headless club as the crowd cheers him on. Upon retrieving the head of the club the caddie attaches it back to the club and Lauder beats him again. Here the Scotsman is a comic savage, using the golf club as a weapon and means of destruction in much the same manner that Macnab did when visiting his cousin.

The bunker, of the title, is also comedic in intent. The bunker is clearly not a bunker but the sand dunes at the beach of Blackpool. Lauder, the Scots clown has hit his ball onto the beach and tries to play back from it. This leads to the final intertitle in Lauder’s voice, “I’ll gie ye something, for laughing at me” after which he raises his fist to the crowd in a threatening manner as they laugh and applaud his ineptitude. Slapstick and buffoonery are the main weapons in the comic arsenal of the film. Lauder is both a destructive force, a bully and comically inept at golf. Once the round of golf has finally been completed, the company assemble at the clubhouse for a drink and the kilties and Sir Harry spontaneously begin a Highland fling.

The film closes as it began with Lauder wearing the same clothes in front of the same tartan backdrop. He has kept his glass and toasts the health of the viewing audience in direct address to the camera. The repeated use of direct address here is an attempt by Lauder to show the similarities between the playing space of the screen and that of the music hall. As Jon Burrows (2003, p. 167) suggests, the mass



audience that cinema was attracting would have been used to the codes and conventions of the music hall and the use of direct address was common in that environment. Lauder is arguably following suit with his smiles and looks to camera: as Burrows suggests, performers were figuratively reaching out to an absent, anonymous audience in cinema. Direct address was a function of the music hall, where it was used as a customary form of interaction with a familiar audience.

Lauder's performed Scottishness here is far from subtle. His use of tartan and Scots language serves to underline his nationality yet also plays to his established image in the public perception. Chapter 5 provides in depth examination of his career and some of his methods but this early example of Lauder's film work shows the duality of the performer: respectable and serious when dealing with the serving troops and anarchic and destructive as the Scots clown on the golf course.

### *Pride of the Clan* (Tourneur, 1917)

*Pride of the Clan* (Tourneur, 1917) was a joint production by Artcraft Pictures Corporation and Mary Pickford Film Corporation of the USA and stars Mary Pickford as Marget MacTavish in a tale set on the west coast of Scotland. Pickford by this point was the highest paid female star in movies and had already been popularly referred to as "America's sweetheart." Fred, reviewing the film in *Variety* (1917, January 5, p. 6) described the film as, "thoroughly satisfactory." Another columnist for *Variety*, writing as "The Skirt," describes the picture as telling, "a childish story that any child might have written." Ray, reviewing the film in *The Billboard* (1917, January 13, p. 52) states that the film is, "as fine a thing as this charming screen star has ever done. A simple plot but very effective and well directed."

The plot itself is that the MacTavish clan chief is killed in a fishing accident and his daughter (Marget, played by Pickford) becomes the chief, as is the way of the clan. She falls in love with Jamie, who is described in the opening character background titles as, "with the clan but seems not of it." He turns out to be the lost son of nobility, Lord Dunstable, and his father insists that Marget is not good enough for his son so forces her to break off the engagement. She does this and then sets out to sea where her boat starts to sink and she is rescued by Jamie. Dunstable sees the error of his ways given the love Jamie and Marget have and the film ends with the couple reunited.

The film's representation of Scottishness can be seen as a continuation of the mode established in *Auld Robin Gray*; that is, there is an implicit acceptance of locale in the film that is not solely highlighted through the costumes of the characters. Pickford wears tartan once she becomes the chief of the clan MacTavish but here it is a status symbol. She is the leader of the clan and tartan is used as her uniform to denote this. Indeed tartan does appear prominently on other characters in one section of the film and its use is somewhat jarring but effective at underlining the location of the film as Scotland. During a ceilidh, which as Brownrigg (2007, p. 89) notes, immediately denotes Scotland, there are two pipers seen both of whom wear tartan. They are, however, unlike any other character in the film dressed in a stylised military uniform of kilts, doublet tunics and Glengarry hats. This choice of costume reflects Cheape's (2010, p. 17) assertion that the classic image of the Scotsman was the kilted military Highlander and the film uses this imagery in tandem with the ceilidh itself to reinforce its location.

A more subtle manner of representing Scotland and Scottishness is found in the use of intertitles. As in Kailyard novels narrative is in English and reported speech is in Scots. We see Marget rousing the clan to attend church on the Sabbath and we read her saying "Ye're all gangin' straight for perdeetion an' ye'll finish up in Hell," shortly before she demands, "bring me the MacTavish whip! I'll be my fayther's own bairn, I'll fill the Kirk!" The use of Scots locates the characters more fully for the audience who would have been used to reading Kailyard novels and the writers are well versed enough to know of the Dominie, the Scots term for a schoolmaster normally affiliated with the Church of Scotland.

Local Scottish newspapers praised the film. *The Courier* (1917, September 25, p. 2) noted that Pickford, "is seen in the character of a Scottish lassie, and right worthily does she fill the role." *The Falkirk Herald* (1917, October 24, p. 3) review told that, "she acts with her usual vivacity and versatility." It goes on to discuss the setting of the film stating: "it is a fair representation of the rocky shores and fertile valleys of 'bonnie Scotland.'...the scenes depicted are sure to stir the blood of all true Scotsmen." Yet it is a correspondent to *The Picturegoer* (1917, August 11, p. 207) who really enthuses about Pickford's performance: "I had never seen perfect film acting before. I thought I had of course. But now I know that there is no one but Mary who can give me such perfect pleasure again."

Pickford's performance, much like Florence Turner's, straddles the line between histrionic and verisimilar. Pearson (1992, p. 50) notes of Pickford that she mastered the verisimilar code whilst working under D. W. Griffith for Biograph. Yet in *Pride of the Clan* it is her use of the histrionic code that stands out. Her declaration of horror and despair follows conventional histrionic performance lines (3.8). Her hands are clasped in prayer as she screams at the sky, her head drops and she covers her face before striking out skywards with both hands and finally introduces the classic swoon indicator of one hand across her forehead, palm out and fingers curled. Other characters are not afforded similar screen time as the star but again, similarly to *Auld Robin Gray*, male actors do not use the histrionic code other than for emphasis.

Scottishness in *Pride of the Clan* is presented as a reality; these are the conditions of existence within the diegesis. The signifier that is tartan is not overly relied upon. The combination of the ceilidh with the military figures is the film's least subtle moment in terms of reminding the audience of the location of the film but this is a fleeting moment. It is the use of Scots on the intertitles, in a newly written story as opposed to a recitation of a love song such as *Auld Robin Gray*, that help make this stand out as an example of an American produced film attempting to be accurate in its portrayals and representation of Scottishness.



Figure 3-8. *The Pride of the Clan*: Mary Pickford employs pure histrionic acting in order to communicate her character's despair and eventual slide into exhaustion.

*I Love A Lassie* (Lauder, 1920)

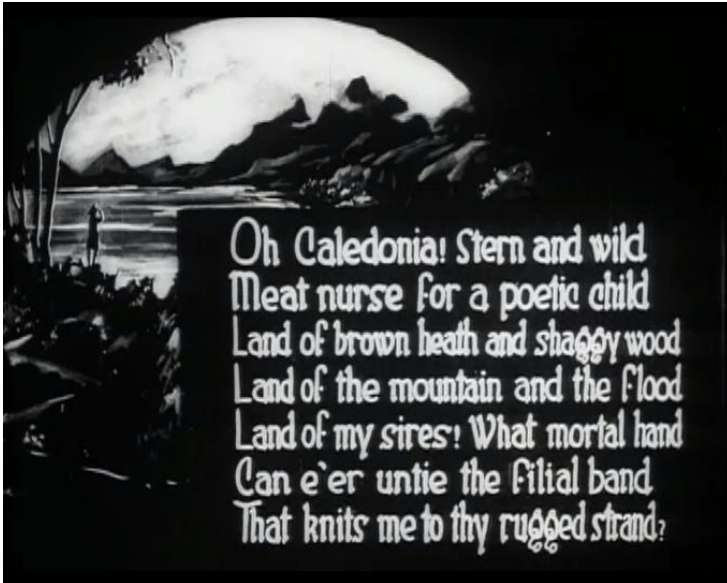


Figure 3-9. *I Love A Lassie*: Sir Walter Scott, quoted at the opening.

Following his early screen venture with *Bunkered at Blackpool*, Sir Harry Lauder established Harry Lauder Productions around 1920.<sup>25</sup> Under this name his company produced at least one film starring Lauder himself. Lauder features prominently in Chapter 5 and this film is included here in order to allow me to continue to interrogate the

representations and performances of Scottishness in early cinema. *I Love A Lassie*, otherwise known as *All for the Sake of Mary* was made partly on location in Argyllshire, using some local, amateur actors.<sup>26</sup> The NLSMIA holds the first reel of this film, while a longer version is held by the BFI and can be viewed in London. Based around the narrative of one of Lauder's more popular songs the film wastes no time in establishing its national identity. Its opening intertitle is the second stanza of the sixth canto from Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of The Last Minstrel* (3.9).<sup>27</sup>

Lauder appears bedecked in tartan. A kilt and sporran along with a Tam O'Shanter hat and a lengthy checked scarf leave little room for an audience to come to any conclusion about the character's nationality. But this costume serves to differentiate him from the other male characters in the film: he is the only one that wears tartan of any kind and also the only one to sport a kilt. This serves two purposes: firstly, it allows Lauder, as the star of the film as well as its writer and

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<sup>25</sup> See <https://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/blog/where-are-they-now-early-scottish-feature-films/> for more details.

<sup>26</sup> The opening titles of the film tell us that, "the players are all local people with no experience of acting.....few have been inside a cinema and several have never seen a train."

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/breathes-there-man;>  
<http://www.bartleby.com/270/3/1.html>; <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/longpoems.html#lay>  
amongst others for the full text.

director, to stand out from the other cast members and secondly, it is congruent with his popular image of the time.<sup>28</sup>

It is unfortunate that only the first twenty minutes of the film survive, ending abruptly with Lauder rowing across a loch, having decided to seek his fortune outwith his community. Lauder plays a lowly shepherd, Sandy, who falls in love with a young woman, named Mary. The narrative of the film is pure Kailyard, in Shepherd's (1988, p. 130) terms: the setting is a rural community; there is an imprecise chronology to events; the protagonist has to overcome odds against him and he will, we suspect, eventually return and triumph.

Lauder's exit across the loch at the end of the surviving footage provides an interesting point in the film and its portrayal of Scottishness. When he decides to leave the rural community he changes his clothes. The kilt and sporran along with the checked scarf are rejected and he leaves wearing trousers, a shirt and a jacket. This makes his character conform to the dress code of the other males in the film but also suggests that Sandy knows that the greater world is not equipped for a man dressed as he had been. In order to conform the kilt has to go and the young man rows across a loch to begin his quest for riches in the greater world. The cartoon Scotsman, the kilt wearing, well-meaning Highland image is rejected for the mundane, drab clothing of normal society. Pam Cook (1996, p. 25) noted that the use of tartan in film was indicative of a yearning nostalgia, a culturally conservative desire for simpler times.

### *Annie Laurie* (Robertson, 1927)

*Annie Laurie* (Robertson, 1927) is a film that has provoked a vitriolic reaction from critics. Forsyth Hardy noted that Hollywood's treatment of a traditional Scottish story, "might have been a kind of warning of things to come" (1990, p. 6). Indeed he decries it as finding the road to travesty the easiest route to take and as such the film may be seen as the first of the great Hollywood re-imaginings of history and also one of the first great filmic slanders on the people and history of Scotland (Hardy, 1990, p. 9; Stenhouse, 2009, p. 172). *The Evening Telegraph* in Dundee described it as

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 5 for further discussion of Lauder's career and methods.

having, “a facility and an ignorance which are amazing” (1928, April 3, p. 8) while the *Courier and Advertiser* (also Dundee) decided that the connection between the song and the events at Glencoe was, “a secret known only to the American producer responsible for the film” (1928, April 3, p. 8). To expand on this, Hardy (1990, p. 9) refers to a contemporary review of the film which he states, “spoke about ‘the very regrettable affair’ at Glencoe, of the participation of a heroine in ‘incidents which occurred some years before she was born’ and of her being serenaded by ‘a song which was composed some years after her death’.”<sup>29</sup>

Directed by John S. Robertson and starring Lillian Gish, *Annie Laurie* was released in the US in May 1927. The film depicts the story of the massacre of Glencoe, 1692, in which the MacDonald clan were slaughtered by the Campbell clan. The actual recounting of events is not too far removed from history: the MacDonalds and Campbells had a lengthy history of feuding between themselves. In 1691 all Scottish clans were ordered to sign an oath of allegiance to the English King, William of Orange. The MacDonald clan were delayed by bad weather from signing the oath and so as an act of retribution the clan was put to the sword by the Campbells acting on the King’s instructions.<sup>30</sup> The Hollywood embellishments were the character of Annie Laurie herself and the engineering of a romantic triangle between her and the two heirs to the MacDonald and Campbell chieftains respectively.

The film is a remarkable example of an imagined Scotland. Hollywood took a story based on fact and made it a fantasy. The MacDonalds are always seen in kilts. Every one of them wears a kilt and a great many of them wear animal skin gilets. These are the Scotsmen of the wild, the savages. As Russell Simpson’s character, Sandy MacDonald, is wont to remind the audience as well as the other characters in the film, “wild men hae a way wi’ wimmen” which is repeated often through the film and acts as variously a warning and a triumphant utterance. Sandy is the comic relief

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<sup>29</sup> As Hardy said, the Hollywood treatment of *Annie Laurie* should have been a kind of warning of things to come. Mel Gibson’s *Braveheart* (1995) played a similar game with Scottish history. In that film it is implied that William Wallace had sex with Isabella of France with the result that Wallace is portrayed as being the father of her son, Edward III of England. In reality, Isabella was 9 years old at the time of Wallace’s death and Edward was not born until several years after that.

<sup>30</sup> See [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/union/trails\\_union\\_glencoe.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/union/trails_union_glencoe.shtml) for further information on the Massacre of Glencoe.

in the film: he provides moments of amusement through his behaviour, he is the Scottish clown in this, but he is as prepared to fight for his clan as the next man.<sup>31</sup>

The Campbells are presented as more elegant. They wear tartan but this is of a more ceremonial nature; they wear it for effect as opposed to everyday clothing. The Chieftain of the Campbells is seen wearing a periwig, popular since the Restoration of Charles II. The Chieftain of the MacDonalds wears a long beard and has flowing, untamed hair. This differentiation between the savage MacDonald clan and the civilised Campbell clan is underlined throughout the film in various ways. The MacDonalds are prone to using immediate violence to solve a problem where the Campbells use subterfuge and bureaucracy. During the sequence in which the clans gather at the Laurie's household the MacDonalds are left to sleep in the forest at the behest of the Campbells, the reasoning being that they are savages anyway. The Laurie family is presented as neutral both in the narrative and their costumes. Annie, as the female lead character does wear fine clothing, more civilised and moneyed than the other women on screen, until she falls for the MacDonald and then she wears tartan. Specifically his tartan which then operates as a sign of ownership. The female may be the lead character but there is a suggestion that within the clan system she is the property of whoever's tartan she wears.

The performance styles, as with other films in this chapter, vary. Lillian Gish was not only one of the leading stars of Hollywood cinema of the time, she was also trained in Delsartean technique. D.W. Griffith, the most renowned director working for the Biograph Company, sent his actors to the Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Arts for their training (Preston, 2009, pp. 215-216). Gish's early career in film saw her in parts where she would be rescued by men to preserve her chastity such as *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (Griffith, 1912) and she became seen by the public as a symbol of virginal innocence (Fishbein, 1987, p. 56), although Arthur Lennig (2011, p. 445) suggests that there is one moment in his direction when Griffith hints at his desire for her which appears in 1918's *Hearts of the World*.<sup>32</sup> In *Annie Laurie*, Gish plays a woman who rescues an entire clan of men and survives to marry their

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<sup>31</sup> Simpson was singled out for praise by the reviewer for *The Evening Telegraph*, on April 3, 1928 as being, "the best and most natural of the cast" (p. 8).

<sup>32</sup> Lennig describes a camera movement that pans along Gish's legs which is immediately followed by a shot of the male lead (Bobby Harron) looking at them with desire.

leader, Ian MacDonald; Gish's innocent virgin who is rescued by men is replaced by a strong, feisty Scots lass who takes action to suit her needs and to save the man she loves.

Roberta Pearson (1992, p. 50) and Johannes Riis (2004, p. 14) both identify Gish as a performer who adapted to use the verisimilar code early on yet there are moments that are purely histrionic in *Annie Laurie*. These vary dependent on the content of the scene. There is one moment of high drama near the end of the film. Ian MacDonald is captured by Duncan Campbell and his men. As he is made to walk past them, his captors strike him with their swords, scarring him. Annie Laurie runs to try to stop the men torturing her love and Lillian Gish renders a fully histrionic performance for this. With no sound to reflect her emotions, her face is a mix of panic and terror. Eyes and mouth are wide open and she holds the poses for long enough for their meaning to register with the audience but it is just too long to qualify as verisimilar performance. The rigidity and ostensiveness in this scene is, in Naremore's terms, a presentational moment in an otherwise representational performance. In the rest of the film she flows, she does not need to resort to the histrionic performance training that she had received. It is only in the scene of high drama, where her voice could be amongst the most important elements of the film that she resorts to a theatrical, expressive acting style.

This inconsistency in the style of performance was noted by some critics. Robert Sherwood described her performance as, "quite offensive" (1927, June 2, p. 30); F.G.S., writing in *The Daily Mail* noted that she was, "typical Lillian Gish" (1928, March 27, p. 8) and Gish herself was not happy with either her performance or the film as a whole. She had not chosen to make *Annie Laurie* but was contractually obliged and was very unhappy with the whole project, dismissing her work in the picture as being neither remarkable nor memorable (Brownlow, 2005, p. 169). She is quoted by Stuart Oderman as saying, "*Annie Laurie* was not a success. I didn't ask to make it, and I certainly had no control over any part of it" (2000, p. 179). Forsyth Hardy (1990, p. 9) notes that Gish dismissed the film with a single sentence, "Fans always wrote asking why I didn't smile more often in films; I did in *Annie Laurie* but I don't recall that it helped much."

Scottishness in *Annie Laurie* is presented in character tropes that are already well-established: there is the comic relief, Sandy; the brave Highland warrior, Ian MacDonald, and the aristocratic type, Duncan Campbell. However, it is the



aristocratic, English-supporting Campbells who are presented as the enemy, the Scots who cannot be trusted by other Scots who are to be feared whereas the savage Highlanders are celebrated as being heroic and noble. Hollywood here may reflect the history of the Glencoe Massacre with a little degree of accuracy but is content to present the, by now, standard characterisations of male Scottishness.

### *Putting Pants on Philip* (Bruckman, 1927)

The final film to be examined in this chapter, *Putting Pants on Philip* (Bruckman, 1927), is chiefly notable for being the first time that Stanley Laurel and Oliver Hardy were paired together on screen as a double act.<sup>33</sup> Prior to this film Hardy was a stock company player while Laurel had been performing for many years and worked as Chaplin's understudy on American vaudeville tours (Kamin, 2006, p. 35). In 1919 he had portrayed an American attempting to integrate himself into Scottish culture (McCabe, 2004, p. 55). That film, *Hoot Mon!* (Roach, 1919), is a missing, believed lost production, that presents stereotypical ideas about the Scottish people: Laurel plays an American visiting Scotland who decides to buy a tavern called Ye Blue Coo Inn and then tries to adapt to Scottish culture by wearing a kilt and playing golf (Okuda & Neibaur, 2012, p. 25).<sup>34</sup> Then in 1925 Laurel, along with the Scottish actor Jimmy Finlayson, played rival Scottish clan members in *Short Kilts* (Jeske, 1925), a film that portrays the Scots as rowdy, petty, clad entirely in tartan and childish to an extreme.<sup>35</sup> Laurel's early contribution to the performance and representation of the national identity was reliant on cliché and stereotype in order to get a laugh.

*Putting Pants on Philip* does not portray Scottishness in any new manner but it does feature a number of points of interest sparked by the portrayal of the Scots

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<sup>33</sup> It is the first official pairing of Laurel and Hardy made, not the first to be released although the two had appeared in the same films previously (Barr, 1968, pp. 9, 13; Gehring, 1990, p. 62).

<sup>34</sup> This is not to be confused with *Hoot Mon!* (Beaudine, 1926), a Bobby Vernon short comedy in which Vernon plays a car salesman involved in a feud with two Scottish clans and features the same castle as *Annie Laurie* as a Scottish location, or *Hoots Mon!* (Neil, 1939) a UK comedy starring Max Miller about a London comic who tries his hand out in the North. Bob Hope and Bing Crosby perform a routine called *Hoots Mon* in their sixth 'Road' film, *Road to Bali* (Walker, 1952), in which they appear to have been provided by the locals with full Scottish kilt regalia and bagpipes whilst on a tropical island, for no discernible reason at all other than to perform the routine.

<sup>35</sup> *Short Kilts* includes a number of set piece gags that mostly involve Jimmy Finlayson having items smashed over his head or having his head pushed through picture frames.

abroad and their assimilation into US society. The film has a simple plot: a Scottish relative of an American gentleman arrives in the US for a family visit but he is wearing a kilt which attracts unwelcome interest from the locals and he is taken to be bought a pair of trousers. In contrast to the majority of the duo's body of work, the two men do not play characters called Stanley and Oliver: Hardy plays J. Piedmont Mumblethunder and Laurel is Philip.

The opening intertitle establishes the first of the Scots stereotypes employed in the film: thrift. The film is, it tells us, "The story of a Scotch lad who came to America to hunt for a Columbian half-dollar – his grandfather lost it in 1893." The Scots are presented initially as comic characters: two men are seen walking down a gangplank from a ship, dressed identically in kilts, Tam O'Shanter hats, tan jackets and bowties (3.10).



Figure 3-10. *Putting Pants on Philip*: Philip and the old man personify Scottishness across generations.

They wear the same tartan but one of them is much older than the other. The younger is Philip, the old man (who will reappear later in the film) shakes his hand farewell and disappears into the crowd. Both men have walking sticks and both sticks are *Corylus avellana*, a contorta plant commonly known as "Harry Lauder's walking stick."<sup>36</sup> The stick points to Lauder's influence

on perceptions of the Scottish man in the USA. As one of his most oft employed props the walking stick acts as a signifier of not only nationality but also of character intent: Lauder was a clown and a jester; and people using this prop will be viewed in a similar way.

Philip draws a crowd around him as he is stopped by a guard from the vessel who performs a "health-check" on him. As Charles Barr notes (1968, p. 13) this is

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<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/97648/i-Corylus-avellana-i-Contorta/Details> for more details. As will be investigated in a later chapter, Harry Lauder's influence on the representations of Scottish people in film was far reaching.

taken by Philip as an act of aggression and he, as a Scotsman, a dumb savage, retaliates by fighting back. This commotion leads Hardy's character, Mumblethunder, to realise that the fighting Philip is in fact the man he is there to meet. Hardy's reaction, as Mumblethunder, is the first sight of his trademark exasperated countenance, only lacking a direct look to the camera (Harness, 2006, p. 55).

The Scotsman abroad, Philip, draws a crowd due to his dress. In a vein of humour best described as British sea-side postcard, he is surrounded by people who are amused by the man with no trousers. Philip has one other character trait though. He is obsessed with women. When asked what he would like to do for entertainment, he sees a pretty girl and utters (represented on an intertitle) the word, "wimmen?" (3.11).

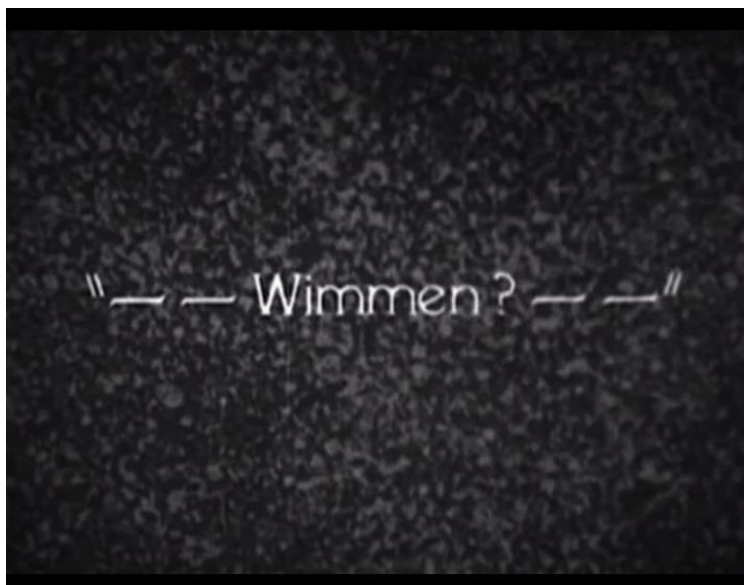


Figure 3-11. *Putting Pants on Philip*: Hollywood comedy Scots language intertitle.

The vein of the savage Scotsman from *Annie Laurie* is continued here. Philip is, to the civilised American people, a wild man. Whilst played for laughs, the Scotsman here is a confirmed sexual predator (Gehring, 1990, p. 62).

As Mumblethunder and Philip leave the docks, the kilt continues to be the thrusting point of the comedy. As the two walk down the street, Philip walks over a subway grate and Philip's kilt is blown up.<sup>37</sup> His underwear can be seen, allowing us to see he is not a "true" Scotsman.<sup>38</sup> As they continue down the street a crowd follows. In a comic twist Philip takes a pinch of snuff and sneezes so violently that he loses his underwear. This is not noticed by anyone and the two continue to walk until at the next grate the kilt is blown up again and the director Bruckman cuts to two women at the front of the crowd

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<sup>37</sup> This use of the subway grate predates the iconic sequence featuring Marilyn Monroe and Tom Ewell in *The Seven Year Itch* (Wilder, 1955) by some twenty-eight years.

<sup>38</sup> The mystery of what is worn under the kilt provides titillation still. The Scottish comedian Chic Murray was asked what was worn under his kilt, to which he said, "nothing's worn, It's all in perfect working order thank you."

fainting. Philip, the savage Scotsman who is only interested in “wimmen” has now attracted the police and this leads to Mumblethunder’s decision to clad his nephew in trousers. There are two implications present. Firstly, by making the Scotsman wear trousers he will be civilised, losing his fervent sexual desires and secondly, he will no longer be an embarrassment to his uncle.

The scene at the tailor’s shop presents further evidence of the Scotsman’s wild, alien nature yet also shows the manner in which it can be tamed. The tailor tries to measure Philip. Philip runs to the back of the shop and disappears behind drapes; he is pursued by Mumblethunder who reappears shortly afterwards and slaps his hands together as if dusting them off. Philip comes out, clearly beaten and upset, he weeps into his kilt after his unseen ordeal. The more powerful and potent polite member of society has forced the wild Scot to submit to his will through the use of violence and the threat of further retribution. Kyp Harness (2006, p. 97) suggests that this scene is a parody of a melodrama cliché that the audience of the time would have been well aware of: the humiliation of a newly deflowered maiden. The act of weeping heralds the moment when the film changes from being about Philip and Mumblethunder to being about the relationship of Laurel and Hardy.

In terms of the performances this film displays the beginnings of their idiolect. Whilst they are not playing the characters they became known as, ‘Stan’ and ‘Ollie’, they employ actions and performance techniques in their repertoire that are instantly recognisable from their later career. Laurel weeps in the film, his character is timid, very much a comic foil and displays an infant mentality, traits that he employed in the majority of his later career (Brown, 2013, p. 41). The real change in character from Stan to ‘Philip’ is the lust for women, a trait that never surfaces again in his career (Harness, 2006, p. 24). Hardy’s character, Mumblethorpe, is self-important, in his mind he is a respectable gentleman. His insistence on his own importance acts as a catalyst for trouble, provoking his own fate and his ultimate loss of dignity, very much the persona that Hardy became associated with throughout the two men’s career partnership (Barr, 1968, pp. 14-15). The loss of dignity is accompanied by a close-up shot of Hardy silently fuming at the camera. The use of direct address by Hardy differs from that of Harry Lauder. Where Lauder as a solo performer is intimate and friendly, Hardy, as part of a double act, is marked as being alone by this: Stan has failed him and the audience empathise with and pity Hardy (Brown, 2013, p. 49). This

is their relationship in almost all of their subsequent films and, as Barr notes (1968, p.16), *Putting Pants on Philip* is the original “Laurel and Hardy” film.

The Scottishness of the film though, is a mixture of stagnating tropes and stereotypes. The Scotsman is sexually aggressive, yet a fool. He is a grown man who is little more than an infant. He is not deemed proper for polite society until he is assimilated and the quickest way to change the Scotsman is to take his kilt, one of his symbols of identity away from him.

## Conclusion

I stated at the beginning of the chapter that I wanted to discover two things: was Scottishness in cinema more than just a kilt, and, was there a universal mode of performance or did performance styles differ between the US and the UK? As far as the costumes are concerned it appears that the kilt, tartan at the very least, has a chequered history. The Dewar’s advert played on an existing and popular brand image: the transference to the cinema screen was simply part of a marketing campaign. The three characters, or at least their three distinct types of costume, laid the foundations for representations of Scottishness in cinema. The development that occurred as narrative film became the prominent form is more problematic. The Scot becomes either a hooligan or a comic character or a mixture of the two. Macnab is a barbaric force, Lauder comical, yet the characters of the amateur production, *Mairi*, reflect none of this. It is the commercially aware productions that leave the Scot in cinema in the easily recognisable package for mass appeal and income.

As for my second question, I believe that the answer is that performance styles differed dependent on certain variables. The American performances were drawn in accordance with Delsartean principles and guidance. Given that the Biograph Company was one of the leading lights of the narrative film in the early years in the USA it seems hardly surprising that their house style should have been so influential. That the techniques continued up to 1927’s *Annie Laurie* suggests that, crucially, in a silent medium ostensive, obvious performance was still needed to convey moments of emotion to every viewer. Nobody can be in any doubt that Annie Laurie is wildly upset in the scene where her love is tortured due to the representational nature of Gish’s performance. It is in the gentler passages of films

that the verisimilar style holds sway, as it is for all of the USA productions examined here.

There is also a gender divide in both the performances and the narratives. Female actors tended to use the histrionic code more than males. This is most obvious in *Auld Robin Gray* which also features a female as the central character in the narrative. The representation of younger women in these early films portray them as strong, able, virtuous and pious but again is dependent on class lines. Jenny stays with Robin Gray for two reasons: her vocalised justification of her actions is that he is a good man and has treated her and her family well but her real reason is that to leave him would be a sin in the eyes of God and society. Annie Laurie, a nobleman's daughter, survives a gunshot to light the beacon to warn the MacDonald clan of the attack. The other women in the films are either unnamed, invalids or servants.

Male Scottishness in early cinema was a mixture of noble savage, puerility and straight out clowning. The Scotsman was either a powerful, sexually magnetic and virile individual or he was a blustering, childish, clumsy and feckless fool. Exceptions to this were few and far between such as Lauder's portrayal of Sandy in *I Love A Lassie*. There is little doubt that producers were taking the imagery that they had been presented with by writers and performers from Scotland. What is observed here is exported cultural specification that becomes convention and is amplified through reach and repetition. The development or continued stagnation of these characteristics will be examined in the following chapters, the next of which examines North American representations of Scotland from 1928 to 1933.

## Chapter 4

### North American Representations of Scottishness: 1928 – 1933

The previous chapter established the manners in which the Scottish nationality and gender differences were represented on screen during the silent era in films from both the UK and the USA. This chapter turns attention to films made in the USA from 1928 to 1933. It uses a number of British local and national newspapers along with material supporting the promotion of the films in trade papers and popular magazines, to examine reactions to performed Scottishness from the USA. Colin Gunckel (2008) has shown how discursive formations within such papers can help to frame the reception and reaction to an external producer of culture. Engagement with the local is, though, relative as local revolves around distinctions between regional and national, continental and global (Habel, 2005, p. 126). The majority of local sources for films discussed in this chapter are newspapers based in Scotland. National papers are those with a UK wide distribution and readership and include trade publications. Published reactions are examined in order to attempt to identify a Scottish structure of discourse to the manners in which they, the Scottish people, were shown on screen by the US producers. Did the producers of films from the USA continue to use the shorthand signifiers of Scottishness from the silent era? If they did, how did reviewers and audiences react?

The films analysed come from a variety of genres: musical revue, adaptations of comic strips, novels, stage plays and original musicals. In common with other chapters, the films' histories are explored before the analyses.

*McFadden's Flats* (Wallace, 1927)/*The Cohens and the Kellys in Scotland* (Craft, 1930)

This section examines films that include Scottish characters with two other peoples that have been subject to stereotypical representations for comedic purposes: the Irish and the Jewish. *McFadden's Flats* (Wallace, 1927) is based on a cartoon theatrical (a theatre show itself based on stories from popular cartoon strips) written and produced by Gus Hill. From the late 1890s to the mid-1920s such shows were part of the make-up of American touring theatre productions (Winchester, 1995,

p. 7). The majority of Hill's shows were musical comedies that incorporated the characters, situations and specific humour of newspaper comic strips in a loosely themed variety style revue. *McFadden's Row of Flats*, as the stage show was called, was originally produced in 1896 and toured up until 1927, ceasing shortly before the release of the first filmic adaptation (ibid, p. 113). The two lead characters, McFadden and McTavish, Irish and Scottish respectively, were minor characters in the original cartoon strips but brought to the forefront of the theatrical adaptation. The plot is simple: McFadden is an Irish labourer who dreams of being a builder, McTavish is a Scottish barber who lends him the money to realise his dream. Further complications arise when McFadden's son begins courting McTavish's daughter.

Scottish Americans were far more subdued in their response to the play than those of Irish descent. Audience reaction to the original theatrical production showed one manner of expressing hostile reactions to repeated stereotypical representation of people across media. During the 1903 run in New York it was reported that at the end of the first act, during the evening performance of March 27<sup>th</sup>, instead of applause the actors were showered with rotten eggs and vegetables. According to *The New York Dramatic Mirror* (1903, April 4, p. 13), an estimated two hundred Irishmen had joined together to protest against the insulting caricatures that were being portrayed on the stage. Mark Winchester suggests that the Irish population of New York were divided into those who took offence and those who empathised with the response, if not the execution of it (1997, p. 108). He cites a document that suggests that, "the stage Irishman is a conventional absurdity...the great question is whether the entire performance is farcical, and, if so, I can see no reason for a hot headed protest in behalf of any nationality" (ibid). An editorial in the *New York Sun*, on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1903, cited by Winchester (1997, p. 108), suggested the possibility of uprising across America as audiences protested negative portrayals of nationality. The argument was that stage convention decided these depictions and if all offensive depictions were removed from the stage then there would be nothing left. The low features of the Irish were the ones that were exaggerated in the stage production yet, as Winchester (1997, p. 109) notes, audiences generally knew that this was a work of fiction.

The 1927 film production starred Charlie Murray and Chester Conklin. *The Billboard* noted the stereotypical representation of thrift in the Scottish character, McTavish, stating that he, "allows Verdigris to build up on his shekels" (1927,



February 19, p. 37). Yet the Scottish character also provides the emotional centre of the film: McTavish gambles his life savings on McFadden being a success in business without telling him. This altruistic act belies the expected behaviour of the Scottish miser and moves the Scotsman to the position of benefactor, a philanthropic character interested in bettering the lives of others.

The initial impact of the film in the US was strong. *Variety*, on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1927, reported that the film had opened so strongly that the Strand in New York was opening two hours earlier than normal to accommodate extra screenings to slake public demand. The film ran for nearly eight weeks in the theatre, *Variety* noting in March 23<sup>rd</sup> that it was still performing well, suggesting that, “the St. Pat. feeling [was] aiding no little bit” (p. 6). Loew’s state theatre in Los Angeles, according to *Variety* (1927, March 30, p. 6), “could not handle [the queues] fast enough at night with this box office smash.” Montreal saw similar success but possibly the biggest financial indicator for the film was its result in Buffalo, where *Variety* records that it took \$27,800 in one week and that this was regarded as a bad week for the film (ibid).

In the UK, the film was regarded by *The Picturegoer* (1927, Dec, p. 64) as a, “homely comedy...good entertainment.” In the Scottish borders *The Southern Reporter* (1928, May 31, p. 4) called it, “a really outstanding comedy.” The tight-fisted Scotsman is mentioned in *The Falkirk Herald* review of the film, on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1928, but there is little else said.<sup>39</sup>

*McFadden’s Flats* (Murphy, 1935) was released in a sound version in 1935. Directed by Ralph Murphy and starring Walter C. Kelly and Andy Clyde, it has the same plot as the 1927 version.<sup>40</sup> Scottish and Irish stereotypes were so familiar in cinema by this point that Lionel Collier’s review for *The Picturegoer* (1935, August 24, p. 24) merely notes that, “national traits are amusingly introduced.” *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (1935, January 1, p. 55) review notes that the character study of McTavish is delightfully absurd. The recognition of the constructed, stereotypical identity of the Scotsman is apparent yet the performance wins over A. R. the anonymous critic: “for

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<sup>39</sup> In December of 1929 *Variety* had a small report that, “Edward Small is making “McFadden’s Flats” at Metropolitan Studios, with Charlie Murray in the same part he had when made silent by First National. Columbia will release this sound version” (p. 12) but this is the only mention of the venture. The film is not listed in either the BFI or AFI databases.

<sup>40</sup> Newspaper listings for the film describe it as, “Just one big scrappy family! More fights than a Sinn Fein riot! A hundred times funnier than your favourite story of the Irishman and the Scotsman.”

once we do not resent the joke on the Scotsman.” This review touches on the Kailyard element of the film without recognising it as such. The film deals with a small community of stock characters, albeit within a large city, who could easily be recognised as working class, couthy individuals. Indeed A.R. posits that the humour, “springs from the everyday activities of ‘small’ people.” Blackford, writing in *The Billboard*, echoes the idea that the Kailyard structure and situation is present. He notes that it is the sort of material audiences would enjoy: “it’s the old story of bickering and bantering between the Irish McFaddens and the Scotch McTavishes” (‘From the Box Office’, 1935). *The Arbroath Herald* (1935, October 18, p. 6) makes no mention of the nationalities of the lead characters, simply stating that they enjoy a, “classic feud.”

These reactions to the representations of Scottishness in the various versions of *McFadden’s Flats* indicate, it would appear, that these stereotypes and stereotypical patterns of character behaviour are seen as acceptable. Scottish stinginess is balanced by generosity of spirit and wallet in order to help a friend. The Scotsman here is not criticised as strongly as the Irishman and is not an obvious figure of fun.

A similar conclusion can be reached about the treatment of the Scottish in the comedy feature *The Cohens and the Kellys in Scotland* (Craft, 1930), hereafter *in Scotland*. The film features two feuding families, one Jewish and one Irish who find themselves in Scotland. This was one in a series of films, each set in a different location including Paris, Africa and Atlantic City until the final bow of the two families in *The Cohens and the Kellys in Trouble* (Stevens, 1933). The plot for *in Scotland* is simple. The two men of the families decide to buy all the plaids in Scotland after hearing that the Prince of Morania is intending to start wearing plaid. Cohen buys all the plaids of McPherson and Kelly buys all those of McDonald. Cohen has a run-in with a stranger on a golf course and this is revealed to be him insulting the Prince. The two men attend a race event and see the Prince but he is not wearing any plaid. Thinking themselves ruined the men then decide to commit suicide, but when Cohen attempts to drown himself he is rescued by Kelly. The two men astound the clans by asking them to buy the plaids back from them but when the Prince is seen wearing the plaids in a parade the Scotsmen gladly pay the two men a fortune.

*Variety* (1930, March 12, pp. 21&33) reviewed the film, suggesting that it was, “full of sure fire laughs for Grade ‘B’ audiences, with the makers not intending it for

higher consumption.” *The Billboard* (1930, March 15, p. 23) noted that there was good comedy in the film, particularly in the golf course and racetrack scenes and recommended that, “this one should play successfully and should receive special billing in neighborhoods strongly Irish or Hebrew.” The comedy was targeted in the advertising for the film, notably the concept of difficulties in a common language.<sup>41</sup> A full page advert in *Variety* (1930, March 5, p. 25), stated that, “the laughter starts in the first hundred feet when Cohen tries to master “’Tis a braw bricht moon licht nicht th’ nicht”” (4.1). This advert stresses the comedic impact of the scene: one stereotype, Cohen the Jew, is appropriating the voice of another stereotype, the Scot. This impersonation, along with the reaction of the audience, indicates acceptance on their part (Taylor, 2009, p. 10). Voices that were found to be out of the ordinary were deemed to be entertaining for that very reason, perhaps due to the materiality of the sound produced and heard becoming the centre of attention thereby unravelling meaning and rationality (Dyson, 2009, p.8).

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<sup>41</sup> George Bernard Shaw is commonly attributed as having said that England and America were two nations separated by a common language but the sentiment was first expressed by Oscar Wilde in *The Canterville Ghost* where he wrote, “we have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language.” This was in 1887 and serves to highlight the knowledge of the language differences between the two sides of the Atlantic.

*They rolled in the aisles  
with laughter*

at the Colony Theatre,  
(N. Y.) preview, where  
the picture was put on  
without advertising and  
without previous announce-  
ment. Ain't it marvelous  
the way news of a great  
picture gets out!



Directed by  
William James Craft

The laughter starts in the first  
hundred feet when Cohen tries  
to master "Tis a braw  
bright moon licht nicht  
th' nicht"—and the roar  
keeps up for the rest of the  
picture!

*The*  
**COHENS & KELLYS**  
*in*  
**SCOTLAND**

WITH THE FOUR ORIGINAL COHENS AND KELLYS  
**CHARLIE MURRAY · GEORGE SIDNEY ·**  
VERA GORDON · Kate Price *presented by* CARL LAEMMLE

**Pictures—Not Promises:** LAURA LA PLANTE and JOHN BOLES in  
"LAMARSEILLAISE" . . . JOHN BOLES in "THE SONG OF PASSION"  
. . . MARY NOLAN in "SHANGHAI LADY," "UNDERTOW" and "BAR-  
BARY COAST" . . . PETER B. KYNE'S "HELL'S HEROES" . . .  
JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT in "NIGHT RIDE" . . . "DAMES AHOY" . . .  
"THE SHANNONS OF BROADWAY" starring THE GLEASONS . . .  
"THE STORM" . . . "WHAT MEN WANT" . . . "BROADWAY"  
. . . "SHOWBOAT" . . . and the two biggest of them all—PAUL  
WHITEMAN'S "KING OF JAZZ" . . . "ALL QUIET ON THE WEST-  
ERN FRONT."

Don't fail  
to read  
complete  
details in  
UNIVERSAL  
WEEKLY

**Universal's New Selling Season is on NOW!**

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Figure 4-1. The Cohens and the Kellys in Scotland: Full page advert for The Cohens and the Kellys in Scotland.

The Scottishness of *in Scotland* is dependent on stereotype. Scotland as a location is used for narrative purposes, little more than that, and the golf course becomes a space for comedy as with Harry Lauder (see Chapter 3). The reaction of local Scottish press suggests that by this stage two things had happened: firstly the

audience were well aware that stereotype was an integral part of stage, and by extension, filmic convention, and, secondly, that the Scottish audience was already knowledgeable enough about film to be able to laugh at the ways in which Scotland and its people were presented by Hollywood. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1930, *The Southern Reporter* suggested that the film was, “the funniest Scottish story-film ever put on screen” (p. 4). *The Falkirk Herald* review, on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1930, noted that, “one has to forgive a few mistakes regarding the American conception of Scotland and her people, but these glaring irregularities materially enhance the comedy aspect” (p. 13). The comedic potential of hearing an alien voice trying to speak Scots was picked up as one of the highlights of the film by the reporter for *The Hawick News* (1931, March 13, p. 8). However, *The Scotsman* (1930, July 2, p. 10) chose not to pick up on any of these points. Its review simply said that the film, “reintroduces an amusing couple who on this occasion have a business deal with a couple of hard-headed Scots, and in the end it is the latter who come off second best.”

The two films in this section are comedies. Whilst they are works of fancy that exist to provide an audience with escapist moments and belly laughs they both, to some extent, represent the continuation of Hollywood’s reliance on cliché and stereotype in presenting Scottishness. Where *McFadden’s Flats* differs is in the foregrounding of the Scottish character and their action in the narrative. Matthew Turner (2003, p. 48) suggested that comedy is reliant on the reversal of expectations and the film offers just that: this is a Scotsman who is generous and altruistic to his friends, a reversal of the notion of Scots frugality. Sarah Kozloff (2000, p. 82) warned that the use of dialect historically represented characters as being silly, quaint or stupid and *in Scotland* presents this even in its advertising. The use of the phrase in Scots on the posters for the film points to a lack of sensitivity from Hollywood producers towards nonstandard dialects as well as positioning the Scots as figures of fun, their otherness confirmed by their speech and accents. Carl Grindley (2006, p. 14) noted that filmic cliché is sustained by what seems to be typical to an audience: the comedic Scotsman was already a well-known figure in the US by this time and the next section concentrates on two films that present another well-known Scottish male, the military Scot.

## *The Black Watch* (Ford, 1929) a.k.a. *King of the Khyber Rifles*

*The Black Watch* (Ford, 1929) was based on Talbot Mundy's novel, *King of the Khyber Rifles*. It was released in the UK under the title, *King of the Khyber Rifles*, but I refer to it as *The Black Watch* unless I am quoting a source directly. This section examines the reactions to hearing the voice of the actors and the star of the film for the first time in addition to examining the different responses between trade and local press. Scottishness in *The Black Watch*, whilst contested by the reviewers, is clearly placed and performed by the cast. There is a clear divide between officers and enlisted men in terms of class structure, voice and behaviours throughout the film.

Victor McLaglen, a British-American actor, played Captain King in his first starring talkie role. *Variety* (1929, February 20, p. 8) reported that the film would, "be an all-talker instead of silent as originally planned." Produced by Fox, the film was directed by John Ford in one of his earliest forays into working with sound on film.<sup>42</sup> Both *Variety* ("Changes to All Talk", 1929) and *The Billboard* ("McLaglen to Talk", 1929) reported on the film during its production but the first mention of the film in UK trade press came on March 11<sup>th</sup> in *The Film Weekly* ("News in Brief", 1929). In a further report, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, the same magazine states that Cockney accents could be worth money in Hollywood as Ford was having difficulty finding an actress who could perform a small yet vital role in the film. The article ("Cockney Accent Scarce", 1929) tells us that he found a touring actress and, "had to get her understudy to replace her for one matinee performance, so that she might contribute the desired touch of local colour to the production" (p. 7). However, no information about who she was, or what part she played, is offered.

April saw *The Billboard* report that the film's title was shortened to *Khyber* ("It's Now Just 'Khyber'", 1929) and May saw the launch of the full promotional campaign. *Variety* ran a full-page advert, proclaiming the film to be, "a masterpiece of melody and dialog" ("John Ford Production", 1929). The performance of the dialogue is one area in which critics were divided. Most notably the split came between native and non-native Scottish speakers with the non-native audience the less receptive.

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<sup>42</sup> *The Black Watch* is the earliest surviving complete Ford sound film but it is interesting to note that according to Crafton (1997, p. 283) the dialogue was directed by Lumsden Hare (who also played the Colonel), leaving Ford to concentrate on directing the action (the film credits Hare with 'Stage Direction').

The first review of the film, in *The Billboard* was not overly encouraging. McLaglen, who was at the time a rising star in Hollywood, came in for subjective criticism along with the overall sound quality: "McLaglen's voice does not have the marked gruffness one expects, and it is at all times clear...the recording in *The Black Watch* is sometimes not all that is desired, but it is not, on the other hand, seriously far from perfect" (1929, June 1, p. 22). McLaglen's appeal, his star power, also detracted from his performance for Cedric Belfrage, the reviewer for *The Film Weekly*. "Neither his 'tough' manner nor his accent is in any way suited to such a part" (Belfrage, 1929). The review goes on to refer to the audience reaction to McLaglen's vocal performance, telling us that they were unable to restrain their laughter, "during the love scenes owing to McLaglen's pronunciation of her name, Yasmini, as if it were "Yes Minne!" (ibid). *Variety's* London correspondent, also commented on the vocal performance, noting only that McLaglen, "tries to talk with a Scotch accent" (1929, July 31, p. 63).

A more interesting point is made by *The Stage* in its review. They note that the chief interest is in the star in a new 'talkie' yet the reviewer also points out that, "lip readers will understand that the language he uses here is that of ordinary melodrama, and not the realistic barrack-room stuff that was so obvious in "What Price Glory", (1929, July 25, p. 4). There is an inference here that in silent films, actors could use any language, any dialogue that they felt was appropriate for the scene. Yet *The Stage* joins in the chorus of disappointment with McLaglen, saying that he, "is convincing only when silent. His voice is not good, and lacks the refinement that would be expected of an officer from a crack regiment." McLaglen's voice was not the *expected* voice for his physicality and his performed Scottish accent was found to be disappointing. However, *The Film Weekly*, in a feature article on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1929, suggests that his supporters will not be disappointed with his performance although their writer adds the caveat that, "doubtless a closer acquaintance with the microphone will mean a further improvement" (p. 18). Just over one month later, on August 19<sup>th</sup>, one of *The Film Weekly's* columns, A Film Man's Diary, noted that McLaglen was "very badly cast in *King of the Khyber Rifles* and his voice did not suit the character he was called upon to portray" (p. 9). *The Picturegoer*, in its review of the film simply stated of his vocal performance that, "Mr. McLaglen's elocution will improve, but he looks good" ("The Pick of the Pictures", 1929, September 1, p. 70).

Perhaps surprisingly the reaction from local, Scottish newspapers was not so condemnatory of McLaglen's work. Critics felt that McLaglen's accent was excellent and his vocal performance matched his physical one to create a rounded, fully-fleshed character. *The Evening Telegraph* (Dundee) reported that McLaglen's, "admirers will be anxious to know if he speaks as well as he screens. He does not – yet" (1929, July 26, p. 5). *The Courier and Advertiser* review said of him that, "his acting is natural and his articulation excellent throughout" (1929, November 19, p. 9). Further support came from the *Arbroath Herald* (1929, December 13, p. 2), which, in addition to calling it the best work of his career, said that McLaglen found himself in a film that was leaving him, "bestrewn with temptations to overact, he has, by restraint, created a very real character. His voice records magnificently. His accent is honest and unaffected."

The film is for the most part presented in a theatrical manner. Scenes are shown as if through a proscenium arch and there are no examples of shot/reverse shot during dialogue. There are few exceptions to this in the film. There are four shots that are long shot exteriors near the beginning when King is travelling from the regimental headquarters to see the Field Marshal and the scene at the railway station when the regiment is about to leave for France but other than these scenes the actors are framed as if performing on stage. Ford uses close ups sparingly, preferring to frame the action through medium long shots and mid-shots throughout. McLaglen's performance in the film is in tandem with the others. Every character speaks with precision and attempts to clearly enunciate their lines, regardless of the accent they use. McLaglen speaks so slowly at times throughout the film it is as if he



Figure 4-2. *The Black Watch*: Even when with a superior officer, King is placed screen right to show he is in control.

is pondering what his next line is. Where McLaglen differs from the rest of the cast is not in his accent but in his positioning on screen. As King, he is the lead. King is in control and as such he is always placed on screen right (4.2, 4.3).





*Figure 4-3. The Black Watch: King is in control on screen right.*

The only exceptions to this are two of his scenes with Yasmini. In the first, he is falling in love with her. King is not in control of his emotions and is the weaker of the characters in the scene (4.4).



*Figure 4-4. The Black Watch: King is no longer in control of his emotions and has moved to screen left.*

By the time he meets her again, he has taken control of himself again and is placed camera right (4.5).



*Figure 4-5. The Black Watch: Back in control, King moves back to screen right.*

There is also one scene in which the theatrical nature of the film's staging is clearly illuminated: King is about to embark on his mission and the two other characters in the room turn to each other (4.6). This theatrical staging allows Ford to cut to a mid-shot of King standing at the window for his brief soliloquy (4.7).



*Figure 4-6. The Black Watch: King has turned to the window to make his exit. As he does so, the other two characters turn to each other allowing King to be ignored.*



*Figure 4-7. The Black Watch: Ford cuts to King, now ignored by the other characters, who delivers his brief soliloquy before leaping out of the window.*

The film also features Scottishness for comedic purposes. There are two comedic figures, enlisted men serving in the regiment. As they are seen boarding a train for France, Sandy McTavish (played by Harry Allen) is being reminded by his wife (played by Mary Gordon) of what to do when he is in battle; that he should tell Parisian hussies (as she calls the women of that city) that he is a married man; to pull down his kilt when he sits down as he is a member of the Kirk in order to “hide yer shame” and finally to give his drinking ration to someone that needs it to which he replies, “aye I’ll gie it to the first yin that needs it worse than a McTavish!” McTavish is next seen with another character who is referred to as “Sergeant” or “Jock.” The

comedy comes from McTavish's exclamation that war is a welcome break for a married man to which Jock replies in a heartfelt manner, "och aye."

The pair are wheeled out at various later stages in the film to provide light relief: as the men are travelling through France, McTavish's greatest concern is that he has not heard the football results yet. Jock merely responds, "och aye" to every one of McTavish's utterances. The two actors use pastiche accents: every r is rolled to extremes by McTavish and every "aye" has different vowel lengths from Jock. Their extreme pronunciation of language sets them apart from other characters. They are amongst the few enlisted men who speak and when compared to the officer class they stand apart. Where McLaglen and other actors playing officers use an approximation of Received Pronunciation to highlight refinement and privilege, the enlisted men use a rougher accent to show their different social standing within the film.<sup>43</sup>

### *Seven Days Leave* (Wallace, 1930)

*Seven Days Leave* (Wallace, 1930) is based on J. M. Barrie's play *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* (1918). David McCrone (2001, p. 42) suggested that Scottish nationality was traditionally constructed around the masculine as Kailyard and Tartanry had little place for women. Yet this film, based on a work by one of the most famous Kailyard authors, has a woman as its central character. The plot revolves around her and is instigated by her. Almost everything that happens in the film is as a result of her actions and wishes.

The plot concerns a spinster charwoman, living in London, who is ashamed that she has not made any significant contribution to the war effort. She then invents a son, having seen a newspaper report that named a soldier in the Black Watch that shares her surname, and proceeds to tell her co-workers of him. She writes to him to invite him to stay with her in London which he does and the two collaborate on her invented story. He is an orphan and single and, after a run in with the Military Police,

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<sup>43</sup> A letter in *The Film Weekly* (1929, December 1, p. 98) from a reader named "C.L." was not as concerned with McLaglen's or any other actors' vocal performance as the inaccuracy of the production design, noting that whilst the scene in the officers' mess had great attention to detail, "it was a pity that the haggis was allowed to be piped in by a couple of Gordon Highlanders. The two yellow stripes in their tartans were very obvious to Scots in the audience."

he returns to the front determined to do his 'mother' proud. He is then killed in action almost immediately and the film ends with the old lady bearing his sacrifice as a totem of her contribution to the war effort and having won her friends' respect. Beryl Mercer plays Mrs. Dowey and the rising star Gary Cooper plays Kenneth Dowey, the soldier who becomes her 'son.'

The play and the film have several differences: Barrie's play was published as part of his anthology *Echoes of the War* (1918) and includes several pages of text to set the scene and provide stage directions for actors before any dialogue occurs. The play opens in Mrs. Dowey's flat with the other charwomen where the film has an entirely new opening as exposition of her situation: she approaches the military to see if she can be of any help in the war effort. In the play, Kenneth is a Black Watch soldier, a kiltie of the Scottish regiment, and although it is never directly stated in the film it is implied that Kenneth is of the Canadian Black Watch. This allows Gary Cooper, one of the rising stars in the Paramount Studios stable, to use his natural voice throughout the film. Scottishness here is disregarded in an effort to protect the studio's investment. Beryl Mercer, on the other hand, does play Mrs. Dowey as Scottish, as the original text required.

The film is referred to by trade papers prior to its release under different titles on different sides of the Atlantic. In the US the film is *Seven Days Leave*, but in the UK press it is called *Medals*. *The Film Weekly*, in October 1929, does not refer to the film by any title merely stating that it is an adaptation of Barrie's play. *The Picturegoer*, in November of the same year refers to the film as *Medals* (November 1, p. 62). On December 9<sup>th</sup>, *The Film Weekly*, in a double page feature, states that the film is called *Medals*, and that Cooper is playing a "Canadian-Scottish soldier" (pp. 14-15).

Land (1930, January 29, p. 21), the reviewer for *Variety*, praises both Cooper and Mercer's performances, but notes that it is Mercer's work that "makes the film possible." J.F.L., reviewing for *The Billboard* (1930, February 1, p. 22), is in agreement and suggests that Mercer, "bids well to be one of the leading character women of the future." Mark Forrest (1930a, p. 483), writing for *The Saturday Review* states that Mercer and Cooper, "both give excellent performances," and the editor of *The Picturegoer*, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1930 says that, "there has rarely been a better characterisation of an elderly woman craving motherhood and its cares than that given by Beryl Mercer" (p. 48). Local newspapers followed suit in their admiration for

the performances of the leads. *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser* review on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1931 says of Mercer that her performance is, “epic, one of the greatest roles the talented actress has ever done” (p. 3). Dundee’s *The Evening Telegraph* (1931, January 6, p. 6) also praises Mercer: “Miss Mercer has 43 years of stage and silent screen experience behind her...she gives a wonderful portrayal.” The reviewer though says of Cooper that he, “is obviously not at ease in his part. Though he makes a fine figure and his voice records well, he has given finer interpretations.” *The Falkirk Herald* review (1931, March 7, p. 16) notes that, “the incomparable veteran, Beryl Mercer, is the “Old Lady,” while Gary Cooper is also seen to advantage here.” *The Shields Daily News*, on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1931 (p. 6) notes that Cooper’s performance is splendid but suggests that, “many will say it is excelled by the acting of Beryl Mercer.”

The film is essentially a two-hander. Cooper and Mercer have the majority of the screen time, the other characters who appear serve only to propel the narrative. Mercer’s performance is subtle and filmic. Her experience of on-camera work in tandem with her knowledge of the craft of acting are utilised to give a realistic and believable portrayal of a woman who is desperate to be respected and accepted in society. She has no obvious signs of Scottishness; there is no tartan in evidence, she is dressed plainly yet respectably. Her voice throughout has soft rhoticism and the lilting quality found in East Coast Scottish accents. It is, however, the small details of her physical performance that allow examination of her character work. When Mrs.



Figure 4-8. *Seven Days Leave: The Vicar and the gossips.*

Dowey’s deception is nearly uncovered, Wallace cuts between her and her friends with the vicar. We see the gossips listening intently as the vicar tells them that Mrs. Dowey’s son is in London and is coming to meet her (4.8).

Mercer, as Dowey, uses a combination of a simple motion of her hands in tandem with her facial reactions to allow us to read her inner psychological state. In (4.9) she is listening to the vicar and the gossips, and, in (4.10), she has realised that she is about to be found out. Her

eyes widen and she has pulled her hands up to cover her body as if she has been shot by an invisible bullet.



Figure 4-9. *Seven Days Leave*: Mrs Dowey listens apprehensively.



Figure 4-10. *Seven Days Leave*: Wounded and protecting.



Figure 4-11. *Seven Days Leave*. Calmed, but still protective hand position.

(4.11) shows her almost immediately afterwards. She has recovered her calm facially but is holding her left hand in a fist, as if she is ready to strike out. Julia Walker (2006, pp. 625-626) discusses Delsarte's concentric energies which reveal the mental attitude of a character. This series of movements take a little over four seconds on screen but the motion of her hands exposes an internal conflict that

suggests her need for emotional satisfaction, in this case not being found out as a liar.

Cooper, on the other hand, was inexperienced: this was his first all-talkie feature and he had above title billing. Paramount was making him into a star. The relocation of his character to Canadian origin can be seen as a deliberate act on the part of the studio. James Naremore (1988, p. 140) refers to Cooper as, “a straightforward American type,” and it is entirely possible that Cooper could not do the required Scottish accent for the character so the easiest route for the studio was to change the character’s origin. Indeed, Cooper is seen as having built a career on *not-acting*. George Toles (2003, p. 34) suggests that as early as 1931 Cooper had grasped the inwardness of characterisation that the camera required for expressions of intimacy, a minimalism in performance that drew viewers to the character. Land’s review in *Variety* (1930, January 29, p. 21) notes that Cooper, “is restrained and likeable in the part” and part of the reason for this is that, in his performance, he does very little. His physicality contrasts with Mercer’s, he is a full head and shoulders taller than her, the effect of this is that she is seen looking up to him, near pleading with him to believe her story and allow her to continue it. There are some moments when he is requested to be physically expressive, his character is releasing pent-up anger and he comes across as dishonest. He is visibly acting, not being. The suddenness of his movements, combined with the angularity of his physique, jars as he shares the frame with Mercer. Mercer, in reaction, does very little and is the more believable of the two. In Austin-Smith’s terms, Cooper is acting badly but Mercer is acting well (2012, p. 20). Her performance is measured at all times, her Scottish accent is assured and lyrical. There is belief in her character’s situation and reactions to events in the narrative.

In the play, Kenneth Dowey is Black Watch, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Angus and Dundee battalion of the regiment. In the film, Kenneth is Canadian Black Watch. This change allows every other actor who portrays a member of the battalion with Cooper to use their natural voices: the sight of kilted soldiers may immediately suggest Scottish regiments but to hear strong North American accents emanating from the men is surprising if taken out of context. Not all reviewers noted this change though. The editor of *The Film Weekly* suggests that the nationality of the film can be judged by the way in which the kilt is treated: “the Scot sees nothing funny about a kilt, whereas other nationals hardly see anything about it that is not funny – and this

would seem to apply especially to American film-producers” (1930, December 27, p. 6). The editor in this case is most certain to be referring to another of the extra scenes that were written in for the film. Kenneth has taken Mrs. Dowey and her charwomen friends out to a pub to buy them a drink. He is approached by two drunk sailors who are determined to answer what David Goldie (2003, p. 8) refers to as the, “lingering question” of what is worn under the kilt (4.12). Kenneth’s reaction to the sailor’s attempts to discover the truth of the matter could also be seen to be typically Scottish: having had a drink he resorts to violence to end the sailors’ abuse.



Figure 4-12. *Seven Days Leave*: Stereotypical desire to see under the kilt.

The transmission of nationality and identity in the film is negated by the suggestion that Cooper’s character is not Scottish. Mercer plays a Scottish character convincingly but Cooper is excused this by the script change. In *Seven Days Leave* it is apparent that the star, the studio backed Hollywood investment, is of greater importance than the representation of national identity of the character the star is portraying. The military figure here is Scottish in appearance and costume but relocated to origins in the North American continent in order to excuse any potential display of lack of acting skill in an early talkie feature.

The two films in this section, on the surface, present the military Scot. Kilted soldiers who are ready to go to battle, whether on Flanders Fields or in the local pub. Where they differ greatly is in their use of voice. *The Black Watch* employs a stilted, theatrical, Received Pronunciation vocal delivery for the officer class and a harsher,



more rhotic voice for the enlisted men. Scottishness is divided along lines of class in Ford's work where *Seven Days Leave* negates Scottishness altogether for its depiction of enlisted men. The sole Scottish voice in the film is that of Mrs. Dowey, in an adept performance by Beryl Mercer. North American military Scots in this period are either Officers who sound English, or men whose language is the reported speech of the Kailyard novelists.

### *King of Jazz* (Anderson, 1930)

*King of Jazz* (Anderson, 1930) is a musical revue film. There is no plot and no narrative to the film. Instead the film is a variety style piece: various acts perform their turns and the culmination of the film is a spectacular, large-scale musical number. Rick Altman (1987, p. 131) noted early sound cinema's capitalisation on existing theatrical forms observing that, "when film first learned to speak, it sang instead." The musical genre is largely a continuation of archaic entertainment forms such as vaudeville, burlesque and minstrel shows (Rubin, 2002, p. 53). Spectacle in theatre was mostly associated with the form known as the revue. Revue was not slave to a narrative: elaborate production numbers were linked together with no concern for logic or plot but, unlike vaudeville, revue had all the scenic and production materials and resources of the legitimate dramatic stage. Revue also, crucially, tended to be located in one theatre for a number of nights where vaudeville would move from town to town on the circuit.

The early 1920s was the heyday of the spectacular revue in both New York (on Broadway) and London. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 combined with the rise in the popularity of the talking picture sounded the death knell for the theatrical revue format. It was the rise of the talking picture that reinvigorated the revue. Kristin Thompson posited that the large number of revue style films made in the early sound years could be attributed partially to Hollywood grappling with language barriers: "even with no translation they proved attractive; when subtitled they required a minimum of writing to keep the audience up with the action" (1985, p. 158). A number of the most important early musical movies were nothing more than plotless revues transferred to the screen. *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (Reisner, 1929) was MGM's flagship production, featuring a roster of its most lucrative and popular stars. Jack Benny acted as Master of Ceremonies as Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, Lionel Barrymore and Marion Davies amongst others performed their turns. *The Show of*

*Shows* (Adolfi, 1929) was Warner Bros. revue style film, featuring John Barrymore and Jack Buchanan amongst the cast.<sup>44</sup> Paramount Pictures released *Paramount on Parade* (Arzner, Brower et al, 1930) featuring some of its contracted stars (Clara Bow, Gary Cooper, Maurice Chevalier et al) and Universal Studios effort in this genre was the 1930 film, *King of Jazz* (Anderson, 1930).

*King of Jazz* featured Paul Whiteman, a bandleader of international reputation, and his orchestra (Goldmark, 2007, p. 208; Spring, 2013, p. 26). This was the first venture of the new studio head, Junior Laemmle, who in accordance with his policy of “bigger is better” budgeted \$1 million for the production (Crafton, 1997, p. 344). The film’s central theme is the origin of jazz, positioning Whiteman as the all-knowing mogul who creates this musical form from the raw materials that are provided by other musical forms.<sup>45</sup> Towards the end of the film there is a lavish production number, *The Melting Pot*, in which globally recognised songs and musical styles are seen and heard. As each song finishes the players are lowered in to a pot bubbling over a stove. It has been noted though that whilst there are Scots, Italians, Russians, Polish Jews and Germans added to the pot, to name but a few, there are no African Americans present (Crafton, 1987, p. 415). Whilst Scottishness as whiteness within racial politics in America is not a focus of this thesis, the whiteness of the Scots in *King of Jazz* could be seen to tie back in to *McFadden’s Flats* as a further incorporation of Scottishness as whiteness within America.

The UK press were mostly supportive of the film. Leonard Wallace in *The Film Weekly* said that, “not only does it set a new standard in lavish display, but it presents revue in a way that no talking picture has yet done” (Wallace, 1930). The uncredited writer for *The Era* noted that the film outshone anything that its director had done on the London stage and went further, suggesting, “this country can take

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<sup>44</sup> Warner Bros. released four other musical films in 1929: *Gold Diggers of Broadway* (Ruth, 1929), *On With the Show* (Crosland, 1929), *The Desert Song* (Ruth, 1929) and *Paris* (Badger, 1929). All of these musicals stand apart from *Show of Shows* as they are plot driven. The audience desire for story *with* spectacle is perhaps reflected by the winner of the American Academy award for Best Picture, 1928-1929, being *The Broadway Melody* (Beaumont, 1929), a revue style production which had an added backstage plot as a narrative thread.

<sup>45</sup> The opening of the film stakes Whiteman’s claim to be the King of Jazz in a cartoon segment. The segment shows Whiteman conquering an African lion by playing violin at it; he then soothes the natives with his playing and the natives turn into, in Michael Rogin’s (1996, p. 139) phrase, “plantation, blackface mammies.” Jazz, in this cartoon, serves two purposes: it domesticates Africans into servants and functions as a trophy that the white man brings back from Africa (Rogin, 1992, pp. 1065-1066). The cartoon segment was the highest profile animation of 1930, directed by Walter Lantz and presented in Technicolor, as is the entire film (Crafton, 1997, p. 395).

some share of the credit for this momentous production, for its author is John Murray Anderson, a Scotsman" ("The King of Jazz", 1930).<sup>46</sup> Only Mark Forrest, writing in *The Saturday Review*, was not taken in by the spectacle: "here it is at last, and I hope this is the last of it" (Forrest, 1930b). Indeed, Forrest's review is one that ties in with the seemingly growing disinterest of the public in Revue films. The film was not the success it had been expected to be. Donald Crafton describes it as being a "\$2million flop, a sign that the public was tiring of the concoction of attractions constituting the revue movie" (1987, p. 357). Forrest (1930b), accurately suggested that:

the consolation of the whole business is that no one in the future is likely to spend so much money again on a revue, and that being so, the Americans, ever fearful of comparisons where mere expenditure is concerned, may cease to put any more on the screen, which will be a very good thing for the screen. (p. 486)

The film itself deals with national identity in a shorthand manner. The big production number at the end, *The Melting Pot*, features national dress and famous songs of the featured nations. The opening riff segues into a jazzed-up rendition of the theme of *Rule Britannia* before one form of stereotypical Englishmen are shown. The men are dressed for a fox hunt; they wear long red coats and riding hats and four of them sing *D'Ye Ken John Peel*. As this is a spectacular movie we see a whole stage set: eighty people dressed as Englishmen are playing the tune on hunting horns; sixteen women, dressed for the hunt march on stage and perform a dance that evokes the motion of a rider in the saddle. The sequence lasts just over eighty seconds and very much sets the tone for the treatment of each of the nations to be featured: shorthand signification and, to the unknowing viewer, confusion verging on mystification.

Scotland is introduced by a woman who sings the opening couplet from *Comin' Thro' the Rye*, a folk song most commonly associated with Robert Burns. As she reaches the end of her final note the drone of bagpipes can be heard and Anderson cuts to forty men, dressed in a manner that is suggestive of, whilst not actually being Highland regalia, who are playing the bagpipes. The camera pans right across the stage set and we see another forty pipers flanking stage right. Sixteen women perform a stylised dance, this time intended to be a Highland fling. This is once again an interpreted Scottishness: the most obvious fabrication is that the

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<sup>46</sup> The writer is inaccurate here. In his autobiography, Anderson (1954, p.1) states, "I was born on the peninsula of Avalon, Newfoundland."

female dancers are all wearing sporrans, forbidden in Scottish country dancing for women, and that their kilts are simply too short. Ladies kilts traditionally should reach the knee, the ones worn in this film are best described as mini-kilts but the sporrans are simply an anomaly (4.13).



Figure 4-13. *King of Jazz*: Large sporan, short skirt.

Scottishness in *King of Jazz* merely serves the purpose of allowing for a production number to easily identify a nationality that is universally recognisable. The music of the pipes is heard only once in the film and does not reappear in the resulting music of the melting pot. *King of Jazz's* Scottishness is a tip of the hat to the repetitive conventions of an imagined Scotland and nothing more.

### *Delicious* (Butler, 1931)

The final film in this chapter, a musical, provides a leap in both focus and execution of Scottishness. *Delicious* (Butler, 1931) has as its protagonist a feisty Highland lass type who is a member of the Scots diaspora attempting to make a new life for herself in America. The film stars Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell who made twelve feature-length films together, beginning in 1927 with *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* (Borzage,

1927) and ending in 1934 with *Change of Heart* (Blystone, 1934). Gaynor's pedigree as a performer is reflected in her being the first recipient of the Academy award for Best Actress in 1929, an award she won after being nominated for her roles in three films: *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* (Borzage, 1928), *Street Angel* (Borzage, 1928) and *Sunrise* (Murnau, 1927). The pairing of Gaynor and Farrell was immensely popular with audiences and critics alike (Crafton, 1997, p. 338) and *Delicious* was their eighth talkie together.

The film revolves around a fairly convoluted story about Heather Gordon (Gaynor), a Scottish girl who is moving to America to live with her Uncle. On board a ship, bound for the New World she meets and falls for Larry Beaumont (Farrell), a successful polo player who has asked his amour, Diana von Bergh, to marry him. After a series of unlikely events and musical set pieces, Gordon is deported and Beaumont, realising his true feelings for her, rushes to the ship she is on and the two are brought together and plan to be married by the Captain on the high seas.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>47</sup> This full summary of the plot is taken from the American Film Institute database and I only include it here to illustrate the sheer unlikeliness of the chain of events:

"On a ship headed from Europe to America, immigrants sing and have fun in steerage. Heather Gordon, a Scottish woman whose parents have died, is going to live with an uncle in Idaho. Her Russian friend Sascha, who wants to make it as a composer in New York City, is traveling with relatives. Wealthy Americans Larry Beaumont and Diana Van Bergh travel in first-class. Diana's mother wants the two married and Larry has proposed, but Diana has merely stated that she will think about it. Heather and Sascha sneak into the first-class section for some fun, but they are spotted and chased. Later, in the ship's stable, Heather meets Larry, who is a polo player, and mistakes him for a groom. Sascha and Heather meet again in the ship's music room, where they are caught by the crew and accused of shipboard thefts. Larry, however, along with his Swedish valet Jansen, vouches for the pair. After Heather has a dream about her arrival in America, in which she is greeted by "Mr. Ellis" and a welcoming committee, who give her the key to the city, the ship arrives at Ellis Island, where Heather discovers that her uncle now refuses to take her in. According to the law, with no means of support, she must be sent back to Europe. Sascha offers to marry her so that she can stay, but she refuses, saying that she doesn't love him in that way. Meanwhile, because Larry cannot see Heather before he departs, he asks Diana to deliver a letter to her, but after he leaves the ship, Diana's mother tears it up. While Inspector O'Flynn, who is sent to make sure that Heather stays on the boat, is distracted by Jansen, Heather hides in a horse van, which is lowered directly onto a train. The horse turns out to belong to Larry, and Heather arrives at his mansion just as O'Flynn drives up to question him. Jansen hides Heather, but she is eventually discovered by Larry, who finds out that she never got his letter. Larry offers to help the girl, but she goes away during the night, leaving a note explaining that she cannot accept anything from him. Heather then goes to Sascha and his family, who put her to work in a café show disguised as a Russian. Olga, one of Sascha's relatives, sends Larry a telegram explaining where Heather is. O'Flynn almost catches Heather, but he is fooled through the efforts of Larry, Jansen, and Olga. That same night, Diana and her mother show up to invite Heather and the Russians to play at the engagement party for Diana and Larry the following week. Heather, who has fallen in love with Larry, is crushed, and when Sascha proposes to her again, she accepts. The Russians buy them a radio as a wedding present, and they are all listening to Larry's polo game when they hear that he has been injured. Heather rushes to Larry's, where Diana lets her in, but then calls the police. Now realizing who Heather really loves, Sascha calls off the marriage. Meanwhile, Jansen proposes to Olga and she accepts. Heather escapes with O'Flynn hot on her tail and, after a mad chase around the city, gives herself up. A judge orders her deported, and she is sent to a ship about to set sail for Europe. Larry, however, finally realizes Diana's true

star attraction of Gaynor and Farrell is bolstered by the full musical score composed for the film by George and Ira Gershwin.<sup>48</sup> Sir Harry Lauder is credited by the AFI as appearing off-camera, briefly, in a dream sequence but it is the two stars that are the draw. *Variety* on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1931, reviewed the film declaring that, “Gaynor and Farrell are still in the flop-proof class,” although the reviewer does note of Gaynor’s accent that, “Miss Gaynor’s Scotch dialect as she does it won’t make much difference to her fans” (pp. 166-167). *The Billboard* review of January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932 is damning of the film: “an infantile affair, with a weak musical comedy libretto and numerous repetitions that become so boring that one almost wishes the immigration authorities had found the little alien girl and deported her and gotten the whole thing over with” (p. 18).

The film received a mixed reaction from the UK press. *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser* reviewed it on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1932. They note that whilst Gaynor in costume does look like a Scottish lassie, “even her most ardent admirers must feel a shock when she speaks...her accent is one hundred per cent American.” The review



Figure 4-14. *Delicious*: Janet Gaynor, "in a fancy dress."

goes on to indicate the affection held for Gaynor: “However, it says a lot for Janet and her talent that this discrepancy is forgiven and forgotten after the first few moments” (p. 5). *The Film Weekly* (1932, Mar 5, pp. 25-26) noted that her Scots accent was non-existent and that for most of the film she, “generally succeeds in looking just like Janet Gaynor in a fancy dress” (4.14). Orme, writing in *The Sketch* on March 9<sup>th</sup> found it “as difficult to believe in Miss Gaynor as a little Scots emigrant as it is to take her adventures seriously” (p. 432). *The Evening Telegraph* (Dundee) gave a concise review of the film

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nature and rushes to board Heather's ship. On the ship he proposes to Heather, who accepts, and they plan to be married by the captain on the high seas.” <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=950>

<sup>48</sup> Posters for the film all include ‘George Gershwin’s Music’ immediately under the title before any other cast or crew member.

which simply read, “unfortunate little immigrant from what appears to be Scotland, finds the U.S. a very big place” (p. 5). Even the critic for *The Scotsman* felt compelled to comment on Gaynor’s vocal qualities in the film: “it is a richly amusing experience to hear Janet Gaynor, with her strong Transatlantic accent, claim to be Scots...the slight tale makes no demand on the intelligence” (1932, Aug 9, p. 5). A correspondent to *The Film Weekly* (1932, Nov, p. 19), signing themselves as “True Scot” suggested of Gaynor that, “she ought never to have had the part of a Scots girl. Her dialect was anything but Scottish, and her dress was exaggerated. Numerous incidents in this picture were an insult to Scotland.”

Gaynor’s performance is hampered by her inability to consistently use any accent. She occasionally attempts to introduce the accent but does this in the middle of a line and the result is that the voice heard is an amalgam of differing peaks. One of her lines is, “you can’t take a chance on love Sasha, you’ve got to be sure.” The opening phrase, “you can’t take a chance on love Sasha,” is delivered in a straight American accent, followed by Gaynor breathing in. Her breathing strategy emphasises the second part of the line where it may have been better for her if she had treated the line as two separate statements to Sasha. Her exhalation on the next word, “you’ve” marks the point where she changes her accent: “got” is pronounced “get” and the last three words, “to be sure” are said in a cod-Irish accent. Next she responds to news that Mr Beaumont has left the ship, saying, “didn’t he leave a message for me?” This line is delivered, again in an American voice other than the word, “message” which is uttered as “missidge,” a pronunciation unlikely to be aired by any Scots accent. Her final spoken words in the scene are to her dog: she tells it, “it’s alright darling, I’ll take care of you” both of the ‘r’s pronounced as if she is from Massachusetts, the ‘r’ becoming ‘ah’ as opposed to a rolling Scots ‘rrr.’

There is no doubt that Gaynor’s attempt at a Scottish accent is appalling but she is not the only performer in the film required to use an alien voice. Lawrence O’ Sullivan, a native of Pittsburgh, plays the Irish character Detective O’Flynn. His accent sounds throughout like a poor imitation of a poor imitation of a west coast Irishman. The voiceless dental fricative of the digraph ‘th’ is inconsistently applied in character leading to another mixed accent that serves to dislocate character from background. O’Flynn though, is simply a caricature Irishman who exists to provide comic relief in the film’s tenser moments. Gaynor, the Oscar winning actress, fails in her vocal performance of Scottishness. Her work in *Delicious*, and the press reaction

to it, illustrates that costume alone would not be enough to be convincing in representing and performing a national identity. Reading her Scottishness in *Delicious*, and the reaction to it, it can be seen that the measure of affection for her as a performer is so great that her ineptitude in the part is forgiven by local critics and accepted as unimportant by international critics.

## Conclusion

Siegfried Kracauer (1949, p.53) noted that Hollywood, the American film industry, tried to reflect popular attitudes in its portrayals of foreign characters but that the result of this was that these, as he put them, “vague attitudes,” resulted in concrete types. The very real problem for Scottishness in film is that vague attitudes were already cemented in the minds of North American filmmakers thanks to the literary influence and the popularity of parlour ballads. It is not surprising that the musical instrument used in *King of Jazz* to denote Scotland is the bagpipe, nor should it really be a shock that the song chosen to introduce Scotland to the musical melting pot should be one written by Robert Burns. The two are Scottish exports, both in their own ways icons of the nation, and both easily associated with Scotland in the minds of the greater public. Visual imagery of Scotland was already set in filmic terms: a man in a kilt and most likely a military association to boot. This seemed to be so strong that there was little need for accuracy in the reproduction of Scottish voices and the treatment of the Scottish voice brought both new problems and new solutions.

Both *The Black Watch* and *Seven Days Leave* featured lead male actors who were not native Scots. Where Victor McLaglen received some criticism for his vocal performance from the press, Gary Cooper did not. This was for two reasons. Firstly McLaglen had an expectation attached to him from his work in the silent era; people thought they knew what he would sound like. Secondly, the producers of *Seven Days Leave* had the foresight to change the lead character’s country of origin.

Hollywood, American film, dealt in stereotypes and caricatures as these were already seen as the most effective manner of communicating information about the characters seen on screen. The accuracy of the actor in vocal performance comes some way to the fore, although as shown in the case of established, well-liked stars such as Janet Gaynor, this was not an insurmountable hurdle. The Scottish accent



was a point of contention in the UK press but this contention was seemingly dependent on the feelings towards the performer attempting it. Representations of Scottishness in the early sound years in the US failed to develop further. Established stereotypes were sufficient for the filmmakers for the simple reason that the visual imagery of Scottishness was by this point universally accepted.

The next two chapters examine the manners in which UK film-makers represented and performed Scottishness during the key years of the transition to sound, where native Scottish performers portrayed the nation to the world. Beginning with two of the biggest Scottish stars of the era, Sir Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe, Chapter 5 examines transitions from silent to sound cinema in tandem with the transition from the music hall stage to the silver screen through the works of two Scotch comics. Chapter 6 closely examines for the first time the 1930 film, *The Loves of Robert Burns* (Wilcox), a work that is positioned at a crucial point in the transition from silent to sound.

## Chapter 5

### British Representations of Scottishness 1927-1933:

#### From the Music Hall Stage to Centre Screen

Filmic representations of Scottish people have, so far, been identified as positioning the Scots in one of several categories. However, the most frequent trope in the performance of Scottishness has been intentionally comedic, with the Scot as either a fool or a foil and dressed in 'classic' Highland regalia. Such representation of nationality deliberately inflected through performance is examined in this chapter through the work of two of the most popular Scottish figures of the music hall circuits as they attempted not only the transition from silent to sound film but also the transition from stage work to screen. The chapter offers a historically informed account of the careers of Sir Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe in a chronological manner from circa 1900. The films that are closely examined were all made during the key period of the transition to sound, 1927 to 1933. Their men's performances are analysed and contrasted with particular attention to their vocal work as, for the first time in this thesis, native Scottish voices are heard on film. Other films that the men appeared in during my period can be classified as missing, believed lost. Nevertheless, they are reflected upon through records held by trade and newspaper archives as well as ephemera.

Sir Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe were two well-known performers in both the music hall circuit in the UK and the vaudeville circuit in North America, where they held particular appeal due to what Richard Zumkhawala-Cook (2008, p. 130) refers to as, "Scottish America's blood fantasies," as well as across the Antipodes. These blood fantasies refer to immigrants, often several generations removed, and their holding on to the idea of the "old country," as well as the identities proclaimed by their families, such as Scotch-American or Irish-American. Lauder and Fyffe both performed as "Scotch Comedians." The Scotch Comedian, often also known as the Scotch Comic had been a popular attraction in the music halls since the mid-1850s (Maloney, 2010, p. 132). Certainly, by the 1870s both the term and the persona was so widespread that it was claimed that no evening's bill of entertainment was

complete without a Scotch Comic.<sup>49</sup> Styles and modes of performance overlapped, as did the material used, and the use of the languages of Scotland positioned the figure as the point that created a community of performer and audience (Brown, 2013, p. 122). Alasdair Cameron and Adrienne Scullion (1996, p. 39) view the Scotch Comic as not only a link in an evolving chain of national consciousness but also a celebrated symbol of nationality, emblematic of types of behaviours that audiences were not allowed to express under normal circumstances. The national identity that was performed was so strong that Cameron and Scullion (1996, p. 45) said of Lauder and Fyffe, “these are performers with international careers whose stage identity, humour and audience was distinctly and most certainly Scottish.” Lauder and Fyffe were certainly not the only Scotch Comics working on the circuits at the time but they are the two that I focus on in this chapter. One of their contemporaries, Tommy Lorne, was nearly as popular domestically but was essentially different to both Lauder and Fyffe and did not have the international reach or success that the two did.<sup>50</sup>

That Lauder and Fyffe were popular is not in dispute. They both found success in London and the USA; Lauder through the aggressive marketing and management of his agent inveigling expatriate networks of Scots around the globe and he toured across the North of America and the Antipodes frequently.<sup>51</sup> To use stage terminology of the period, both of these men were “big time” (White, 1926, p. 436).<sup>52</sup> The adulation and success that the men had was not universal though. Their routines and performances were viewed by some critics as worthless and insulting to Scotland. Both men were targeted by name in Hugh MacDiarmid’s poem *To*

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<sup>49</sup> See Paul Maloney, *Scottish Music Hall and Variety* (no date) for further details. This can be found at: [http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/collections/sta/articles/music\\_hall/index.html](http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/collections/sta/articles/music_hall/index.html)

<sup>50</sup> *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* reported that he was offered £1000 per week to work for the Fox Film Company in Hollywood for three months to make talkies after a run in pantomime in Glasgow (1929, October 19, p. 7). None of these works survive (if, indeed, they were made) but there is a short film, *The Lard Song* (Newman, 1927), that he made for De Forest Phonofilm held by the BFI in London. Further information can be found by Paul Maloney (2010, pp. 137-141) who provides insight into Lorne’s stage act, impact and influence and, in common with Mackie (1973, pp. 52-55), notes that Lorne was essentially different from Lauder and Fyffe by dint of being a clown, a figure more related to the European circus tradition, who exaggerated and played with his Scottishness to the domestic audiences of the time.

<sup>51</sup> This biographical detail was written by Gregory Lauder-Frost, one of the great-nephews of Lauder and can be found at <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/htol/lauder3.html>, a resource run by the Centre for Scottish Studies at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia

<sup>52</sup> Big time meant an act that worked on a circuit of theatres where they only had to perform twice a day as opposed to a small-time circuit where acts would have to perform multiple times.

*Circumjack Cencrastus*, in which MacDiarmid excoriated them as being out of date, insular and insulting to the nation and his view of it. MacDiarmid viewed them as work-shy loafers, and elsewhere referred to Lauder as an, “overpaid clown” (cited by Goldie, 2006, p. 7) although it has been suggested that MacDiarmid may have simply been jealous of the two men’s accumulation of wealth (Lyll, 2004, p. 6; Goldie, 2006, p. 8).

There is a section of MacDiarmid’s work, titled *Hokum*, which opens with the complaint that a man such as he should be in penury when other, less intelligent people (Lauder and Fyffe) should experience great financial rewards for peddling hokum (McCulloch, 1982, p. 182). Hokum itself was defined by Percy White (1926, p. 437) in his lexicon of common American stage terminology as: “any old, time-worn gag, or piece of business which has been found by experience to absolutely sure-fire before any kind of audience” and, as such, implies an audience taste for old-fashioned entertainment. Rob King consequently sees “hokum” as a culturally divisive term: on one hand, it encourages an anti-modernist agenda which stifles creativity and expansion of careers but, on the other, it became a celebratory term of resistance to metropolitan sophistication in rural areas (2011, p. 323). I argue in this chapter that whilst both men have been seen by some as mere peddlers of hokum Lauder was certainly not anti-modernity, he instead embraced the opportunities afforded him in order to further his career and that Fyffe was one of the first truly modern comedians and actors to emerge from Scotland yet he was wrapped in an all too familiar cloth.

## Sir Harry Lauder and His World-Famous Songs

Sir Harry Lauder was born in Portobello, on the outskirts of Edinburgh, in 1870. Lauder’s career on stage began at the age of 24 in 1894.<sup>53</sup> By 1900 he had established himself as a touring comedian and met with success in London. Lauder was a sophisticated artist who was well aware of the potential that international modern media would afford him (Goldie, 2010, p. 10) and he was, if not the

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<sup>53</sup> Taken from Lauder’s biography from University of Glasgow, Special Collections, available at: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/collectionsa-z/scottishtheatrearchive/stacollections/sirharrylauder/html>

trailblazer for the Scotch Comedian on the international stage, the first to fully exploit opportunities afforded him.<sup>54</sup>

By 1927, Lauder had reached the age of 57 and he could lay claim to being more favoured in some parts of the globe than even the great Charlie Chaplin (Busch, 2003, p. 39). His decision to perform as a Scotch comedian was inspired by seeing Dan Leno singing London-style, Cockney songs in the Glasgow Empire in 1900 for a wage of £100 per week.<sup>55</sup> He reasoned that if Leno could be paid that much to sing those songs in Glasgow, then an artist should be able to be earn that much to sing Scottish songs in London. He was seen on his first engagement in London by George Foster who became his London agent and he worked his way around the London circuit until becoming an established favourite (Baker, 2014, p. 59). Lauder, on his London debut wore tartan and spoke in a Scots accent so strong that George Foster is quoted by Richard Baker (2014, p. 59) as saying of the audience that, “they couldn’t understand half he said or sang...but everyone realised that he was a genius and that nothing like him had struck London for years.” This statement though was made by a man with a vested personal interest in Lauder’s career and stands in contrast to the claims that Lauder changed the language and styles of his routines when he performed outside Scotland. Lauder himself claimed that he spoke English with a Scotch accent as he knew that the use of broad Scots as he performed it in Scotland would have little or no impact in the wider world (Marshalsay, 1992). MacDiarmid aside, Lauder’s reputation shone, with the renowned critic James Agate declaring him to be a great actor who had “an exceedingly fine feeling for character” (Baker, 2014, pp. 59-61), although a more reflective description of his abilities came from H. V. Morton (1929, p. 166) who said of Lauder, “the greatest compliment the world pays him is the fact that he is the only comedian who is permitted to be serious whenever he feels like it.”

Lauder was seen, by the majority of his global audience, as a true representation of Scottishness (Horrall, 2001, p. 190); indeed, Marlis Schweitzer

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<sup>54</sup> Cameron and Scullion (1996) discuss Lauder’s international career and view it as a consequence of the work of W.F. Frame, a Scotch comedian who preceded Lauder. Frame appears to have created the template for Lauder to copy, in terms of touring overseas, particularly in the USA and Canada, around the turn of the twentieth century. Lauder, according to Cameron and Scullion, was simply in the right place at the right time to exploit travel possibilities.

<sup>55</sup> See Marshalsay, K. (1992). *The Waggle o’ The Kilt*. Glasgow: Glasgow University Library Studies. Retrieved from: <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/STELLA/STARN/crit/WAGGLE/lauder.html>

notes that he had such an impact on the American audience that his voice and accent became the expected voice for anyone from Scotland to use (2011, p. 254). Andrew Horrall (2001, p. 213) remarks of him that, “so successful had he been as a performer that by 1915 Scotland had become the ‘land of Burns and Harry Lauder’, and, to at least some Americans, all Scotsmen had become imperfect representations of Lauder.”

Lauder embraced the potential of new technology by recording his material for release as phonograph records with pictorial song sheets which were then used as part of the marketing of his act to a wider base, exploiting expatriate networks on overseas tours (Maloney, 2010, p. 135). Headlines were hit on both sides of the Atlantic in 1907 due to his fee for visiting the USA - \$2,500 per week (Wertheim, 2014, p. 197).<sup>56</sup> His overseas success was so great and the demand for his act so strong that, according to Schweitzer and Guadagnolo (2012, pp. 145-160), in the USA there was a burgeoning industry for vaudevillian mimics – essentially tribute acts.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence Lauder’s act was being performed before he arrived and he was greeted as a returning hero in some places he had never been to before. Schweitzer and Guadagnolo (2012, p. 157) posit that the impersonators in the USA escaped criticisms of ethnic stereotyping because they were seen to be imitating a singular Scottish singer, not a generic Scottish type.

Lauder, as seen in Chapter 3, was no stranger to working on camera by 1927. Rick Altman (2004, p. 177) notes that in 1914 Selig-Polyscope released 17 films of him singing, thereby capitalising on his sixth tour of the USA. These films were produced in Chicago whilst Lauder was touring the USA in early February 1914 and, according to Scott Curtis (1999, p. 142), were an immediate hit and used sound-on-disc synchronisation equipment to allow the audience to hear and see Lauder

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<sup>56</sup> Marlis Schweitzer (2011, pp. 255-256) states that US trade papers reported that Lauder’s initial fee was actually \$5000 per week, not \$2500. This appears to have been the work of Lauder’s manager, William Morris, and the manipulation of the media continued with Lauder being reported as claiming that up to half of that fee would go on buying him out of contracts he was already signed to in the UK.

<sup>57</sup> The US was not the only area in which ‘tribute’ acts to Lauder performed. Billy Merson, an English music hall performer, performed a routine called ‘Harry Lauder Burlesque’ which was recorded by De Forest Phonofilms and featured the song *Scotland’s Whisky*. The routine is a pastiche of one of Lauder’s stage routines. Merson and De Forest Phonofilm are credited with producing the first sound-on-film productions in England from September 1926 by John Mundy (2007, p. 27) although Paul Matthew St. Pierre dates the film as being from December 1927 (2009, p. 42). Denis Gifford places the film as ‘date uncertain’ (2016, p. 330).

singing.<sup>58</sup> Donald Crafton (1997, p. 90) talks briefly of this film career in the USA noting that Lauder was approached by Fox-Case in October 1926 to make “canned presentations” yet he stopped halfway through one of his songs and announced to camera, “This is a test.” Crafton presumes that this was to prevent unauthorised exploitation of his performance, most likely on the instruction of his American agent, William Morris Junior, who was undoubtedly protecting his investment.

In 1927, *The Billboard* (March 12, p. 10) reported that Lauder was finally moving into film: “He will make his debut as a star in a picture entitled *Huntingtower*.” Lauder himself was in *The Evening Telegraph* (1927, May 4, p. 2) quoted as saying that the film would allow him to be, “an actor for the first time.” Released in 1928, *Huntingtower* (Pearson, 1927) is classified as missing, believed lost, as no footage from it can be sourced. What does survive are publicity images and photographs taken from its release. There is also a short local topical film of Lauder visiting the Regent Picture House in Glasgow on the day of the film’s release.<sup>59</sup> This topical film shows that the front of the cinema has been dressed as a baronial castle, in keeping with the film’s setting, and there is a group of boys, the local lads turned actors, who appeared in the film as the “Gorbals Die Hards” – the youth gang who assist the protagonist – in full costume.<sup>60</sup> The event is clearly a publicity stunt, engineered by the cinema manager of the time, William McGaw. Lauder appears in the topical film as he is attending the screening yet he appears with no tartan on his person at all. There are possible reasons: either he did not feel the need to be in character as ‘Sir Harry Lauder’ for the screening, or, he did not know that he was to be filmed. Lauder’s performance of his Scottishness, on that day, October 5<sup>th</sup> 1928, was absent. He appears in everyday clothing, a performer in mufti.

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<sup>58</sup> These early sound films, the technology behind them and the protectionist business practices of William Morris Jr are discussed in greater length by Scott Curtis (1999).

<sup>59</sup> This is available from NLSMIA and titled, ‘Sir Harry Lauder Visits the Regent Picture House, Glasgow, to View *Huntingtower*’. The film may be accessed online at <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/7936>

<sup>60</sup> The use of amateurs in the film represents a continuation of Lauder’s work in *I Love A Lassie*, where the majority of the cast were local people with no training or experience as performers.



Figure 5-1. *Huntingtower*: Lauder as McCunn.

Based on John Buchan's novel of 1915, the plot of *Huntingtower* chronicles bourgeois triumph over Bolshevism (Waddell, 2012, p. 72). The novel involves Dickson McCunn, an affluent retired grocer from Glasgow who holidays in southwest Scotland and foils a Russian revolutionist plot to kidnap and murder two members of Russian aristocracy. Lauder took the part of McCunn in the filmed version. Seen in costume in stills from the production, he seems a good fit to portray a working class aspirant who is playing at being the Laird (5.1). Lauder's costume as McCunn was little

different from that worn on stage, even the hat was added by Lauder as an instantly recognisable part of his projected identity (Butt, 2010, p. 174). George Pearson, the director of *Huntingtower* had Lauder in mind for the film from its inception (Pearson, 1957, p. 145).

1928 saw Lauder continue to tour the circuits of the world. He spent four weeks playing the Knickerbocker theatre in New York. *Variety's* reviewer, Lait, was enthusiastic about Lauder, praising him highly yet there are signs in the column that this critic may have been getting tired of the familiar routine: "In his program he practically duplicated the first routine he did in New York, which set the nation aflame with his name...he makes any and every other Scotch comedian – at least – look like milky water against rare wine" (1928, February 1, p. 37). The following year found Lauder generating more headlines in the USA due to his fee for a radio appearance. In August 1929, he was paid \$15,000.00 for singing three songs, with *Variety* reporting that, "\$15,000 for three numbers is twice what Al Jolson received on the Dodge Bros. hour" (1929, August 14, p. 57). Indeed by 1929 Lauder had been a



successful artist for some three decades and was an elder statesman of music hall. In the USA he was certainly not known for his appearance in *Huntingtower* as *Variety* demonstrated in its article reporting he was to begin work on a film in the US for, “Welch-Pearson [*sic*]...Lauder appeared several years ago in a silent film “Hightowers” made in England, but the picture didn’t do so well over here” (1929, December 25, p. 5).<sup>61</sup>

Lauder gave an interview to *The San Francisco Examiner* in November 1929. This was reprinted in *The Billboard* and his responses provide an insight into not only his view of his and other’s acts, but also of his attitude towards the character types he is portraying. Lauder distances himself from other performers, “to many it is only a job – a way to earn a living. They have to change their acts every year. But I sing the same songs I sang 20 years ago, and the people like them” (1929, November 23, p. 49). Given that he could still sell out theatres and tours in most of the English speaking world it seems that Lauder was entirely committed to giving the people what they want. In his case, the audience ostensibly seek only comfort and reassurance. It is not stretching a point too far to suggest that as Lauder used expatriate networks to further his career then the audiences from these areas are ones that are, as Zumkhawala-Cook posits, clinging on to their original national identity. Cameron and Scullion (1996, p. 39) write that the figure of the Scotch Comic was given its universal power and currency by, “their appeal to the Scottish diaspora of North America and the Empire.” They are being cosseted by Lauder’s work: he is showing them Scotland as they remember, or in some cases imagine it. Ian Brown (2005, p. 139) posits that, “the diaspora preserves its own versions of that Scottish culture that it holds in high regard,” and in the USA, it was Lauder’s performance as the epitome of all things Scottish that guaranteed the loyalty of the Scots diaspora as Schweitzer (2011, p. 255) states, “Lauder supported diasporic fantasies of home.” Schweitzer and Guadagnolo (2012, p. 152) note that in the early twentieth century major urban centres in the USA had Scottish Societies, made up of immigrants. Lauder’s appearances in these major cities encouraged these societies to feel not only a collective sense of identity but also a stronger connection to their ancestors. If

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<sup>61</sup> This quote serves to illuminate the lack of impact that *Huntingtower* had in the USA. Not only does *Variety* misspell the name of the production company, Welch-Pearson, they also manage to get the name of the film entirely incorrect.

Lauder's performance, his representation of Scottishness rings true to this expatriate network then why should he upset them by changing the routines that they clearly enjoy and demand?

Lauder turned 60 years old in 1930. A performer who was known for his vocal abilities and vast sales of phonographic recordings, yet age did not seem to be having any adverse effects on his stage work.<sup>62</sup> Charles Crouch (May 3, 1930), critic for *The Billboard*, reviewed his show on Broadway in May: "his singing was fresh and warmly filled to the brim with the good old fashioned charm and sentiment that overcomes his auditors, making them entirely his subjects...there is nothing out of date about the untiring Scot, whose following appears to remain loyal to him." Whilst his stage performances were still popular with the public, his more recent forays into film had so far been unsuccessful in widening his audience base. *Huntingtower* was a silent film yet Lauder's greatest appeal came from his singing and his routines. *Auld Lang Syne* (Pearson, 1929) was to be the follow up, again directed by George Pearson for Welsh-Pearson Films.<sup>63</sup> This was also to be silent but was written around Lauder's stage act and during the film he would be seen to sing six of his famous songs with the intention from the producers that the cinema orchestras would play the melodies in synchronisation with the image (Pearson, 1957, p.155).

Pearson's autobiography, *Flashback: The Autobiography of a British Film Maker* (1957), reveals the technical difficulties that were encountered in the production of *Auld Lang Syne*. At the time of its production, Lauder's song *I Love A Lassie* was a world-wide favourite. Pearson (1957, p. 156) tried to incorporate songs into the film by arranging that Lauder, "should sing them, during filming, as near as possible in synchronisation with their gramophone records. He tried hard to keep strict lip synchronisation, but found the effort too disturbing." Pearson claims that he managed to edit Lauder to perfect synchronisation which allowed him to convince R.C.A. to release the discs to create the sound track for the film. The result of this effort was that *Auld Lang Syne* was released and, according to Pearson (1957, p. 157), "Lauder was seen, and heard singing in perfect synchronisation, in a film that

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<sup>62</sup> According to William Dean-Myatt (2012, p. 2) "Lauder could be relied on to be a best seller all over the British Isles (not to mention USA, Canada and Australia)."

<sup>63</sup> Pearson (1957, p. 152) writes in his autobiography that *Auld Lang Syne* was written by the distinguished critic Pat Mannock and was written specifically for Lauder. Pat Mannock also wrote for *The Picturegoer* which had featured a very positive two-page spread on Lauder and *Huntingtower* in 1927.

was otherwise eighty per cent silent.” Unfortunately, *Auld Lang Syne* is also missing, believed lost. A telling review, written by Maitland Davidson for *Britannia* magazine (1929, April 19, p. 643), states: “the acting of Lauder, his comic genius as translated in facial expressions and the movements of that ugly and ungainly little body, are so superbly right as to make one almost forget the poverty of his material.”

In late 1930 Lauder and Pearson were back working together to make films. The UK had caught up with the technical challenges that sound had introduced meaning that Lauder could finally be seen and heard singing on film. However, it was not to be a feature length narrative film that was produced. The men were creating a series of short films to be released under the banner title, *Sir Harry Lauder In A Series Of His World Famous Songs*.<sup>64</sup> The films and the manner of their making could be seen to underline Lauder’s commitment to his material and to his paying public, but this method of selecting the material for the films appears to be more clever marketing by his management. *The Film Weekly* (1930, December 13, p. 6) magazine in the UK set up a public voting system in order that the public could decide which songs they wanted Lauder to perform. Some 8,659<sup>65</sup> readers responded, the object being to discover the twelve most popular songs from Lauder’s career. Lauder himself confirms through the auspices of *The Film Weekly* that this was his first talking picture. He is quoted as saying, “I asked your advice because throughout my career, I have always regarded the public as my judge. In making the talkies of the songs you have chosen I can assure you that I shall do my best to entertain” (ibid, p. 6). *The Film Weekly* on December 27<sup>th</sup> interviewed T.A. Welsh, one of the producers of the film, who stated, “our aim is to present Sir Harry to filmgoers in the intimate atmosphere of a music-hall performance...so realistic is the effect that one feels Lauder is there in person. Lauder’s voice reproduces perfectly” (1930, December 27, p.7). George Pearson (1957, p. 188), in his autobiography, recalls the production reasons differently: “the real purpose was to multiply his audiences a millionfold.”

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<sup>64</sup> An indicator of Lauder’s continuing popularity overseas is that *Variety* (December 24, 1930, p. 51) reported the making of the films in December 1930. *The Billboard* preferred to report Lauder’s continued popularity in the UK theatre circuit and highlighted his income. Lauder netted \$16,500.00 from two venues alone on his most recent tour, “\$9,000 from the Pavilion, Glasgow, and \$7,500 from the Empire, Edinboro [*sic*]. The famous Scotch comedian was booked on a percentage guarantee and drew record business at both theatres.” (*The Billboard*, Dec 27<sup>th</sup>, 1930, p. 17)

<sup>65</sup> Favourite Lauder Songs. 1930. *Film Weekly (Archive: 1928-1939)*, 4(113), pp. 6.

Whatever the motivations behind the film's production, some of these shorts are available to view, including *I Love A Lassie* and *Roamin' In The Gloamin'*. *I Love A Lassie* was the winner of the poll in *The Film Weekly* (1930, December 13, p. 6) and the first of the films to be produced. As T.A. Welsh had promised, the films would have identifiable music-hall settings. *I Love A Lassie* opens after the titles with a curtain that opens to reveal a painted backdrop of a rural scene, the entrances to the wings are flanked by painted, prop boulders. This is a staged performance in a theatrical setting. The effect concentrates the cinema audience's vision towards centre stage, mimicking a theatre. The tune to the title song is already playing and an audience can be heard chattering excitedly but remain unseen. The cinema viewer only sees the stage, as if they were sitting in a theatre's circle. The immediate impact for the cinema attendee is immersion into the world shown on the screen – they are in a music hall, exactly as the director and producer desired it.<sup>66</sup>

Lauder enters to the sound of applause and strides confidently towards centre stage, and as the refrain nears its end the director cuts to a medium long shot, the camera positioned slightly to stage left in the auditorium. Bedecked in tartan, he waves a brief acknowledgment to the audience and begins to sing, freely using Scots words in the lyrics of his song. The director cuts to a mid-shot and stays in this framing until the end of the first verse. The chorus begins and Lauder, now back in a medium long shot dances a jig as the unseen audience sing the chorus. The camera pans and tilts to follow him as he dances, simply to keep him in frame. Lauder begins each verse of his song with a gesture of his right hand, his left holding his trademark walking stick. The gesture points to the audience as if to say to them to pay heed as he is about to commence again. He is performing as he would on stage, making sure his audience are ready and aware that he is about to sing.

Peter Bailey (1994, pp. 131-132) discusses direct address in music hall and suggests that it was a commonly used tool. Performers would shift in and out of their routine to address the audience thereby positioning the audience as an active participant in the show. The theatregoer was thus given greater access to the artist. By allowing the crowd to see the joins in performance the performer was knowingly acknowledging their artifice. Lauder incorporates this mode throughout his screen

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<sup>66</sup> In his autobiography Pearson (1957, p. 188) wrote, "After some discussion it was decided to confine the film background to the Music Hall setting with which Lauder was accustomed."

performance and also directly addresses the camera so that the cinema viewer is included. Direct address in cinema is seen as a tool for comedic performance by Alex Clayton (2012, p. 51). Looking at the camera allows a reciprocal knowledge exchange between the performer and the audience and James Naremore (188, p. 70) terms such moments as performance within a performance, the result of which is a vital instance in intentional comedy. Lauder has transitioned from the music hall stage performance mode into a cinematic mode simply by continuing to do what he always did with the modification of treating the camera as an audience member (5.2).



The audience that is unseen in the film is definitely in the theatre. They have not been dubbed in in post-production. Lauder talks to them at one point. He moves upstage to look for his sweetheart, gazes offstage, jumps with excitement before then allowing

Figure 5-2. *I Love A Lassie*: Lauder uses direct address.

his body to sag in a gesture of sadness and disappointment before turning to the audience and saying, “it’s a nanny goat”, which provokes a huge laugh from the crowd. He turns again and sees her, turns back to the audience and raises a clenched fist in triumph before running off as the music fades out. He returns for a bow and the curtains close over the stage. As was the intention stated in the press, the cinema audience is getting Lauder’s stage routines recorded on film.

The second part of the film opens as the first, but with no music. Lauder walks out on to the stage but this time addresses the audience and the director stays in a medium long shot. He raises his right hand, the index finger pointing to the roof in a gesture that tells us he is about to speak. He repeats this gesture every time he wishes the audience to quieten down before the director cuts to him in a medium close up for an unaccompanied rendition of the opening verse of *The Auld Scotch Sangs*. Lauder, in line with Coquelin’s ideas of performance, has adjusted his performance to the frame. He knows that the size of shot has changed and he has adjusted the scale of his physical movement accordingly. He works within the size of the shot and none of his movements during this section are jarring or grandiose.

The lyrics to the song are in Scots – and Lauder emphasises every aspect of this but gives a clue as to his own native accent due to his rhoticism. Lauder follows this song not by allowing the audience time to applaud, but by immediately introducing his next turn. As he does this, the director cuts back to the medium long shot and we see Lauder talking to the audience in the theatre before launching in to an accompanied version of *My Ain Dear Nell*, the vocals synchronised with the change of shot back to a medium close-up. His speaking voice is important here: before he begins to sing he asks the audience “do you remember the songs your mother used to sing, or your dad?” Lauder is not using Scots here and he is slurring his words slightly. It is as if he has forgotten which accent he should be talking in.

Throughout this film he employs a stylised use of Scots in song, particularly in the song that he has written – the title track itself. He refers to a “Hielan’ lassie”, and tells us that he will “soon hae her all to masel” and he goes on to pepper the lyrics with Scots words and the stylised pronunciation of English words: her “faither”, “nicht”, he talks of his “hert” being captured by his “derrling” and finishes the third verse of the song with a line that is not fully intelligible but sounds as if he is singing, “if she was here I’d row her in my pline”.<sup>67</sup> When Lauder addresses the audience, though, he does not use Scots terminology – after singing *The Auld Scotch Sangs* he talks of “mother” and “dad”, not the Scots “mither” or “faither.” This free mixing of languages does not mark Lauder out as unique though. Stage Scots as opposed to Scots itself was already an existing convention from the nineteenth century, and was shaped by considerations of effective delivery of the material (Bill Findlay, 1996, p. 33). Lauder’s stage Scots is marked by clarity of enunciation of all words of either language and combines with the pace of his delivery to create a hybrid language that is intended to be universally understood and is typical of the work of Scots language entertainers (Findlay, 1996, p. 32).

The song finishes and we are back in the establishing shot, the curtains close and Lauder goes off to rapturous applause from his audience. However, as Lauder is in character and in this case the character is a simple and excited country boy he pulls the curtain aside in a medium close up shot and leans out to wave to his

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<sup>67</sup> The actual lyrics for this line are, “And if she were here I’d revel in the pride.” The lack of intelligibility is a combination of old film stock deteriorating before digitisation and a sudden cut as a piece of the film is missing.

audience with what could be best described as a *glaikit*<sup>68</sup> look and a wee grin before the end title comes up.

*Roamin' In The Gloamin'* is the second in the series of films. The camera shots and set-ups are identical – given Welsh's stated desire to replicate the music hall in the cinema there is no need for extravagant camera work. The direction is nearly identical: Lauder enters wearing the kilt but this time the tartan is different. Wearing different tartans was one of the ways in which Lauder could guide an audience through changes of character – his song-sheets and record sleeves featured pictures of his characters and the audience could associate the stage clothes with the character from the records and song-sheets.

Lauder begins his song exactly as he did in the previous film, but towards the middle of the song he breaks off to tell the audience the tale of his young love that he has bought a ring for as he is going to ask her to marry him and after this tale he returns to finish off the song. Once again the audience is unseen but he commands them to join in his singing and they audibly do so.

One of his subtler character changes is apparent towards the end of the song. Lauder holds his walking stick as if he has his sweetheart in his arms. He is walking out with his love and is not afraid to physicalize the relationship through intimacy unlike the character he portrayed in the previous film who would never behave in such a manner. This character is more *au fait* with the ways of the world than the previous one and the physical change of attitude underlines this to the audience. That change also highlights Lauder's abilities as an actor. He would perform up to a dozen different characters, each one different from the last. In Coquelin's terms, Lauder is playing himself with this change: he has examined what he will do in character and made the physical and mental changes he needs in order to communicate the difference to the audience. A very simple change, yet one that is remarkably effective in highlighting the difference in attitude and behaviour of this character compared to the last one he played.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> 'Glaikit' is a Scots word meaning stupid, foolish or thoughtless. The definition is available from the Dictionary of Scots Language at <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/glaikit>

<sup>69</sup> This is an example of Lauder using Ernst Mathjis' idea of, "the self-conscious design of a performance on the basis of a previous one, often by the same actor, but also based on real life templates, exemplary models or clichéd stereotypes" (2012, p. 141).

The routine finishes and the curtains draw again – the film reflecting Lauder’s stage appearances as well, closing the curtain in order that the theatre audience knew that he had completed his routine – and reopening to introduce his next routine. The second part of the film appears to be the close of his set. He comes out on stage and speaks to the audience. He uses no Scots words this time and has changed his accent from the previous routine: gone is the twang of the teuchter, the Highland native. He is projecting as an actor would in a theatre and emphasises his pronunciation. His rhoticism is noticeable and this carries into his rendition of the song, *The End of the Road*: as he approaches the chorus he overly rolls the ‘r’ sound. The audience in the theatre have seen Lauder before – they know when they are to sing with him in this song and they do so without prompting.<sup>70</sup>

The reception of the *Series* films was mixed. Reviewing *I Love A Lassie*, *The Bioscope* noted that the intimacy of seeing Lauder close-up for the first time might bring a new appeal to his audience and remarked on the undoubted box-office potential of having such a famous and well-known entertainer in the cinema. Their review is upbeat, commenting on Lauder’s inimitable style and his ability as a performer to draw in every member of his audience, yet there is a note of complaint regarding the *mise-en-scène*, “little has been expended on the matter of production, Lauder appearing on the stage before a familiar back cloth” (1931, February 11, p. 43). *Variety* on *I Love A Lassie* simply stated, “Just as he appears on the stage, so Sir Harry Lauder posed before the camera. Pearson-Gainsborough made this subject in England. There is no comedy to relieve two songs” (1932, May 31, p. 14).

Lauder’s refusal to create new material worked against him with critics and his hijacking of his test in 1926 may well have put him out of favour with Hollywood producers. He appears to have removed himself further from their favour when *Variety* (1932, December 1932, p. 3) reported him as saying at a party at his agent’s house in Los Angeles that, “It seems to me that there’s a great lack of sincerity

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<sup>70</sup> I have been unable to discover whether or not cinema audiences sang along with the film in the manner that the music hall audience did. The question of whether or not they did was raised when I gave a presentation as part of the Bo’Ness Hippodrome’s Silent Film Festival in 2015 and used some of the footage of Lauder that is discussed in this chapter. The audience at the presentation were mostly of retirement age and as one of the songs came on in the auditorium it was immediately apparent that around three quarters of the audience in 2015 were singing along with Lauder on screen from 1931. Malcolm Cook (2013, pp. 9-10) notes that the Ideal company made a singalong film of Lauder’s *Stop Yer Ticklin’ Jock* (1926) for release in cinemas but makes no mention of the Welsh-Pearson films I am concerned with.



here...the picture business has come on lean days. It can't expect to prosper unless those who are in it are sincere." From this point on some writers in the American press seems to have grown tired of Lauder. Whilst his performance of identity is never mentioned directly it is his reliance on his old material, his hokum as it were, that provokes the irritation of the critics although this is balanced by their admiration for his performing skill. *Variety* reviewed him at the Hollywood Playhouse noting that, "Lauder at 63 is little different from the Lauder of 25 years ago...in action words and gags he rendered those numbers as he did in 1907", but then held him up as an act that younger comedians should aspire to emulate, "Lauder in many respects is an object lesson to his profession, particularly in the use of his material. It may be old but it's always clean." (1932, December 6, pp. 47, 53).

Lauder made only one more film, *The End Of The Road* (Bryce, 1936). The film is another that can be classed as missing, believed lost, although some stills are available. Lauder portrayed the patriarch of a Scottish touring concert party in the film. Off stage, in the film, he is seen wearing a tweed suit with a top hat, a working man like any other. On stage in the film, he wears "Sir Harry's" clothes: the kilt, the oversized sporran, the white gloves and the walking stick are all present. In the same way that his material did not change, neither did his use of costume. Tartan was inseparable from his image in the eyes of the public and Lauder's performance of Scottishness lasted him the majority of his lifetime. This hokum was both his genius and his curse. Coquelin suggested that one of the greatest problems a performer can have is that the naturalistic illusion employed is so convincing in the creation of the character that the performer is condemned to be disregarded as an artist (Carnicke, 2010, p. 186). Harry Lauder certainly fits into that compartmentalisation. He was known as a Scotch Comic and played that role so convincingly and for so long that he became the epitome of Scottishness globally.

He was Scotland's greatest entertainment export of the time yet never seems to have been fully appreciated as an artist and performer. His construction of Scottishness was so reflective of the expectations of the audience that he was unable to break away from his stage persona in films and evidently unwilling to try to in theatres. The inflected nationality that Lauder performed throughout his career was so successful that he became a major cultural influence.

Artists that followed in his wake would, somewhat inevitably, be compared to Lauder's performed Scottishness. The next performer in this chapter, Will Fyffe, rode

on the wave that Lauder created but added elements to his performance that made him different.

## Will Fyffe

Will Fyffe was born in Dundee in 1885. By 1927, he had reached the age of 42 and had been performing professionally for some thirty-six years. His father had been a ship's carpenter who had given up his job in order to pursue a career in the theatre, particularly the "penny-geggies," travelling troupes of players who performed Shakespeare and melodramas (Scullion, 2008, p. 371). Alisdair Cameron also talks of Fyffe's early years in these "penny-geggies."<sup>71</sup> Richard Baker explains further that from the age of seven Fyffe was performing a wide range of parts and that he eventually moved into performing in revue – the music hall circuit. He styled himself as a Scotch comedian perhaps, as Cameron and Scullion (1996, p. 51) observe, "what anyone with an eye to the commercial main chance does is to recreate what had made money before."

He wrote all of his own material and penned two songs that he tried to sell to Lauder. The songs, *I Belong To Glasgow* and *I'm Ninety-Four Today* were rejected by Lauder so Fyffe used them himself.<sup>72</sup> His acting and performing skills were held in high regard. Richard Baker notes that after his London debut in 1921 the critic James Agate wrote that, "the world now holds a new and unspoiled joy. This is the Scotchman as he really is, not belaudered to the sentimental skies...I here and now salute a great artist and comic genius." (Baker, 2014, p. 58). Jack House (1986, p. 41), the Scottish writer and broadcaster, said that Fyffe, "slew the audience. He was a bit like Harry Lauder but didn't have such a good voice. On the other hand his character studies had more depth than Lauder's."

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<sup>71</sup> See <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/collections/sta/articles/geggies/index.html>, for an abridged version of Cameron's writing on Scottish popular theatre.

<sup>72</sup> See: Electric Scotland website <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/henderson/singalong/page19.html>; The Scottish Daily Mail article, <http://www.pressreader.com/uk/scottish-daily-mail/20121123/281771331478806>. Trevor Griffiths (2012, p. 165) refers to Lauder performing *I Belong to Glasgow* in 1946 at a Church of Scotland 'Open Doors' event. This event was designed to provide local youth with a more attractive and inspiring alternative to the cinema or the street corner. Some ministers questioned the spiritual element of the event given the song's celebration of drunkenness.

Fyffe's popularity and impact was so great that one year after his London debut he performed at the Royal Variety Performance. By the mid-1920s he was firmly established on the UK music hall circuit and, like Lauder before him, then turned his attention to the USA. He made his American debut in New York in 1927. Sime, writing for *Variety* (1927, April 6, p. 28), was enthusiastic: "there's no doubt that Fyffe could hold an audience for a full evening. He's a show in himself...there is nothing on the Palace bill or in Vaudeville that can follow Will Fyffe excepting a picture." J.W.R. writing for *The Billboard* (1927, April 16, p. 19), concurred: "he is indeed a character comedian deserving of all the good things recorded by those responsible for his appearance in this country...his success was overwhelming." Fyffe had a definite and strong impact in the USA. By 1929, E.E.S. in *The Billboard* (1929, January 26, p. 89) described Fyffe as, "a perfect blending of both tragedian and comedian...Fyffe will most assuredly scale the heights now passively defended, but once held unassailably by the rather different Sir Harry."

Throughout his career Fyffe was firstly a stage actor and secondly a music hall star. He had only appeared in two films prior to 1930 – *The Maid of Cefyn Ydfa* (Haggart, 1914) in which he played the small part of a drunk, and *The Maker Up* (Anon., 1926).<sup>73</sup> *The Maker Up* shows Fyffe backstage as he changes his make-up for his stage shows. Reflective of the public knowledge of his work, this short film shows him changing from his own clothes in to his make-up for the elderly man who sings *I'm 94 Today* and then his transformation from this character to his bibulous Glaswegian for his routine that ends with his most popular work, *I Belong to Glasgow*. It is notable that neither of the costumes he wears for these characters feature any of the items of Tartanry: both characters are clothed in everyday outfits, suit jackets, trousers, shirts not any shorthand indication of nationality from either of them. They are dressed in a universal Western manner and, in this period of his theatrical career, Fyffe was highly regarded for his ability to represent character as opposed to immediately letting an audience know that he was Scottish. A 1929 review of his show at the Tivoli theatre, Aberdeen, in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* (1929, December 3, p. 13) declared that, "Will Fyffe is an artist to his finger-

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<sup>73</sup> *The Maker Up* was part of the Pathe Pictorial issue number 420. The Pictorial was a companion piece to the Pathe Gazette newsreel and it featured stories of general interest in a cinemazine format (BUFVC, n.d.). The film itself lasts just over three minutes and is presented as quick change studies of the character comedian.

tips and it is because of this that he has gained not only national but international renown. He does not caricature the Scot.”

February 1930 saw Fyffe’s sound film debut in British International Picture’s release, *Elstree Calling* (Brunel, Hitchcock, 1930). *Elstree Calling* is essentially a revue but unlike *King of Jazz* there is a plot linking the turns.<sup>74</sup> Some of the best known and most popular variety acts of the time were recorded performing their routines interspersed with the music hall artist Tommy Handley as compere. Fyffe tops the bill, a measure of his stardom and draw at the time.

Handley’s introduction to Fyffe is simple yet it provides the platform for expectations in the audience as to what they are about to see. Fyffe is introduced as, “a famous Scotch comedian,” and we are told that he is an expert on whisky and is at the quayside of the docks to embark on a trip to America. Handley alludes to the Scottish reputation for frugality by telling us that Fyffe is trying to get a workman’s ticket, the cheapest rate available, for the sailing to America. For comic effect a Glengarry is lowered in to shot for Handley to put on as he says, “and now to get ready for a little Scotch.” This does however provide a first sound cue: the skirl of pipes bursts onto the sound track. Handley reacts with terror, albeit played for laughs, and wrenches his body around to look off screen left. This movement serves to guide the cinema audience’s perception of the source of the sound. No pipers are seen yet the pipes are immediate on the sound track and also rather loud. As Mark Brownrigg (2007, p. 319) said, the bagpipes serve as a signifier of nationality – the Scottish are the people who are most associated with the pipes so it makes cinematic and audio sense to introduce a Scotch comedian with the sound of bagpipes.

The director cuts to a dockyard scene. A painted backdrop, a theatrical device, shows a harbour. There is the outline of the prow of a ship in front of these and a rope snakes up from behind a small wall to loop itself around a mooring bollard. Fyffe enters, suitcase in hand. He is dressed as a more subdued version of Lauder. He wears a glengarry hat, a tweed jacket, waistcoat, shirt and tie and a *filleadh mhòr*: the kilt worn with the upper half draped over the shoulder and attached to the jacket with

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<sup>74</sup> A very slender plotline involves a man trying to tune his television set to see the acts and performers as the film is broadcast to the nation.

a highly ornamental brooch. The merest glimpse of the clothing worn reveals the use of Tartanry as an identifier of Scottish culture (Brown, 2005, p. 137). The use of this costume by Fyffe not only operates as a pre-requisite for wider transferability of his act without the need to utter a word to the audience but also reflects the need for urgency for a performer to establish an impact (Brown, 2005, p. 137; Maloney, 2010, p. 34). The scene itself is a continuation of Scottish music-hall tradition from the nineteenth century: a Scottish setting, a Scottish character and (when Fyffe speaks) a Scottish accent (Bell, 1998, p. 41).

The skirl of the pipes continues as Fyffe waves and says his goodbyes to his off-screen friends who have ostensibly come to see him safely on board the ship. The camera holds Fyffe in a long shot, allowing the audience to identify the man as a Scotch comedian through the combination of his use of costume and the sound of the bagpipes. The pipes finish and Fyffe ends his goodbyes with the line, “if I don’t see you through the week I’ll see you through the window”, at the end of the line giving small chuckle and turns to face towards the camera. The director cuts to a



Figure 5-3. *Elstree Calling*: The nearest Fyffe gets to direct address.



Figure 5-4. *Elstree Calling*: Fyffe breaks the frame regularly.

medium shot, Fyffe visible from the waist up and his routine begins.

His routine is oddly awkward for a performer who has not only reached the heights that he has but has such a wealth of performing experience. Fyffe does not look around as if addressing an audience in the way that Lauder does – he also, unlike Lauder, does not use direct address at any point in his routine (5.3).

Fyffe would have been comfortable with this mode of performance in music hall so it is puzzling as to why he does not employ this

technique on camera. His entire performance appears as if he is reading his lines from just below the camera, as if there are prompt boards propped up on the floor. His positioning in the frame is awkward. When the medium shot is cut to, Fyffe is pointing with his right arm to the side of the stage. The effect for a cinema audience is that he loses the end of his arm and any gesture he may be making is therefore also lost (5.4). Fyffe does not stay still for very long. He does not perambulate around the stage, preferring to stay in mostly one spot but he makes a continuous series of movements. The camera has to move to keep him in frame as best it can. His movements though are small: he is simply shifting his weight from one foot to the other but he does not appear to realise how large such a small movement in mid-shot becomes on the screen.

His routine is quick-fire. His delivery is rapid and there is a joke in every line but there is no space to allow the audience to appreciate it. This is comedy of the modern age: Edward Fink (2013, p. 43) notes that in modern comedy every word or action sets up the gag and occasionally does not linger long enough for the audience to get the joke and Fyffe is very much in this mould. The rapidity of his delivery combined with his continually looking off to read his lines leaves him with the appearance of being nervous and under rehearsed. The technicalities of screen performance have not been addressed by the performer or production team and as a result of this his performance in the opening moments of the film, visually, is jarring.

Fyffe is performing high comedy, a form that generates laughter through fast-paced dialogue, subtle nuances and character idiosyncrasies (Fink, 2013, p. 45). The routine concerns Scottish stereotypes, or, as Colin MacArthur (1982, p. 68) prefers to call them, discursive positions, which he sees as points from where discussion stems. Money, and the saving of it through thrift, along with alcohol are the two main themes, both of which are long linked by stereotyping repetition to the forefront of the Scottish mind. The Scottish love of whisky is mentioned in one of Fyffe's throwaway lines: "my luggage was leaking." The overt Scottish worrying about spending money is ensconced in a routine about a taxi driver. Having been told by the driver that luggage travels for free in the taxi, Fyffe opts to put the luggage in and he and his wife walk to the hotel instead. The canny Scot has bested the native and saved himself money whilst getting his luggage delivered for free. These two topics, alcoholism and money, may be hokum but they are framed in such a way by the delivery of the routine that they become fresh. Unlike Lauder, Fyffe does not tell

rambling tales, narratives that are accented by character performance, Fyffe instead offers what Arthur Berger (2010, p. 6) describes as narratives that are punctuated by jokes. His story concerns his visits to New York and is structured as set-up, punchline/gag, and repeat.

Fyffe's only staged movements are his entrance and his move at the end of his routine where he climbs a small series of steps that take him upstage and to the top of the small wall before he turns back and raises his hat in salute. He does not employ the comic jig that Lauder does as he does not need to. His material is all he needs. In common with Lauder, Fyffe includes a song in his routine, *Twelve and a Tanner a Bottle*, a satirical ditty regarding the spiralling cost of whisky in the UK. As with Lauder the accompanists are not seen, the music just begins with no source identifiable on the screen and he begins his song. It is only towards the end of the song that there is a clue as to the position of the microphone that was used in this recording. Throughout the song he is in good voice and clearly heard until he turns upstage for his final action, where he continues to sing but his voice becomes lost as he has turned his voice away from the microphone. Again, this leaves Fyffe looking under prepared and unprofessional. There are, though, elements in this performance that hint at what could have been. He relaxes as he goes through the routine yet his delivery does not slow any but this is because there is, unlike in Lauder's films, no audience there. Had he had an audience then his rapid fire delivery would have to have been tempered to allow the audience to laugh. It is when he begins his song that we can see the strength of his characterisations: Fyffe transforms himself into the character that is singing. As the song goes on, the character is getting steadily drunk and he very successfully performs as a man who is becoming increasingly inebriated.

Given that Fyffe had received such glowing reviews for his stage work it is odd that he should come across so badly on film. He was a seasoned stage performer, by this time having been performing for over thirty years and was taking the USA by storm. An explanation as to why it is that his turn in *Elstree Calling* is so poor is that it may never have been intended for release. According to the NLSMIA and Pathé themselves, Fyffe recorded the footage in New York in 1929 as a sound test for Pathé, and *Elstree Calling* was released in 1930. This sound test footage has been taken in its entirety and dropped in to the finished film.

*Elstree Calling* got poor reviews. It was a hastily assembled film, making the newspapers as a result of the speed of its production.<sup>75</sup> Fyffe's turn in the film was reduced in *The Times* of 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1930, to a comment about his voice saying that, "his rich Scots accent comes somehow incongruously from the screen" (p. 10). Internationally the film fared no better. Ernest Marshall in the *New York Times* decried it as being, "second-rate variety...Elstree will have to call much louder to catch the ear of an American or any other foreign public" (1930, February 9, n.p.).

Fyffe's talent though continued to shine through. As a character actor he was in demand and brought gravitas to his roles and dignity along with a well-observed keenness for pathos and comedy. Jeffrey Richards (Foster, 2010) recognises that Fyffe kept the image of Scotland and Scottishness on the screen during the 1930s and 1940s and gave it a star role as he was an undoubted star of the time. He appeared in a further twenty-one films before his untimely death in 1947.<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion: Lauder and Fyffe – Exactly the Same But Different in Almost Every Way

Contrasting the two men's routines of the early sound years, it can be said that Lauder comes across the better of the two. He is more at ease on camera; he uses direct address so that the cinema viewer knows that he is talking to them, the camera serving as a device that straddles both the world of the cinema audience and the world of Lauder's performance. He also knows his script and he has an (unseen) audience with him. To compare them, the two wear similar outfits: Lauder the more ostentatious of the two, the more voluminous in his wearing of tartan. They both came from the music hall where costume amplified the impact of the performer on the stage. Furthermore, costume was a projection of identity: the wearing of tartan said to an audience that you are watching someone from Scotland.

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<sup>75</sup> "The production was finished only last week, and, it is claimed, creates a record by being publicly shown less than two months after being started in the studio" (*The Evening Telegraph*, 1930, February 7, p. 11)

<sup>76</sup> In 1933, Fyffe appeared in the film *Happy* (Zelnik, 1933) with Stanley Lupino and Laddie Cliff. The film is essentially a vehicle for Lupino and Cliff to perform some of their stage routines. Fyffe plays Simmy, the landlord of the male leads. The film is set in Paris but there is no indication of the nationality of any character in the film. Lupino and Cliff use their own, English accents, Fyffe uses a 'character' voice which does have Scottish inflections but is markedly different from the voice he uses in *Elstree Calling*. As I cannot say where Fyffe's character is meant to be from and the film is not set in Scotland I have not included it for close analysis in this chapter.



The two men differ in the language that they use though. As mentioned Lauder peppers his routines with Scots dialect whereas Fyffe does not. He only uses a Scots term once, during his rendition of his song. But during the song he is not performing as Will Fyffe he is performing as the unnamed character who is singing, a different level of performance. Yet there is a marked difference in the language and delivery that the two men employ. Lauder, throughout, has a stylised twang in his voice as if he is impersonating a native speaker. Whilst this points to Lauder's mastery of characterisation on one hand it also detracts from the listening experience for a native speaker as it is understood to be an element of his overall performance. Fyffe, by contrast, is, in Pearson's terms, the more verisimilar of the two. Watching him in the 21<sup>st</sup> century he is not as remote from us in terms of style of material and delivery which juxtaposes Lauder, a man who embraced the modern almost everywhere except in his act. Fyffe employs demotic speech in his routine and does not attempt an accent. Lauder emphasises his Scottishness in his vocal performance whereas Fyffe uses his vocal performance to realise his.

The content of their routines also differs in places: Lauder's scripts focus on rural life, concerning small affairs. His work can be comfortably placed into the framework for Kailyard writing that Gillian Shepherd established. Fyffe's routine is an urban tale of travel: he is setting sail for New York, a city he has been to before. Fyffe's is a tale of adventure and international travel and Lauder's are pastoral tales of love and desire. The two performers do though find some common ground in the Scottish reputation for frugality. Lauder finds it inconceivable that he can have a lost a ring after he has paid for it; Fyffe is aghast at the expense of living in New York. Yet where Lauder delivers his lines with an air of innocence, Fyffe delivers them knowingly. He is aware of this trait of Scottish behaviour and he will happily play along with it. The two men reinforce in subtly different ways the idea that Scottish people are 'careful' with their money.

The similarities do not end there though. Both men have recorded their stage routines when facing the challenge of transitioning from stage performance to screen performance. This has been expressed in quantitative terms by Cynthia Baron (2012, p. 111): at its simplest, screen performance is smaller with a far bigger effect. Small movements on stage are amplified on screen so that as mentioned earlier when Fyffe simply shifts his weight from one leg to another the effect is that he is lurching uncomfortably on screen.

The biggest difference between the two men is that Fyffe has at least written new material. At the end of his first tour of the USA, Fyffe broke a leg and was hospitalised in New York for some eight weeks. He spent his recuperation time writing, apparently compiling a volume of Scotch jokes, five hundred of which dealt with thrift (*The Billboard*, 1928, February 25, p. 12). Lauder was content to rest on his laurels and perform the same old routines for as long as he can.<sup>77</sup> Fyffe, by contrast, was concerned with creating and writing new material.

It is perhaps not surprising that Lauder seems to come off the better of the two in terms of their filmic performances. Quite apart from his being some fifteen years older and having more experience of working on camera, Lauder's films were productions. They were filmed before an audience with a multiple camera set up two years after Fyffe's routine was captured in New York. Lauder was working with a director whom he had worked with before and was comfortable with. He also had the calming knowledge that the routines he was to perform had been chosen by the public as their favourites. Considering this it is little wonder that Lauder creates a more polished performance in these films.

The greatest similarity between the two at this period in their careers is that they are simply recording their stage acts – being Scottish in this period of sound film was essentially the same as being Scottish in the music halls and vaudeville circuits.

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<sup>77</sup> Both men dealt with the question of money in their routines. Lauder was well-known as a thrifty Scot, demanding even a penny change from bell-hops in hotels who he sent for newspapers. This display of thriftiness off stage was a continuation of his characters and ensured that he was remembered wherever he stayed. It has been suggested though that in private, he was very generous with his tips to staff (Irving, 1977, p. 82).

## Chapter 6

### The Loves of Robert Burns

Robert Burns is a key figure in Scottish national identity and was central to the Scottish diaspora of the nineteenth century (Finlay, 1997, pp. 125-129; McIlvanney, 2010, p. 1). His life and works are celebrated on a global scale on the anniversary of his birth, January 25<sup>th</sup>. This can be seen as a form of “pastoral nostalgia,” which itself is another form of the Romantic loss symbolised by Tartanry (Leask, 2010, p. 1). Murray Pittock (2011, pp. 32-33) notes that Burns, in the nineteenth century, was viewed as a figure who was both national and universal in appeal yet still undeniably Scottish.<sup>78</sup> This chapter begins with a precis of Burns and his works on screen up to 1930 before examining the 1930 production *The Loves of Robert Burns* (Wilcox, 1930) and will establish its importance in the production of early British sound cinema. This chapter is distinct from others in my thesis in that the title character and all of the other characters portrayed in the film are based on actual people and the events of the film are (loosely) based on historical fact. Some of the early films featuring Burns and/or his works stressed the legitimacy of their attempts as accurate representations of his life as well as emphasising the expertise of their creators in order to allay critics, as Burns was one of the identifiable cultural icons of Scotland and Scottishness.

Forsyth Hardy (1990, p. 9) suggested that it is not surprising that early cinema that featured Scotland or the Scottish people should turn to the works of Burns, amongst others, as a well-known symbol of the nation. Portrayals of Burns on film though are slightly different to those featuring other Scottish writers. Burns was a poet not a writer of narrative fiction; plays and dramas do not appear in his canon unlike Sir Walter Scott or J. M. Barrie, two of the most popular Scottish writers whose works were adapted to the screen. *Tam O'Shanter*, possibly Burns' best known work,

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<sup>78</sup> Pittock's chapter in the 2011 work, *Robert Burns in Global Culture*, provides an excellent background to the global popularity of Burns and his works as well as introducing the concept that Burns has been a victim of 'high' cultural snobbery in the UK for the last eighty years or so.

has been adapted as narrative fiction for filming but his other works, his songs and poems have appeared in several hundred films over the years.<sup>79</sup>

## Burns in Early Film

As stated elsewhere in this thesis, one of the problems with so many early films is that so many of them are, to use Janet McBain's phrase, missing, believed lost; the films discussed in this chapter do not buck this trend. 1907 saw the Gaumont Production Company release the scenic<sup>80</sup> *The Land of Bobby Burns* (Anon., 1907). 1912 saw B.B. Film Service of Ayr release the scenic *The Land of Burns* and the narrative *Tam O'Shanter's Ride* (Foulger, 1912). *Tam O'Shanter's Ride* was met with a favourable review in the Ayr Post: "each evening the audience has shown its appreciation in no half-hearted manner."<sup>81</sup> *Tam O'Shanter*, Burns' epic poem about drunkenness, witches and fortuitous escape was retold in 1915 by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company of the USA in their production *The Tam O'Shanter* (MacQuarrie, 1915), a three reel long interpretation of the poem. 1922 brought another scenic from Gaumont, *The Land of Burns* (Anon., 1922) and press coverage of this film shows its potential impact on a global scale. *The Bioscope* review of the feature on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1922, stated that, "its appeal should be world-wide on account of the vast interest taken in Burns all over the world, and in view of the Burns Societies established in so many countries."<sup>82</sup> It was not just the reach of Burns that was discussed though. There was, in a feature article on the same film in *The Bioscope* of August 3<sup>rd</sup> an attempt to establish the legitimacy of the credentials of the film's creative team: "the work has been magnificently produced by Mr Jack Harris...and under the advice and guidance of Mr J. Taylor Gibb, whose knowledge of Burns and Burns lore is acknowledged all over the world."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Burns' other well-known works are many but the most popular in terms of use in films is undoubtedly *Auld Lang Syne*. IMDB lists some 200 films with that song in them. See [http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0122855/?ref\\_=fn\\_nm\\_nm\\_2](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0122855/?ref_=fn_nm_nm_2) for further details.

<sup>80</sup> Scenics were one of the first film genres to emerge and Scotland featured prominently amongst the favoured locations of early film makers (Vélez-Serna & Caughie, 2015, p. 170).

<sup>81</sup> This review is sourced from the Early Cinema in Scotland project website. See [www.earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/film/785/](http://www.earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/film/785/) for further details.

<sup>82</sup> See <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/tradepress/1331/> for further details.

<sup>83</sup> See <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/tradepress/1332/> for further details.

In 1926 Burns first appeared in film as a character and critical reaction was not favourable. *The Life of Robert Burns* (Sandground, 1926) is another missing, believed lost, film but reviews of it in *The Bioscope* from October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1926 point to the importance of the accuracy of the treatment of Burns' life in the eyes of critics: "it is full of glaring mistakes, which will appear farcical and disappoint those who know their "Burns" ...the portrayal of Burns himself leaves much to be desired."<sup>84</sup> *The Bioscope* regularly featured a Scottish section and it is in the same edition that a J. S. Clarke, described as one of the foremost authorities on Burns is quoted: "serious criticism is not merited by such blatant trash. The picture could be considerably improved by cutting out fully fifty per cent of the celluloid and then setting fire to the other fifty."<sup>85</sup>

1927 saw the UK Parliament pass the Cinematograph Films Act (BFI, 2014). Film production had, by this point in time, more or less died out in the UK (Wood, 2009, p. 2). The Act, known popularly as the "Quota Act" was designed to stimulate production in the UK in the face of market domination by the major American studios and to ensure that British cinemas showed British produced films. Until the Act was passed the majority of films shown in British cinemas were American (Street, 1997, p. 28) and the Act was partially created to boost production in the UK. The original quota of British produced films to be shown in UK cinemas was set at only five per cent which goes some way to illustrate the market dominance of the US studios (Murphy, 2012, p. 536). One of the major motivations behind the act was to promote the indigenous production of films that had a uniquely British character and would feature the great national figures of the UK (Wood, 2009, p. 3). Lowe (2011, p. 219) informs us that the Act went as far as to have, "legally defined a British film in terms of the nationality or domicile of the persons involved in the production of the film." The Act went some way to stabilising the industry in the UK but it was two years after the Act was passed before the technology to record sound on film became available to the UK studios. The advent of sound brought new possibilities for the portrayals and uses of Burns.

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<sup>84</sup> See <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/tradepress/1339/> for further details.

<sup>85</sup> See <http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk/tradepress/1340/> for further details.

## *The Loves of Robert Burns* (Wilcox, 1930)

Herbert Wilcox, the director of *The Loves of Robert Burns*, was an early advocate of sound film. In 1928 he went to America and produced a sound film, *Black Waters* (Neilan, 1929), for distribution in the UK and also arranged for Western Electric to install recording apparatus in his as yet unbuilt studio (Murphy, 1984, p. 153). Wilcox's studio was named British and Dominions and formed in 1927. In 1929 he managed to gather the capital needed in order to build his studio a permanent base at Elstree. In June of 1929, *Blackmail* (Hitchcock, 1929) received its first trade showing and in October 1929 Wilcox commenced production of two films in his Elstree studio: *Rookery Nook* and *The Loves of Robert Burns*. As such, *The Loves of Robert Burns* was produced at the outset of sound on film technology being available in the UK.

In common with films produced in the USA music was employed in order to add to the commercial appeal of the movie. Harry Warner (1964, p. 168) is often quoted as saying about the transition to sound in the US, "Who the hell wants to hear actors talk? The music – that's the big plus about this," and, as Katherine Spring (2013, pp. 2-4) shows, early US sound films were predominantly musical in nature, as we saw in Chapter 5. Indeed, it was rare that an early sound film produced in the USA was not a musical (Crafton, 1997, p. 315). As a commercial model that had a proven appeal to the UK audience it followed that UK producers would be keen to take their inspiration from the competition. *The Loves of Robert Burns* featured songs and formed part of a partnership between Wilcox and HMV entered into in September 1929 (Murphy, 1984, p. 153). The agreement was a simple one: British and Dominions would make the films and HMV would supply the music and the singing stars to appear in them.<sup>86</sup> This negated the need for the film's producer to obtain the rights to use music on the film's soundtrack and also allowed for the use of established, star attractions from the world of music to appear in film.<sup>87</sup>

This integration of talent is what led to Joseph Hislop being cast as Burns. Hislop was a Scottish tenor of international reputation but he had never acted on film

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<sup>86</sup> In his autobiography, Herbert Wilcox (1967, p. 86) recalls that the agreement gave him, "access to their recording stars" to feature in his films.

<sup>87</sup> Kathryn Kalinak observed the shift from theatre manager to film producer regarding the obligation to license music for performance with film in her 1992 work *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*.

before.<sup>88</sup> Michael Turnbull cites his agent, Alberto Sciaretti, as saying that Hislop, “should not be considered mainly as a singer but as an *actor* who happens to be an international figure in the musical world” (1992, p. 65). The casting of Hislop in the title role indicates that the film was built around a star attraction, one that was already known for performing some of the songs that featured in the picture. This affiliation of singer with song was part of the overall marketing of the film in the hope that by combining the elements of performer, musical performance and “great British National figure” would appeal to not only those familiar with the works of Burns and others acquainted with Hislop’s successful career in opera but additionally to the patriotism of the British (6.1).

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<sup>88</sup> Hislop was one of the most popular and successful tenors of the era. See [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/11945364.Legend\\_of\\_tenor\\_who\\_was\\_a\\_singer\\_for\\_Scotland/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/11945364.Legend_of_tenor_who_was_a_singer_for_Scotland/) for further details. Also Michael Turnbull’s biography *Joseph Hislop: Gran Tenore* (1992).

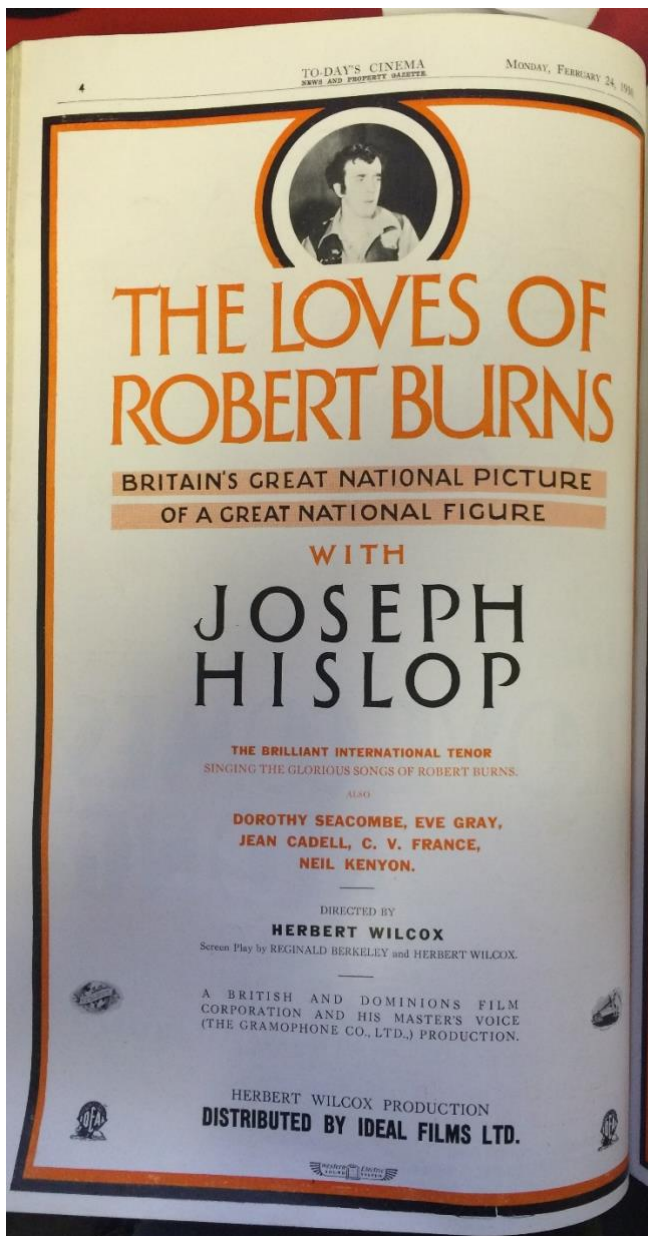


Figure 6-1. *The Loves of Robert Burns*: Advertising appealing to the 'National' aspect of Burns (*To-Day's Cinema*, 1930, Feb 24. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive at The Cinema Museum).

The rest of the cast was made up of seasoned, veteran performers: Craighall Sherry played James Armour; Nancy Price was Posie Nancy; Neil Kenyon was Tam and Jean Cadell was Mrs. Burns.<sup>89</sup> Whilst these names may mean very little today, in the 1920s and 1930s these were, if not household names then at least fairly well known to the public. Neil Kenyon was a London based Scotch Comic, to an extent following in the wake of Harry Lauder's popularity, but had toured internationally, including visiting Australia before Lauder himself (Hesse, 2014, p. 61). Kenyon was

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<sup>89</sup> Jean Cadell is probably best known for playing Mrs Campbell in *Whisky Galore!*



so popular that he even featured on a series of Music Hall Hero Cigarette Cards (Russell, 1996, p. 74). The two actors who played the loves themselves though were not Scottish. Dorothy Seacombe, who played Jean Armour, was from Bolton in Lancashire and Eve Gray, who played Mary Campbell, was originally from England but travelled to Australia as a child.

The UK press played a part in the promotion of the film and emphasised its importance in the new era of sound on film production for the industry. An examination of trade papers and newspapers illustrates strongly that there was an attempt to build an air of expectation around the film. *To-Days Cinema: News and Property Gazette*, a trade publication, ran several articles in February 1930 to encourage cinema owners to take the film on. On February 7<sup>th</sup> an advertisement claimed that the film was destined for great status and impact. Having declared that the film put Britain on the talkie map, the advert copy went on to say:

Technically, dramatically, vocally, musically, and as entertainment, it is unhesitatingly declared that 'The Loves of Robert Burns' marks the arrival of this country in the forefront of 'talkie' productions: and it is believed that American producers have, in this picture, found their match! (p. 7).

The film also met the requirements for inclusion in the quota allocation of the Cinematograph Act, an important fact highlighted in the campaign in order to encourage cinema owners to book it for consumption.

Taken in context, the advertising negates Burns position as a Scottish national figure. Emily Torricelli (2016, p. 12) notes that some of Scotland's greatest artists and intellectuals have been appropriated as British and *The Loves of Robert Burns* is no exception.<sup>90</sup> Press adverts hailed it variously as, "Britain's Great National Picture of a Great National Figure!", "Britain's Brilliant Talkie Hit!" and, "A Challenge to the Pick of Foreign Productions!" (6.2) This can be seen as a response to the Quota Act; films were to be distinctively British, thereby characterising British films in the global marketplace (Lowe, 2011, p. 226)


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<sup>90</sup> Pittock (2011, p. 41) cites Joseph Chamberlain as having said: "Burns you claim, and claim rightly, as your National Poet: but that does not exclude us as Englishmen from claiming him as one of the glories of the United Kingdom."

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TO-DAY'S CINEMA  
NEWS AND PROPERTY GAZETTE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1936



# THE LOVES OF ROBERT BURNS

**A CHALLENGE TO THE PICK  
OF FOREIGN PRODUCTIONS!**

## JOSEPH HISLOP

THE WORLD FAMOUS OPERATIC TENOR  
SINGS DELICIOUSLY THE COUNTRY'S  
FAVOURITE AIRS

ALSO  
DOROTHY SEACOMBE, EVE GRAY, JEAN CADELL, C.V. FRANCE AND NEIL KENYON

**TRADE SHOW**  
TIVOLI,  
NEXT MONDAY (March 3rd) at 8.45 p.m.

DIRECTED BY  
**HERBERT WILCOX**  
SCREEN PLAY BY REGINALD BERKELEY  
and HERBERT WILCOX.

A British and Dominion Film Corporation and "His Master's Voice" (the Gramophone Co., Ltd.) Production.

**HERBERT WILCOX PRODUCTION**  
**DISTRIBUTED BY IDEAL FILMS LTD.**

Figure 6-2. *The Loves of Robert Burns: A Challenge to the Pick of Foreign Productions!* Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive.

The stance is clear: this movie is the very best that Britain can produce and is easily equal to the imported films that were dominating the UK market. National pride is appealed to, Burns is no longer Scottish, he is a British figure, a global export that the whole of Britain can and should be proud of and this film must be supported by the trade and the viewing public. Additionally, in a similar vein to earlier presentations of Burns, the campaign took care to illuminate that the film was not to be presented as an accurate portrayal of the man. On February 28<sup>th</sup> *To-Day's Cinema: News and*

*Property Gazette* ran an article on the film, the sub-heading of which read, “Not a biography” (6.3).



Figure 6-3. *The Loves of Robert Burns: Not a Biography*.  
Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive

*The Loves of Robert Burns* was released in March of 1930, opening with a week-long engagement at the Tivoli in London, the first British-made talkie to do so. Reviewing the film on March 6<sup>th</sup>, *The Stage* noted that, “the story is by no means intended as an autobiography of the poet.” The plot of the film revolves around Burns and two of his loves: Jean Armour and Mary Campbell. Burns, in the film, meets Jean in 1784 and woos her at a Hogmanay Dance in Mauchline, Ayrshire.<sup>91</sup> He seduces her and she becomes pregnant. As Burns is an honourable man he proposes an ‘irregular’ marriage which Jean accepts.<sup>92</sup> When she tells her father, James Armour, he reacts with shame and horror. He calls the minister and forbids the marriage. Burns is humiliated and condemned in the Kirk and his relationship with Jean is ended. Burns then meets Mary Campbell and falls in love with her, asking her to

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<sup>91</sup> The date of Burns’ meeting Jean Armour is disputed. Some sources claim it was indeed 1784 but others, including the National Trust for Scotland’s Burns Museum state the date as being 1785. For my purposes I am choosing to cite NTS as the most reputable source of this information. See <http://www.burnsmuseum.org.uk/about-robert-burns/the-life/> for a timeline of his life.

<sup>92</sup> Marriage in Scotland was based on canon law. A church service was not required, only an agreement of the two parties concerned in writing was enough to constitute legal marriage. Witnesses were not required and neither was any form of parental consent even though the lower age limits were 12 for women and 14 for men (Leneman, 1999, p. 673).

marry him and move to start a new life in Jamaica.<sup>93</sup> She then dies and Burns' poetry is published in Edinburgh. He visits Edinburgh, has an affair, and returns home to Alloway to discover that now that he is a published author with a reliable source of income James Armour has had a change of heart and is quite happy for Jean to marry him. They are married and Burns sinks into a deep depression as he still loves Mary Campbell. Burns takes to spending entire nights in the Inn drowning his sorrows and eventually his alcoholism takes its toll and he dies in a chair having returned from an all-night binge.

The episodic nature of the film was commented upon in some reviews.<sup>94</sup> *The Courier and Advertiser*, on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1930, defended this on the strength of the performances of the cast: "It does not boast a plot, but as the story unfolds it is clear that no plot is needed." Michael Orme, writing for *The Sketch* (1930, p. 504) felt differently: "the picture is too episodic to be convincing; its chronological outlines have no definition or correlation." The effect that this structure could have on the viewing audience comes from "Frat," writing in *Variety* (1930, March 26, p. 39): "the film is slow, to the point of wearing, the story is thin and in parts almost incoherent." In the same review, Frat also addressed the potential appeal of the film to the diaspora: "it can be made to attract the Scots element abroad from the clannish angle, but it is doubtful whether they will be satisfied with what they get."

Frat's assertion that Scottish critics' satisfaction was doubtful, was for the most part, accurate. W.A.R., writing in *The Evening Telegraph* on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1930, was positive about the film but did suggest that, "the genius of Robert Burns is too big for this medium. No one characterisation can present an adequate portrait and that is why the film people fall short of their ideal." It fell to *The Citizen*, a Fife based newspaper, on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1930, to provide a damning critique by, "a local Burnsite." This critique was nearly totally condemnatory of the film, save for praising Hislop's singing: "The poet was always shown us as the roysterer, love-making and

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<sup>93</sup> It was September 1786 when Burns and Campbell were due to leave Greenock harbour for Jamaica (Hamilton, 2005, p.1; Davis, L. & Mahlis, K, 2011, p. 15). This means that in the space of some forty-five minutes the film has leapt through two years of Burns life with no indication to the audience of the time passing.

<sup>94</sup> Paul Holt is quoted by Turnbull (1992, p. 169) as finding the film episodic to the point of frustration, but the quote is not referenced by Turnbull. All that is said is that Holt wrote for a London newspaper. An anonymous review in *The Film Weekly* (March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1930, p. 25) says of the film's form that it, "is episodic rather than dramatic." *To-Days Cinema*, in its Booking Guide (April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1930, p. 17) actually describes the film's story as 'Episodic.'

drinking, and meeting his too obvious cues with an instantaneously inspired lyric, sung in Mr. Hyslop's splendid tenor voice." It complains variously that, "the film is a masterpiece of misrepresentation...the production has no contact with anything Scots, either spiritual or factual" (p.9). The critic here clearly has their own agenda regarding the life of Burns and the portrayal of this great, Scottish figure. There is disappointment at the lack of information regarding Burns' farming career and the writer strongly criticises the casting choice of Seacombe and Grey.<sup>95</sup> The review concludes: "The film is a "giftie" whereby we may see ourselves as others see us; well it is with Robert Burns that he cannot see himself as the twentieth century sees him."

The film closed at the Tivoli after only one week.<sup>96</sup> It received its Scottish premiere at the Rutland Picture House, Canning Street, Edinburgh on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1930. Turnbull (1992, p. 169) notes that *The Scotsman* critic (29 April, 1930) observed that Hislop sang strongly but that the picture did not work as it presented a number of separate incidents from an entire lifetime. He noted that the audience had a tendency to laugh at serious passages in the film which unintentionally proved amusing: "there was such patent insincerity about the poet's declaration of love to Mary Campbell, coming just after he had finished with Jean Armour, that this scene, which should have been beautiful, was greeted with loud laughter" (Turnbull, 1992, p. 169). *The Times* on March 4<sup>th</sup> said, "sentiment overwashes all else in the film" (p. 23), *The Picturegoer* remarked that, "it is all really rather dull" (1930, April 1, p. 60).

These initial reviews were among the likely factors that caused the producers to revise the film, as can be seen in the "Cinema Booking" guide of *To-Days Kinema*. The guide includes a number of factors regarding all films in its list. These are the sound system used for the film; type and entertainment value; suitability; viewpoints; star; origin; story; direction; acting and the date of the paper's review of the film. The guide, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1930, includes the information under "Viewpoints" that *The Loves*

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<sup>95</sup> The anonymous writer suggests that not only were their performances "a la Hollywood" but also that the real Mary Campbell and Jean Armour, "did not have finely-pencilled eyebrows and the smile that accompanies "I'm Crazy for You" or "You're Ma Sweetie Now" on the revue stage."

<sup>96</sup> Turnbull (1992, p. 168) has the film playing in London at The New Gallery on Regent Street, not the Tivoli. This may be due to the Tivoli being used initially for the trade showing of the film with it transferring to a different cinema for its theatrical run.

of Robert Burns is a, "revised version reduced in footage, thereby gaining in interest" (6.4, 6.5).

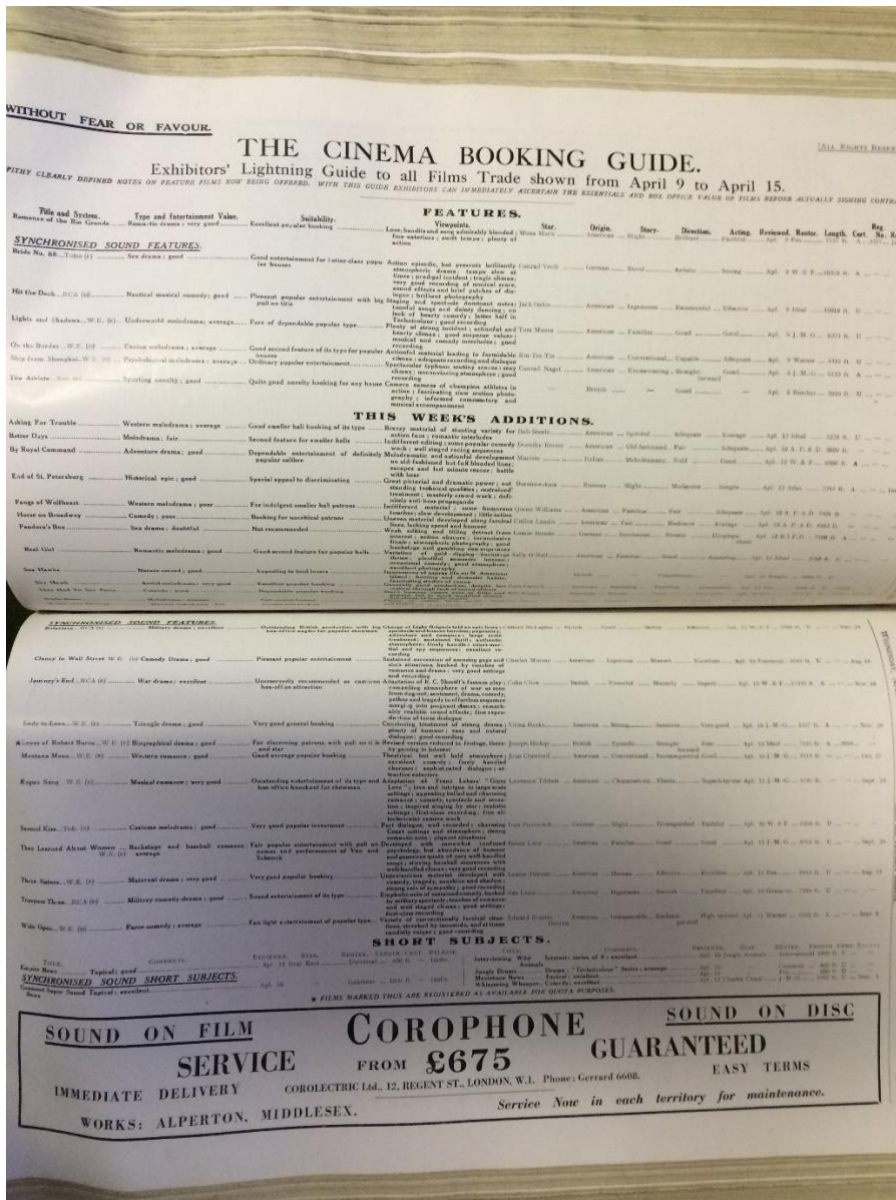


Figure 6-4. The Loves of Robert Burns: Booking Guide. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive

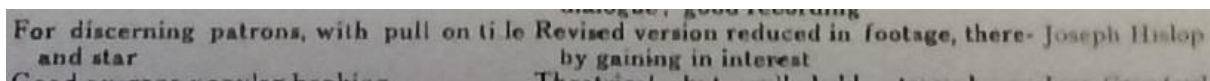


Figure 6-5. The Loves of Robert Burns: Booking Guide detail. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive

The film opens with a Scottish scene-setting montage: Burns cottage is shown with livestock walking past it; Loch Lomond is shown, great glens and rolling hills are

pictured as Hislop sings such songs as *Loch Lomond* and *Ye Banks and Braes*.<sup>97</sup> The potential appeal to the diaspora is commented upon in the *Courier and Advertiser* review of the film: “wherever the film is shown outside Scotland hearts will ache to be back in the land of Burns” (1930, March 5, p. 6). The scenic closes with a shot of the Wallace Monument before the titles begin.<sup>98</sup> After the titles, we are introduced to Burns. He is seen outside, ploughing, while a girl approaches him from a distance. As she nears him the director cuts to interior shots and Burns sees a mouse, picks it up and recites *To A Mouse*. The manner of doing so is slightly odd yet this sets the tone for the use of other poetic works of Burns that are scattered throughout the film: at the drop of a hat, Burns recites his poetry. The Editor of *The Picturegoer* noted this in his review: “he has a most unhappy knack of reciting his verses on the slightest provocation” (*The Picturegoer*, 1930, p. 62).<sup>99</sup> Lionel Collier, writing in *The Bystander* (1930, p. 614) suggested that, “the poet must have been one of the world’s worst bores. On the slightest provocation he would recite his poems and, given any encouragement at all, he would sing them to music which was written after his death.” Far more scathing criticism came from the local Burns site in *The Citizen* (1930, p. 9), who, commenting on the creative process of writing poetry, stated: “Immortal lyrics are not made that way.” The Burns site went on to suggest that the scene could be improved, “if the poet had said the first two or three words, then sat for a long time in thought, spat on his hands and taken the plough shafts again in silence, we might have accepted that opening scene.”

Katherine Spring’s observations of American sound films can be applied in relation to *The Loves of Robert Burns*. Early American audiences were expected to already understand the use of music in diegesis due to their familiarity with the conventions of musical theatre: characters would simply burst into song and dance at any moment and this was accepted *en masse* as a structural component of the form (Spring, 2013, p. 7). However, by the time that *The Loves of Robert Burns* was released in April 1930, Hollywood had learned that abrupt introduction of music was

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<sup>97</sup> The cottage at the beginning of the film is actually Burns cottage in Alloway. Wilcox spent some weeks in Scotland filming exteriors for the opening montage.

<sup>98</sup> The Wallace Monument was built between 1861 and 1869, some sixty five years after Burns’ death. It is possible that the Monument is included either as an icon of Scotland or as a visual reference to one of Burns’ more famous and unashamedly nationalistic works, *Scots Whae Hae*. Pittock (2011, p. 41) suggests that Burns wrote it as a unifying anthem of Scottish identity, guaranteeing that identity would be recognised within the wider British diaspora.

<sup>99</sup> Frat noted in his review that Burns is shown, “mainly bursting into song on ploughland, in tavern and saloon.”

not acceptable unless it was diegetically appropriate: producers in the UK though, were still following the earlier and now outmoded Hollywood model of film-making. Wilcox was behind the US industry by at least a year in that respect but in another respect he was very much leading the way in terms of realising commercial incentives around the picture.

The casting of Hislop in the title role indicates that the film was built around a star attraction, one who was already known for performing some of the songs that featured in the picture. This affiliation of singer with song was part of the overall marketing of the film in the hope that by combining the elements of performer, musical performance and “great British National figure” would appeal to not only those familiar with the works of Burns and others acquainted with Hislop’s successful career in opera but additionally to the patriotism of the British. The film, though, was not popular with the public. HMV cancelled their business arrangement with British and Dominions, and their series of planned pictures were abandoned (Murphy, 1984, p. 154).<sup>100</sup>

Forsyth Hardy (1990, p. 10) wrote that, “Herbert Wilcox did not succeed in giving the film movement or momentum.” Hardy’s criticism lies solely with the director, no other member of cast or crew is singled out yet the film has elements that are coherent and create an impact. The effect for the viewer from the introductory scene is immediate: Burns is established through seeing him using a plough and then the vocalisation of one of his more famous works, *To A Mouse*. The recitation, by Hislop, is confident and powerful. Bearing in mind that Hislop has never acted on film before he is remarkable throughout. He has an assured presence but this is not markedly surprising given that he has already had a successful career as an opera singer. Hislop would be used to being onstage in character and much was made of his performance by critics. *The Film Weekly* review noted that Hislop was not only a fine singer but also, “as it proves, so capable an actor...convincing in appearance and voice” (1930, March 8, p. 25). Frat, in *Variety*, states of him: “Hislop...saves this production’s life” (1930, March 26, p. 39). *To-Days Cinema* is equally appreciative of

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<sup>100</sup> Herbert Wilcox, in his autobiography, does not talk very much about the failure of *The Loves of Robert Burns*. He mentions the film fleetingly (1967, p. 86) and then spends several pages talking about the films he would rather have made instead.



Hislop, saying that he, “walks away with all the honours of acting, singing, and, clarity of diction” (1930, March 4, p. 10).

Hislop’s is the most ordinary and neutral portrayal in the film. Brenda Austin-Smith (2012, p. 20) notes that naturalism in acting is the end result of a consciously coded process. In other words, what the actor does is pre-planned and Hislop, as a working opera performer, would be used to rehearsing and planning his moves and his vocal inflections as part of his preparation for a role. Whilst his decisions and preparation are invisible to the audience the results of these are not. As Baron and Carnicke (2008, p. 46) highlight, it is what the actor does in the frame that is of more importance than the creative process and Hislop is a relaxed presence who is most definitely there for his singing ability yet his acting skills are second to none. There is conviction in his performance: swagger when he is wooing ladies; spikiness when he is confronted by other men; deference to his elders (regardless of their intentions on his life) and, in the scene where Burns is condemned and humiliated in the Kirk, Hislop brings gravitas to the scene. Burns really does appear to be a broken man by the events in that scene, although this may have been influenced by the shooting schedule; the film was only shot at night for two reasons<sup>101</sup>. Firstly, Hislop was working during the day at Covent Garden and, secondly, Wilcox was producing a filmed version of the Aldwych farce, *Rookery Nook*, in the same studio during the day.<sup>102</sup> It is, though, the neutrality in his performance that emphasises his ability. In line with Sarah Kozloff’s observation about lead characters, “the hero...can cross verbal boundaries” (2000, p. 151), Hislop has a neutral voice. He is clearly Scottish but it is not an affected, imitated Scottish accent. It flows and is natural, he is understood by everybody in the film from the working class people he grew up with to the upper class social elite of Edinburgh and he understands everyone in the film. In this way, he is a focal point for the audience.

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<sup>101</sup> Nerina Shute, writing in *The Film Weekly* reported from the set during the film’s production in October 1929. Shute (1929, Oct 7, p. 11) records that working conditions were not ideal for Hislop, “behind an army blanket our world-famous opera singer was practising his songs to the tune of road drills and sundry explosions emanating from gentlemen with hammers.” The other members of the cast were not much better off in their working conditions: Shute records, in the same article, that both Kenyon and Price were suffered burns from an open fire during the filming. *The Film Weekly* ran a number of feature articles on the production of the film over the following weeks most of which concentrate on the difficulties of filming at night time for the cast and crew.

<sup>102</sup> See *The Film Weekly*, October 7<sup>th</sup> 1929, p. 11; *The Film Weekly*, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1929, p. 8; *The Picturegoer*, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1929, p. 26

The two female characters that are most featured in the film did not do so well in their vocal performances with critics. Both Dorothy Seacombe and Eve Gray were English and therefore using a non-native accent. Frat commented on them, saying that they, “frequently forget their Scotch accent” (1930, March 26, p. 39). *Cinema To-Day* noted in their review that some of the dialogue, “does not reach the ear intelligibly” (1930, March 4, p. 10). It is Seacombe, as the more featured of the two actors, who fares the worse. Her accent in comparison with Hislop’s effortless, natural voice and those of the other cast who are using their native accents, does not stand up to scrutiny. As Schairer (1992) shows, non-natives attempting to speak as natives are immediately noticed and regarded as different. The opening scene is a good example of this. Seacombe, as Jean Armour, delivers the line, “if yer nae dancer, ye’ll be nae kisser”: the line is meant to be in Scots, as is the entire film, but Seacombe fails to be convincing. “Nae” is a particularly difficult word for her and it sounds strained as she attempts to say it. Where a native Scottish speaker would pronounce the word as “nay,” Seacombe produces it as a diphthong, running together the two vowels with the effect that the ‘e’ at the end of the word as it is spelled is then vocalised.<sup>103</sup>

In another, later scene, she stands out again over the pronunciation of the word “father”. The rest of the cast are using the Scots, “faither” but Seacombe vocalises this as “feather.” Whilst this is one of the pronunciations of the word in parts of Scotland (the Orkney Isles) it is neither factually accurate nor accurate within the diegetic as a vocal performance. The result of this is that Seacombe as Jean Armour is then differentiated from the rest of the cast due to the difference in her speech where there should be homogeneity. To the native ear, the vowel sounds are the first to be noticed as different. It follows that the audience watching the film will pick up on the differences in performances by the actors and the actor who is pronouncing words differently will draw more attention as “fake” in the diegesis. Indeed the anonymous critic in *The Citizen* derides her performance:

If it had not been so much a matter for anger, it would have been one for uproarious laughter, that occasion when the producer’s Jean repels the poet’s perfectly elocutioned lyrical

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<sup>103</sup> Schairer (1992, p. 318) also considers the difference in pronunciation of diphthongs and establishes a hierarchical structure of common mistakes in speech imitation.

advances with “och awa,” which she must have heard some Scots comedian say in his patter. (1930, p. 9)

Whilst her Scottishness is questionable due to her vocal delivery her physical skills show that she can adopt and use a number of acting and performance styles and techniques with aplomb. In the scene where Jean tells her father that she is pregnant Seacombe crosses codes from histrionic to verisimilar. As her father reacts to the news she strikes a series of poses that may be seen as histrionic. She holds her wrist to her forehead, hand facing away from her. This is desperation and despair but it is performed through extended gesture. Part of the reason for this is that her father’s reaction to the news is to stand stock still and lower his head to the ground: he is shunning her and her method of response is to exaggerate her emotional state through physicality. However she then immediately uses the verisimilar techniques to convey more subtle nuances of character thought and feeling in combination with a low moan of anguish.

Charlie Keil’s (2012, pp. 202-204) discussion of Florence Turner in Vitagraph films of 1908 to 1913 can be applied to Seacombe’s performance in this scene: it is the effortless, intentional switching between codes of performance that serves firstly to showcase her strengths as a performer and, secondly, to highlight to the audience the severity of the scene that is unfolding in front of them. The scene jumps to later the same day: the minister has been summoned so that the men can decide what to do with the pregnant girl. Jean is presented alone in the frame. She is rocking gently in a chair, her hands clasped together in front of her chest and she stares into the middle distance. We can hear a discussion off screen but our sole visual focus is the figure of Jean in her despair. Seacombe does not have to do anything: the positioning of her hands tells the audience almost all that they need to know. This is a memorable and accurate moment in Seacombe’s playing of the part. The Scottishness of the character is left open to question only by the vocal performance. Unfortunately, in sound film, the voice is prioritised as a measure of the reality that is presented.

Of the other cast members, it can be said that as they were using their native voices they were more successful in their performances of nationality. This, though, on its own would not illustrate the performances wholly. As mentioned in the previous chapter the use of the Scottish voice can either be realised or emphasised in performance: in this film, other than Hislop and the two non-native speakers, all of

the performers use the same accent. More strikingly, all of the characters speak in Scots dialect for the entire film. The presentation of the dialect form of speech is potentially the main factor behind the film's failure at the domestic box office outside of Scotland and overseas. Whilst it is easily understood by Scots, such as the reviewer in *The Courier and Advertiser* (1930, March 6, p. 6), who remarked, "a noticeable feature of the film is the splendid Scotch burr that everyone has cultivated. It is very pleasant to listen to," it was not so easily understood by English audiences. The effect of the overall Scottishness of the film was questioned directly by *The Daily Mail* which asked, "was it too Scottish for a London audience?" (cited by Turnbull, 1992, p. 169).<sup>104</sup> Lionel Collier in *The Bystander* (1930, March 2, p. 616) said, "I found the Scottish accent, which is very considerably underproof at times, very difficult of comprehension." Regional accents had been heard before on screen, notably in Hitchcock's *Blackmail* (1929) which featured a variety of East-end of London accents (Murphy, 2012, pp. 542-543), but the Scots accent and language was known to the majority of the UK from the works of Harry Lauder and the Scotch Comedians of the music halls. When dialogue is heard in *The Loves of Robert Burns* it is a natural form of speech, one that Scots would be perfectly at home with but, as some critics noted, could prove unintelligible to non-native ears.<sup>105</sup>

One of the stand out performances comes from Neil Kenyon, a long-standing music hall performer, who portrays Tam the Tinkler. As mentioned earlier, this character is the local alcoholic. As such, Kenyon's characterisation provides two tropes of identifiable Scottish stereotypical characteristics: the drunk and also the comedic fool. But Tam also serves as a conduit for the audience: he is, during several scenes in the film, the character who supports and defends Burns to the greatest extent. Tam idolises Burns: during the Hogmanay party scene Tam is shown with tears flowing down his face as Burns first recites his poetry and then sings *Auld Lang Syne*. Tam is the sole person in the Kirk who is prepared to speak for Burns, and to speak to him afterwards; it is Tam who visits Burns in his sickbed and last

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<sup>104</sup> Turnbull gives no page number for the article.

<sup>105</sup> The difficulty of reproducing accurate accents was not confined to the UK. Douglas Turney, in *American Speech*, recorded that he had an (unnamed) actor friend who told him of, "the infrequency, with which he and his kind accurately imitated the Mexican accent!" (1929, p. 434). Colin Gunckel, (2008, pp. 332-333) comments on the difficulties of established film stars such as Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy speaking phonetic Spanish in order to increase their films market potential in Mexico.

speaks to him in the public house before Burns goes to his death. As such Tam operates as the Scotsman who loves Burns because of his works.

Kenyon provides an excellent comic performance as the drunk in the tavern at Hogmanay. He, as Tam, discusses the entertainment for the evening. He has a glass in his hand, he is taking his time saying his words as only a very drunk man does and denies what he has said as soon he is questioned about it. He describes the dancer for the evening as, "The best sword swallower in the land" and when told that the man does not swallow swords he immediately responds, "och awa', I never said he swallows the swords, ya poof" to the delight and hilarity of the onlooking crowd. Tam's dialogue reinforces one of the most important elements of the film's Scottishness: it is all in a Scots accent. None of the central characters (other than Burns) have Anglicised speech. "Away" is "awa", "you" is either "ya" or "ye" and so on. This was noted by the press yet the difficulty in understanding the accent is still made plain: "Neil Kenyon, whose accents help to aid the Scottish effect which in some cases is apt to degenerate into a nondescript phrasing somewhat difficult to hear." (*The Picturegoer*, 1930, April 1, p. 62). The natural Scots voice used is not a standardised one for the audience outwith Scotland and is therefore more difficult to understand.<sup>106</sup> The use of the Scots language throughout the film is undoubtedly a major factor in the film's lack of success at the box office.

The film is interesting for its performance of Scottishness in costume. By now the kilt is firmly established as the primary costume signifier of nationality and location. In *The Loves of Robert Burns* though, the kilt and indeed tartan in general is conspicuously absent; there is only one character who wears any form of tartan habitually and that is James Armour, played by Craighall Sherry. Armour is described in the film as having fought at Culloden as part of the second Jacobite rebellion.<sup>107</sup> The wearing of the plaid marks Armour as not only being identifiably Scottish before he utters a word but also directly linked to Scotland's Jacobite past. A past which is not linked to heroism but to defeat and failure (Craig, 1982, p. 10). Pam Cook

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<sup>106</sup> The Scottish accent would be known to some through radio broadcasts and the popular Scotch Comics such as Harry Lauder but in *The Loves of Robert Burns* the accent is more Scots vernacular than Scots 'broadcast'. Scots 'broadcast' was a standardised language and accent which differed from that used in the film. See Hajkowski, 2010, p. 7 and Stuart-Smith et al, 2013, p.503

<sup>107</sup> The scene is between Burns and Jean and centres on a discussion of a sword that belonged to Jean's father. She claims that he used it at Culloden as "part of the 45" to which Burns asks, "your father was at Culloden? This sword was part of the 45?"

suggests that tartan along with music and landscape are used emotively to create a sense of the past in film in an idealised manner (1996, pp. 25-26). Armour wearing tartan sets him out as one who still feels this loss and is also nostalgic for the past. None of the other recurring characters wear tartan in the film, yet they are all identified as Scottish, equally though, none of them are identified as having been a member of the second Jacobite rebellion.

Tartan makes its other appearance in the Hogmanay ball scene. The setting is the Inn at Mauchline. Four pipers are heard playing and they enter in what is best described as a stramash of full Highland regalia: Bonnie Prince Charlie jackets, kilts, sporrans, Balmoral hats, tartan socks, flashes and kilt shoes. They lead in sixteen dancing girls, all dressed in the same uniform: white shirts, kilts, sporrans, tartan knee length socks and ballet pumps.<sup>108</sup> As the pipers play reels, the girls perform a Highland fling<sup>109</sup> before the floor then clears for the sword dancer. This scene shows the clothing associated with Scotland, kilts and so on, as being used at a ceremonial, celebratory occasion. There is a distinction drawn between those who are performing as entertainment and those who are being entertained through the use of costume. The period detail is questionable but 'the' national identity of Scotland is conferred upon the entertainers. Pam Cook suggests that reconstruction in film is intended to work on the level of myth and legend (1996, p. 27) and the Hogmanay scene operates if not in terms of myth, after all the characters all existed, then it most definitely does function in terms of the legend of Scottishness. The pipers are militaristic and recall the fighting Highland Scots type; the dancers, also in their own uniform, perform the Highland fling style dance first seen on screen some thirty-three years previously and the sword dancer mirrors the pipers in garb. Highland traditions and the spirit of Scots rebellion are indicated in the film through the use of costume. Yet this makes sense as part of the emotional appeal of the film to its intended audience whether at home or overseas. The symbols of Scotland, particularly at Hogmanay, are elements of the nationality that must be seen in order to establish the location and attitudes of the characters.

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<sup>108</sup> 'Stramash' is a Scots word meaning uproar, disturbance, smash-up. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stramash>

<sup>109</sup> The dancers used in the film are Tiller girls. Wilcox apparently originally thought of sending to Scotland to get dancers but decided it was fiscally more sensible to use local talent so he is reported to have gone to the London Tiller school (*The Film Weekly*, 1931, March 7<sup>th</sup>, p. 21)

## Conclusion

*The Loves of Robert Burns* is a film that has vaulting ambition that falls down on execution. As one of the earliest British sound films made it was, somewhat naively, felt by both the trade and popular press that the producers of the film were already the equal at least of the American producers who had been working with the technology for two years already. In terms of the domination of the UK box office by Hollywood there was a specifically nationalistic significance in order to develop a British film industry with a British identity. The attempt at realism through the use of language and accent was not successful at the box office. The audience found the film difficult to understand not only due to the voices heard in it but also for its lack of structure and coherent use of film form. Hislop was known for singing Burns and released over one hundred and fifty records on the HMV label in his career as a highly successful tenor.<sup>110</sup> His acting ability was clear and his performance was sensitive and measured. Perhaps the real reason for the film's failure lies, as Hardy suggested, with the director. Either through exhaustion due to his workload or due to the inexperience of working in the new form of the 'talkie,' *The Loves of Robert Burns* was neither a critical nor commercial success. As a film that was produced at the beginning of the use of sound on film technology though it stands as an important document. Its use of language and voice goes some way to supporting a claim that attempts at employing verisimilitude in films featuring Scotland and Scottish people is not a recent phenomenon.

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<sup>110</sup> Turnbull's 1989 article on Hislop as Burns lists a number of performances and recordings that Hislop gave during his career in the decade before the film was released.

## Chapter 7

### Scottishness in UK Cinema, 1934 & 1935

Chapter 5 interrogated British representations of individual Scottishness in the transition from silent to sound film. The previous chapter was concerned with an ensemble piece produced at the beginning of the new sound technology's assimilation in to the UK industry and illustrated the differences between native and non-native performers. Both of those chapters featured Scottish performers in lead roles as Scottish characters whereas this chapter features an English movie star, Robert Donat, cast as not one but two Scottish characters in a single film. In addition, two films covered in this chapter are the creations of Alfred Hitchcock and René Clair. How would Scottishness and Scottish characters be shown by two of the most respected directors of the era, one of them English and the other French? Jonathan Cavallero (2010, p. 3) noted that so much has been written about Hitchcock that "Hitchcock studies" could legitimately be viewed as a field. The section here on *The 39 Steps* adds to this field by examining Hitchcock's treatment of the Scottish people across two social classes.

Sound technology was by this point well ensconced in the production side of the industry. Teething troubles had been ironed out and there was confidence in the uses of the technology. Colin MacCabe (1976, p. 9) wrote that after the introduction of sound there was a new dominant force in film: realism. Realism is a loaded term. Varun Begley (2012, p. 338) suggests that any drama bears a distinct and intimate relation to material reality yet it is the reproduction of that reality that is open to question. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake (1988, p. 158) posited that realism is a set of conventions; there is not one realism but there are realisms. This ties in with Dudley Andrew's (1984, p. 47) observation that audiences instinctively shape what appears on the screen into something that they are familiar with. Lev Kuleshov (1974, p. 63) argued that reality could not be replicated but should instead be captured by film negating the need for performers in favour of casting by type. As Liz Czach (2012, p. 158) pointed out though there is not necessarily any correlation between a non-performer carrying out a task convincingly in everyday life and then being able to repeat the task unselfconsciously on camera. Stephen Heath (1977, p. 8) noted that, "cinema is the spectacle of reality captured and presented but all presentation is representation and all representation is performance." Performers are



therefore necessary in order to capture a reality and the central artistic activity is then the presentation of a heightened reality, a reality that is more real than that which could be achieved through simply recording (MacCabe, 1976, p. 10).

Through the analysis of performances of Scottishness in previous chapters I have shown that the most popular Scotsman in the world of the time, Sir Harry Lauder, had an influence on the received and perceived Scottish accent, character and style. Would Lauder's comical Scottishness, his deliberate exaggerations of national identity and character bleed into the works of others? Additionally, would any stories of Scotland or about Scotland be produced that could be said to reflect actual events or occurrences within Scotland during these years?

This chapter examines four films across a variety of genres, each of which presents Scottishness in different manners. Where previous chapters have noted that Scotland in early and early sound cinema very much had a fixed identity the choice of films to be analysed here substantiates the idea that progression first began to occur in the 1930s. Some of these imagined Scotlands reflect in part the beginning of the urban realism of the decade (Caughie, 2018, p. 148). *The Secret of the Loch* (Rosmer, 1934) is a thriller, as a sub-genre it is a "creature feature," about a Professor who is certain that he can prove the existence of the Loch Ness Monster. *Red Ensign* (Powell, 1934), best classed as early social realism, is an industrial tale based in a Clydeside shipyard where a designer is hoping to prove his ideas are viable and is desperate for the Government to do something regarding the state of the industry. *The 39 Steps* (Hitchcock, 1935), a thriller, is assessed in terms of the performances of John Laurie, the native Scottish actor who plays the Scottish crofter in the film, and Peggy Ashcroft, the English actress who plays his wife.<sup>111</sup> The performance of Frank Cellier, an English actor, who plays the Scottish Sheriff, is also considered. The three of them all share the screen with one of the biggest stars of the decade, Robert Donat, who plays the lead character, Richard Hannay. Almost immediately after the completion of *The 39 Steps* for Hitchcock, Donat moved on to work with the French director René Clair to make *The Ghost Goes West* (Clair,

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<sup>111</sup> Colin McArthur (1982, p. 45) missed the chance to analyse the characterisation of the Crofter in the film and extracting any nuance of character or performance by the reductive act of simply describing him as being, "darkly Calvinist."

1935), a comedy feature. This, our fourth film, is the one in which Donat plays two Scottish characters.

### *The Secret of the Loch* (Rosmer, 1934)

*The Secret of the Loch* could be regarded as both a curio and a formative work in the careers of off-screen talent: it is, due to featuring ‘a’ Loch Ness Monster, undeniably a ‘creature feature’ yet it was co-written by Charles Bennett, who shortly after completion of this script, wrote two of Hitchcock’s thrillers, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The 39 Steps* (Barr, 2011, p. 68). In addition to Bennett, the film also featured early work as its editor by David Lean. On screen, the cast included Gibson Gowland, who had starred in Erich von Stroheim’s *Greed* (1924) and Seymour Hicks, a veteran of both the legitimate and music hall stage as well as a number of films.<sup>112</sup> The director was Milton Rosmer, an actor and director of many years standing.

The plot concerns Professor Heggie (played by Hicks) who is convinced that the Loch Ness Monster (Nessie) is real and he is attempting to prove this. Although rebuffed by his fellows at the “Museum of Science” in London, a journalist, Jimmy Andrews, decides to follow up on the story. Whilst the journalist is in Scotland he falls in love with the professor’s granddaughter and the film ends with him coming face-to-face with the monster, and managing to glean photographic evidence of it.

Nessie was reaching its highest fame around the time that the film was made. There was a picture of Nessie, taken by Dr. Kenneth Wilson and known as the, “surgeon’s photograph,” that was published by the *Daily Mail* of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934 (Williams, 2013, para. 9). Additionally *King Kong* (Cooper, Shoedsack, 1933) had sparked interest in monster movies after its success. P. W. Wilson wrote an essay in *The North American Review* (1934, March 1, p. 257) on, “Bobby, the sea-serpent of Scotland,” in which he begged scientists to believe that such a creature could very well exist even in the absence of empirical evidence. Nessie was, at this point, newsworthy.<sup>113</sup> A reflection of the international attention given to Nessie is that the American magazine *Variety* (1934, March 27, p. 29) recorded that Seymour Hicks was to star in Wyndham Films production, *The Secret of the Loch*. A British studio

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<sup>112</sup> Jon Burrows (2003, p. 142) described Hicks as a famously esoteric character actor.

<sup>113</sup> Interest in the Loch Ness Monster continued for some years. 1936 saw the release of Malcolm Irvine’s *Things That Happen No. 1* which included ‘real’ footage of Nessie. The film can be viewed at <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film.cfm?fid=0373>.

was making a film revolving around the attempt to prove the existence of Nessie, and even the American entertainment press were interested in it.

E. G. Cousins writing in *The Picturegoer Weekly* (1934a, April 7, p. 30) devoted half of his column to a preview of the film. He tells us that there are no native Scots appearing in the cast. The following week, Cousins (1934b, April 14, p. 30) explained the challenge that the production of the film faced: “Its main problem is to make a £15,000 production look like a £25,000 one.” Laurie Ede (2015, p. 61) suggested that in the 1920s British film design lacked two important factors, design and money, and it appears that, in the case of this low-budget, independent studio operating in the mid-1930s, these factors were still apparent. Cousins (1934b, p. 30) on the other hand notes the importance placed not on realism in the production but on factual accuracy in the representation of legal procedure lest the Scottish audience see errors and write letters of complaint: “a solicitor conversant with Scottish court procedure had to be found and engaged to stand by and watch for errors.”

The topical nature of the film is commented upon in the press. Cousins has, by the end of April, found other productions to concentrate on but does note that the film is, if nothing else, topical given the amount of press coverage of Nessie at the time (1934c, April 28, p. 30). This topicality is picked up by Malcolm D. Phillips who provides a preview of the movie in the June 16<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Picturegoer*: “this was meant to be a modest British film attempt to ‘cash in’ on the Loch Ness Monster boom.” He went on, “one naturally did not expect the technical fireworks of *King Kong*, but the weaknesses of *The Secret of the Loch* lie chiefly in the theatricality of its conception, development and characterisation.” His principal objection is to its theatrical characterisation: “the scene is cluttered up with stage Scotsmen, stage reporters, stage professors and stage conventions” (p. 19).<sup>114</sup>

This appears to have been deliberate. As Phillips noted, the majority of types within the film are played as if on stage; they are presented as loosely drawn caricatures. The reporters, other than the hero, Jimmy, are always seen with drinks in

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<sup>114</sup> The theatrical nature of the performances was also noted by Lionel Collier in his review in *The Picturegoer* (December 1, 1934, p. 27), who called the film, “a theatrically conceived, theatrically developed and theatrically characterised melodrama...the director has relied too much on stage methods to tell his story...which is infested with characters one never sees outside the theatre.”

their hands, even the sole reporter who can get the telephone in the hotel to work. The Scottish regular customers of the hotel bar speak with overly pronounced rhoticism, affected attempts at impersonating Harry Lauder's teuchter characters and all use the reported speech of the Kailyard writers for their conversations. The scientists whom Professor Heggie visits in order to establish the existence of the monster are cartoon creations. The tone of gentle pastiche which characterises the film can be seen in the naming of the museum Heggie visits: it is "The Museum of Science." We are shown a walrus, stuffed and on a wall and the camera tilts down to show us a scientist, rotund and asleep with a walrus moustache that blows out as he snores. Dyer (2007, p. 55) suggested that pastiche, "imitates its idea of what it imitates," indicating that context and signals are crucial in the understanding of the text. V. F. Perkins (1972, p. 71) suggested that the distinction between film and reality is an important one but that, "films do not have to be too lifelike to offer a valid fictional form." The Scottish world in *The Secret of the Loch* is not created as a real world and is not intended to be seen as one.

Hicks, as Professor Heggie, gives a distinctly theatrical performance as an eccentric, apparently slightly dotty, but nonetheless driven and ruthless academic. There is little attempt by Hicks at a localised Scottish accent of any sort, but, there is nothing in the diegesis to confirm his character's background. His voice retains elements of Received Pronunciation but this is tempered with occasional burrs and rolling 'r's that are characteristic of what John Corbett (2008, p. 26) describes as a polite, middle-class, Scots voice. The clothing and overall behaviour of his character suggest that he is wealthy, certainly wealthy enough to employ a gillie who also operates as bodyguard and hired thug. This is the featured Scottish character, the gillie, Angus, played by Gibson Gowland.

Gowland was a character actor who by 1934 had experienced some degree of success in the USA. He worked with Griffith on *The Birth of a Nation*, appeared in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Julian, 1925), starring Lon Chaney, worked with Murnau on *Sunrise*, and played the lead character in Erich von Stroheim's 1924 opus, *Greed*. In *The Secret of the Loch* his character has a dual purpose: he is the servant of the Professor, as such he is the savage Highlander, yet he is also there to provide some comic relief. The film's most intentionally amusing scene allows Gowland to play with stereotypes of Scottishness. As a character actor he combines recognisable details of people along with, "with eccentricities associated with individual touches provided

by the actor's own quirks of physique and personality" (Gledhill, 2003, p.76). Gowland's is the only character seen wearing a kilt, and is obsessed with the clan system and age-old allegiances within it and he is capable of drinking an enormous amount of whisky with little or no effect (7.1). When Jimmy meets Angus the dramatic context sets up the potential for violence to be performed yet this scene is played for laughs. Gowland gives a performance that ranges from warmth and friendliness to instant threat as his character learns more about the reporter who is up from London to cover the story of Nessie. Angus is the tamed savage of the Highlands; the warrior figure who has found that his size and strength are best used in the employ of someone else.



Figure 7-1. *The Secret of the Loch*: Only Gowland is seen wearing a kilt and can drink whisky freely with no ill effects.

*The Secret of the Loch* does not develop or extend Scottish characteristics. *The Scotsman* (June 5, 1934, p. 5) noted that the cinematic Scot was little more than, "a kilted toper" and that the film, "is not noticeably sympathetic to the Scottish character," but concluded by stating that other than its treatment of the Scottish people it, "is a vigorous and competent production." The Scottish characters are as much caricatures as any of the others featured. Scientists are old, stuffy, self-

important men; reporters are always found in the bar of the hotel and there is little in the way of nuance with these types. They are played though, with a sense of fun. The film does not take its subject matter or itself too seriously and in its treatment of Scottishness it retains a gentle tone of pastiche.

### *Red Ensign* (Powell, 1934)

Written and directed by Michael Powell, *Red Ensign*, released in the US under the title *Strike!*, is a story based nominally around industry and worries of unemployment, set in a shipyard on the Clyde, in Scotland and has been viewed as a patriotic take on the depression (Bellamy, 2006, p. 16). The film can be viewed as an early example of social realism, marrying elements of documentary with an established star of the day.<sup>115</sup> It is one of the few films of the 1930s to confront industrial issues and it emphasised the importance of merchant shipping as opposed to naval prowess (Richards, 1984, p. 319; Carolan, 2012, p. 127). Unemployment and poverty are regional or even local phenomena (Royle, 2012, p. 203) and the 1930s saw a dramatic increase in unemployment in the UK, to almost 3.5 million by 1932 (Sedgwick, 2000, p. 40). John Stevenson and Chris Cook (1994, p. 12) argue that the early part of the decade was characterised by rising prosperity amongst the employed yet the industrial heartlands of the UK were in a state of depression and mass unemployment. Rosalind Mitchison and T. C. Smout (1990, p. 242) point out that the growth in the employed population in Scotland stalled after 1931 for several years. The central belt of Scotland remained strong in terms of employment partly because the workers in shipyards were skilled tradesmen, for whom there was a high demand, but also because the Clydeside employers adopted an attitude of holding on and hoping that something would turn up in the end (Mitchison & Smout, p. 224).

Production of the film was underway in the autumn of 1933. E. G. Cousins highlights his hopes for the subject matter of the production, "it deals with a subject that affects us all, and vitally, though we may not be conscious of it - the problem of British shipping" (1933, September 30, p. 32). *The Picturegoer* review of the film by Lionel Collier (1934, June 2, p. 28) is brief. Characterisation, especially Leslie Banks' work, is described as, "sound" a view agreed with in an anonymous review in *Variety*

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<sup>115</sup> Richard Armstrong (BFI, 2014) defined social realism as a combination of, "the objective temper and aesthetics of the documentary movement with the stars and resources of studio filmmaking."

(1934, February 20, p. 25) which states, that a “splendid cast more than does justice to the production, with Leslie Banks natural and convincing in the leading role.”

The film’s central character, David Barr (Banks), has been seen by Mark Duguid (2014) as an uncompromising visionary who is determined to turn about the fortunes of British shipyards during the depression of the 1930s. The film was made for Gaumont-British as a “quota quickie” although Ian Christie (1985, p. 30) suggested that this term belittles the ambition of the film as it attempted, “to cast off quota period cliché and achieve both topicality and a true cinematic scale and rhythm.” Its key themes are the state of British industry in the 1930s and the abuse(s) of power by those in lofty positions. Barr is one of those in such a lofty position, as the manager and chief designer of the yard, but he is thwarted by those above him on the board of directors. Indeed, the board have the “wait and see what happens” attitude that Smout referred to as they hope that the UK government will bring in a new shipping bill to Parliament which will ensure the continued workload and orders for new ships to be built.

The cast of *Red Ensign* could perhaps be best described as “jobbing” actors. Few of them achieved international fame, other than Leslie Banks<sup>116</sup> and, in a small part of a character with no name, the wages clerk was played by John Laurie who later appeared in another film discussed in this chapter, *The 39 Steps*. Laurie is one of the few native Scots in the cast, one other being Allan Jeayes, who portrayed Jock Grierson, a worker of some years in the yard.<sup>117</sup> Others of the relatively few speaking Scottish characters are played by non-native speakers, most notably Mr. McWilliam, played by Frederick Piper. This is one of the interesting points regarding *Red Ensign* and its representation of Scottishness: that there are actually very few Scottish people featured in the film. A film set in a Clydeside shipyard, featuring workers in both the yard and the office, not to mention the management of both this yard and a rivals, is predominantly presented with Received Pronunciation, English voices.

There are clear divides between the working class (I include the office and administrative staff as workers) and the managerial class in the film. Management all

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<sup>116</sup> Banks is seen as an important character actor who worked for Hitchcock, Powell and Korda during the 1930s (McFarlane, 2014, BFI Screenonline).

<sup>117</sup> Mark Duguid (2014) notes that Jock Grierson is named after John Grierson, “one of the most prominent British documentarists.”

speak with an absolute, cut-glass Received Pronunciation voice of the BBC, the precise inflection and intonation of the educated, ruling class of the UK. Even the rival yard owner, Manning, speaks in Received Pronunciation. The men in the yard, notably Grierson, have west coast, Glasgow accents on the rare occasions that they are heard. There are two exceptions to this though: there is a trouble maker in the yard who is revealed in the narrative to be a plant from a rival company who has what may be referred to as a wandering accent. In some scenes he sounds as if he is from Yorkshire, in another he sounds like a Scottish impersonator and in one he sounds as if he is from New York. The office workers that we hear speak are the wage accountants (Laurie and Piper). Laurie is a native Scot and speaks in his native voice. Piper is not a native and has to affect an accent. As with so many other performers he is not entirely comfortable with a Scottish accent. He mangles vowels when referring to the shipyard; in his mouth, the word is produced as “sheepyard” with no rhoticism on the solitary letter ‘r’. Piper’s character is there to provide some moments of comic relief for the audience. He has the stereotypical Scottish affection for alcohol and is easily swayed over by the offer of a free drink from a publican. The publican then conforms to another Scottish stereotype; that of being careful with money, and immediately demands the reimbursement of his costs from his master.

*Red Ensign* is a film that is content to present Scottish people as humble, loyal and above all easily placated workers. Victoria Carolan (2014, pp.146-147) noted that the film, “is told from the management’s point of view (the owners of the shipyard) and there is an emphasis on the workers co-operating.” This co-operation is not achieved without the use of force however. In a scene where it becomes apparent that there is no money to cover the wages for the week, the workforce of the yard congregate and are told of this. The worker who is informing them is dispatched by David Barr who simply tells him to stop stirring up trouble and then throws him into the river Clyde (7.2). That worker is not seen again in the film. None of the other workers are disturbed by this display of aggression by their superior, indeed they all listen to him as he tells them to remain patient and that in the long run they will all be paid properly and they then return to work. This fantastical scene positions the modern working Scotsman as a simple and easily bidden creature, little more than a work-horse. The English accented manager is their better and should be obeyed without fuss regardless of the situation. In many ways, Scotland and Scottish people feature as a mere backdrop to the narrative; the conditions of the Scottish



people's work and life are of no interest to the story which focusses instead on the managerial class.



Figure 7-2. *Red Ensign*: Sequence as Barr despatches the troublemaker.

Scottishness in this example of Powell's early work is not important, beyond other than the geographic location of the film. This is intriguing given that only three years later he directed what is regarded by Sergio Angelini (2014, para. 1) as his most personal feature, *The Edge of the World* (Powell, 1937), based on the true story of the evacuation of St. Kilda. Powell returned to the Scottish islands for two more films, *The Spy in Black* (Powell, 1939), filmed in the Orkneys, and then the Western Isles for *I Know Where I'm Going!* (Powell, 1945).

### *The 39 Steps* (Hitchcock, 1935)

*The 39 Steps* (Hitchcock, 1935) is a loose adaptation of the novel of the same name, written by John Buchan.<sup>118</sup> While on holiday in London, Richard Hannay becomes embroiled in an international spy ring. He soon finds himself on the run from the police who are seeking him for the murder of a spy, a murder he did not commit. He heads to Scotland and ends up hand cuffed to a woman who unwillingly

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<sup>118</sup> Buchan also wrote *Huntingtower* (see Chapter 6).

accompanies him all the way back to London to solve the crime. Nicholas Haeffner (2014, p. 20) notes that the film aims to fuse the spectacular with the visual and is a good example of a picaresque thriller. John Rossi (1982, p. 26) suggests that the film saw Hitchcock raise the chase-thriller to a new level of perfection and David Trotter states that, "Hitchcock had found his niche by the time he made *The 39 Steps*" (2010, p. 116). Susan McCabe (2010, p. 129) claims that the film offers suspense and romance whilst capturing a distinctively British world-view yet questions the solidity of the nation.

The novel had been highly successful yet there are several differences between it and the film: in the novel the protagonist, Richard Hannay, is a Scot who moved to South Africa at the age of six and has returned to the UK as an adult. However, in the film Hannay is described as being Canadian.<sup>119</sup> The novel has an American male spy as the victim of the murder that Hannay is accused of but the film changes this to a female, foreign freelance spy played by the German actress, Lucie Mannheim. Yet one of the largest differences concerns two characters, the Crofter and his wife. In Buchan's original work they are barely featured. Neither of them are given a name in the novel; they exist only to allow Hannay to have somewhere to sleep for one night on his journey. In the film these two characters exist to show a variety of things, not least of which are characteristics common to representations of Scottish males. James Morrison (2004, p. 207) suggests that Alfred Hitchcock's early British works use nationalities as MacGuffins.<sup>120</sup> National identities are accepted by the viewer, "as given, archetypal, universal rather than as local, distinctive" (Morrison, 2004, p. 207). Is this really the case in *The 39 Steps*? There are a number of Scottish characters in the film who are all treated in different ways by Hitchcock and later this section examines closely the characters of the Crofter and his wife along with some

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<sup>119</sup> I cannot find any concrete evidence to support a reason for this change in the character's origin. Robert Donat does not use a Canadian accent in the film, he is actually using a neutral Received Pronunciation voice, the point of the character of Hannay being that he is an outsider who is tossed into events that change his life so the neutral voice is well suited to lend an air of everyman to the character. Hannay's origin is mentioned in a throwaway line at the beginning of the film when Mr. Memory answers a question posed by Hannay about the distance from Winnipeg to Montreal. Mr. Memory simply says, "Ah a gentleman from Canada" before giving the correct answer. It is possible, as suggested to me by Mark Glancy, that the change in nationality from Scots to Canadian is simply alluding to Buchan himself who was appointed as Governor-General of Canada in 1935.

<sup>120</sup> MacGuffin is a term Hitchcock used to describe a plot device. It is generally a goal or an object that the protagonist is willing to reach or sacrifice with little or no narrative explanation as to why it is so desired.

of the other Scottish characters the film presents, although I begin with the film's general reception.

Robert Donat stars as Richard Hannay. Donat was, at that time, building a name for himself as an actor. He had had some success in the USA with *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Lee, 1934) to the extent that Michael Balcon, the producer of *The 39 Steps* felt that having Donat's name attached to the film would be advantageous in terms of appeal and marketing (Balcon, 1935, p. 27; Glancy, 2003, p. 28; Lowe, 2009, para. 7). The film was generally well received by critics. *The Spectator* (June, 1935, p. 1014) review felt that it was, "the best British film of its type yet made." *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (1935, January, p. 72) magazine stated that it was, "first-class entertainment". A reviewer for *Variety*, using the pen-name "Jolo," declared that, "yes, they can make pictures in England. This one proves it" (1935, June, p. 21). Indeed, one of the few critics who did not enthuse about the whole film was Alastair Cooke who wrote in *Sight and Sound* in its summer edition, "this might have been an excellent film...but the story was never digested" (1935, p. 70). Cooke actually goes on to suggest that one of the film's problem areas is in its treatment of some of the more minor characters: "the attempt at odd, Capra-like pieces of inconsequent characterisation (the commercial travellers on the train, the milkman) are unobservant and academic" (p. 72).

The minor characters Cooke refers to are only loosely sketched. The milkman plays only one part in the story and that is to allow the audience to establish that Hannay will not be believed by anyone when he tells the truth and also to afford him the first of his many escapes from his pursuers. The travellers on the train, two lingerie salesmen going to Aberdeen from London, serve to provide the first encounter with a Scottish character. It is entirely incidental to the plot but serves to show different attitudes that nationalities within the UK can have to each other. Indeed, these characters can be seen as precursors of Charters and Caldicott, the comedic pair from *The Lady Vanishes* (Hitchcock, 1938), who are seen as expressing a light-hearted quality of national heritage (Smith, 2012, p. 55). Arriving in Edinburgh, the salesmen wish to get a newspaper in order to find out the winner of a horse race. A paper boy is shown on the platform and one of the salesmen leans down to him and says, "hey son, speak da English?" We see Hannay roll his eyes at this man's treatment of the boy. Hannay is positioned as an outsider who does not

verbally comment on this behaviour. The train leaves Edinburgh and one of the film's set-pieces occurs next: the escape from the police on the Forth Bridge.<sup>121</sup>

The escape allows us to hear the first of several Scottish voices in the film. Donat's voice can be described as mid-Atlantic: well-spoken, vaguely British but not posh or with any specific regional accent. There is absolutely no attempt to provide a Canadian accent. The early scenes of the film are a music hall setting with Cockney voices in abundance and in later scenes we are in a number of different Scotlands: the croft, the country house of the landed gentry and the Sheriff's office. Donat's voice allows him to stand out and move through the narrative in a similar manner to heroes of the western genre as identified by Kozloff: he can be understood by everyone in the film and he understands everyone in the film. The guard of the train berates the police for stopping the train (they pulled the emergency cord) and tells them in a Scots brogue that he, "cannae wait any longer!"

After his escape Hannay is seen walking across the country in the Highlands. This is rural Scotland, the gentility of civilisation is left behind in this wilderness. He approaches a man who is opening a gate and moving cows through it. The man is the Crofter, played by John Laurie whose performance in the film is noted in Land's review in *Variety* (1935, September 18, p. 15): "John Laurie as a grim, grasping, suspicious Scotsman gives a gem characterization [*sic*]." But this is a Scotsman new to the cinema: there are similarities in character type with previous representations but Laurie has a defined, layered character to portray. The novel barely features the Crofter, Hannay as narrator merely recording a pleasant evening spent discussing cattle sales. The film keeps the Crofter nameless but Hitchcock and Laurie present a Scotsman who is driven by money, the Kirk and power and who, in his final on-screen action, resorts to violence.<sup>122</sup>

The Scots characteristics of frugality and miserliness have been noted before. Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe amongst others made light of this reputation in their

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<sup>121</sup> The Forth Bridge is the railway bridge that connects Lothian and Fife. The Forth Road Bridge was not built in 1935 so the rail bridge is called the Forth Bridge in the film. I grew up in Edinburgh and still refer to the Forth Bridge and the Rail Bridge where many differ and call them the Forth Rail Bridge and Forth Road Bridge. The new bridge, the Queensferry Crossing, which opened in 2017, comes after the Rail Bridge, the Kincardine Bridge, the Road Bridge and the Clackmannanshire Crossing and is therefore actually the fifth Forth Bridge which would be a much more amusing and accurate name.

<sup>122</sup> The character is in the credits as 'Crofter' and his wife is listed as, 'Crofter's Wife' although in dialogue the wife refers to the Crofter by the name, 'John.'

music hall routines but in *The 39 Steps* the Crofter adds a frisson of danger. Hannay asks if he can stay for the night; the Crofter's immediate retort is to ask, "For free?" Following a number of questions, the Crofter simply states to Hannay the price for staying: "Two and six." This is the first time that the Crofter looks Hannay in the eyes, exerting power over the stranger. Once the money has changed hands, the pair go to the croft where they are met outside by a woman (Peggy Ashcroft). Hannay asks if she is the crofter's daughter to which he receives the terse reply, "she's my wife," before the crofter stalks off.

In this tiny section, this Scotsman is in a position of power yet is also vulnerable. He has the ability to let Hannay stay in his home and takes fiscal reward for doing so, and is then undermined, potentially embarrassed by a question about his wife. For the Crofter, his wife is his property, his possession even though she is clearly much younger than he. There is little explanation as to why this young woman came to be living in a croft with the old man but there is a hint in her conversation with Hannay. We hear her say that she is from Glasgow. From her reactions to Hannay's conversation with her we see that she is unhappy and yearns to be in a city again, not in rural Scotland and most especially tonight as she talks of Glasgow being alive and vibrant on a Saturday night:

Crofter's Wife (CW): Oh you should see Sauchiehall Street with all its fine shops and Argyll Street on a Saturday night with the trams and the lights and the cinema palaces and the crowds. It's Saturday night tonight.

Richard Hannay (RH): You certainly don't get those things out here.

CW: No.

RH: Do you miss them?

CW: Sometimes.

RH: Well, I haven't ever been to Glasgow but I've been to Edinburgh and Montreal and London. I'll tell you all about London at supper.

CW: John wouldn't approve of that.

RH: Why ever not?

CW: He says it's best not to think of such places and all the wickedness that goes on there.

Hannay goes on to give her details of London (and tell her that she is more beautiful than the ladies there) before her husband returns. The Scottish woman is won over by the charming, intelligent foreigner, the mystery of the stranger sparking her youthful desire to be out and free. Ashcroft and Donat give two marvellous performances in this section. She has a Scottish accent that only slips on occasion – she is let down by her non-native pronunciation of Glasgow and Sauchiehall – but is otherwise near perfect. Her desire and longing for the glamour of the city are made clear by tiny reactions to Hannay’s tales of city life. She wishes more than anything to not be with the crofter and sees Hannay as some form of escape either literal or vicarious. The croft itself is darkly lit and claustrophobic, a direct contrast to the only other domicile that has been seen on screen so far: Hannay’s London flat. The flat is spacious and bright yet there are suggestions that Hannay is only a temporary resident (Glancy, 2003, pp. 46-47) whereas the croft has a permanence to it reminiscent of a prison cell which, for the Crofter’s wife it certainly is.

The conversation between the two is interrupted by the Crofter who returns and demands of his wife: “woman, is the supper ready?” Their relationship is clear from this one line. The Crofter’s wife is his servant. Another trait is then displayed by the Crofter: piety. Grace is said, and guidance sought from God in order that all three of them may be able to, “continually turn our hearts from wickedness and from worldly things unto thee.” The contrast with the wife’s desire to be away from this place and this man lies uncomfortably. During the grace, Hannay realises that the



wife knows from the newspaper that he is wanted for murder. As the two stare at each other they are unaware that the crofter is looking at the two of them. His eyes are lit as the focal point of the shot, there follows a close up of his face, his pronounced eyeballs

*Figure 7-3. The 39 Steps: The Crofter is a visual element that blends with his environment.*

darting between the two. That movement and camera angle show that he is utterly untrusting of their behaviour, the implication being that the Crofter fears that this young, handsome stranger is going to steal his young, pretty wife away from him. The style in this short section of film is an abrupt shift to German Expressionism, described by Mark Cousins (2011, n.p.) as, "Murnau-like." The Crofter is a visual element that merges with the setting, the croft itself (7.3). Throughout the scene, John Laurie has heavy make-up on to accentuate his character's supposed age.<sup>123</sup> He is framed when looking through the window at Hannay and his wife in a manner that shows Hitchcock's expressionist experiences of working for UFA (Bordwell and Thompson, 2013, p. 471).

The Crofter, as a continuation of the tropes already seen in this thesis, fits into two of Dyer's (2002, p. 11) clarifications of stereotype function: he exists as a short-cut and, more importantly for his character and actions, he expresses perceived values and beliefs. His frugality along with his piety are short cuts to "characteristic" Scottish behaviours taken by Hitchcock. More worryingly for representations of Scottishness the Crofter is shortly shown as being willing to resort to violence in order to control his wife.

Hannay leaves the croft abruptly. Realising that the police are on their way, Hannay attempts to bribe the Crofter by giving him five pounds to hide him. Receiving the money the Crofter goes to tell the police that Hannay is not here. Duplicity is now revealed by Hitchcock as a Scottish characteristic, particularly where money is concerned. The wife tells Hannay that he will just be stalling for time to find out if there is a reward for capturing him. Hannay is aghast at the deception of the Crofter: "But he took the money" he exclaims as the wife tells him not to be surprised by this action. The acceptance of this behaviour by the wife tells the audience that this is perfectly normal: if a Scotsman sees an opportunity for financial gain he will grasp it with both hands. This national trait is a given, an archetype that is universally accepted and exploited by Hitchcock here (Morrison, 2004, p. 207). Where previously this behaviour was used for comedic purposes in the work of the Scotch Comics, in the hands of Hitchcock the demeanour here has elements of danger and ultimately

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<sup>123</sup> There is a clear implication in the film that the Crofter is much older than his wife, when he is mistaken by Hannay for her father. John Laurie was in his mid-30s at the time of filming, only some ten years older than Peggy Ashcroft and around eight years older than Donat.

signifies betrayal. The Crofter is most certainly not a character that could be described as being in what Lawrence Napper (2009, p. 6) described as, “the ‘hoots mon!’ tradition,” a phrase that the use of alone indicates the strength of the comedic, stereotypical presentation of Scottish nationality.

The Crofter is seen in the police chase, as after all he now has a reward to chase for capturing Hannay, but disappears from the chase towards its end. He is only seen again once. Hannay is shot whilst wearing the Crofter’s coat. Hitchcock cuts to the Crofter asking his wife if she has seen his hymn book, it was in the breast pocket of his best coat that was hanging on the peg beside him in the frame. His wife answers from off screen that she gave the coat to Hannay to help him escape. The Crofter’s face wears an expression of thunder and he moves off screen towards his wife. We see nothing but hear an almighty slap and his wife scream which acts as a sound bridge to the next scene. The final impression of this Scotsman, the Crofter, is that of a man, a savage who will beat his wife for perceived misdeeds.

Standing in contrast to the portrayal of the Crofter is the Sheriff (Cellier). Not on screen for as long as the Crofter yet the character is as important in terms of reinforcing Hitchcock’s idealised Scottishness. The Sheriff and the Crofter represent two opposite ends of the social classes in Scotland. The Crofter is a man who lives and works on the land. He is not educated, he believes in the teachings of the Kirk and is very much a representation of the past. Contrastingly, the Sheriff is an educated man who holds a position of authority as a judicial officer in Scotland. He is first seen at the birthday party for Professor Jordan’s daughter and introduced as, “Scotland’s equivalent to the beak” in order to explain his position to audiences outwith Scotland, although this assumes that the audience know who “the beak” is. This then, is a character who is a professional, educated, moneyed and in a position of responsibility almost the exact opposite of the crofter. The next time the Sheriff is seen after the party is when Hannay goes to him to tell him what Professor Jordan has done. This is immediately after the Crofter attacks his wife, the sound bridge being her screaming ebbing into the Sheriff’s laughter as Hannay tells him of the hymn book that saved his life.

The bullet is shown in the hymn book and a joke is made by the Sheriff about, “some of those hymns are hard to get through,” an immediate signifier of the difference between him and the pious crofter. The educated man is, of course, not as clever as he thinks he is. When Hannay tells him the whole tale he immediately calls



the police, who turn out to be working for Professor Jordan, to arrest Hannay. As he says to Hannay in a moment of sublime short-sightedness, “we’re not so daft in Scotland as some smart Londoners may think!” The scriptwriters cannot resist one more portrayal of a common Scottish trait: money grabbing. When Hannay is arrested in the Sheriff’s office he demands that he be allowed to make a phone call to the Canadian High Commissioner in London. The Sheriff refuses, telling Hannay that he can do it from London as, “it’ll save you the cost of a trunk call.” The clear implication being that the Sheriff would have taken money from Hannay for using his telephone. Cellier’s accent is recognisable by the native ear as being from the Western Isles of Scotland.

The short sequence immediately following this scene highlights another element of the film that is unique to its Scottish scenes and breaks with conventional representations of music in Scotland: in only one of them is there any background, diegetic or non-diegetic music. There is practically no music in Scotland in *The 39 Steps*. Instead, the film is book-ended aurally: there is music at the beginning and the end in the sections set in London.<sup>124</sup> Debra Daniel-Richard (2010, p. 53) notes that Hitchcock ran against the view of many of his contemporaries that music was a necessity in film, suggesting that the main purpose of using music was to emphasise silence. In this case the silence, or rather the lack of noise, in the highlands of Scotland. There are, of course, speech and other sounds but the only time musical instruments are heard in Scotland is in order for them to assist Hannay’s escape as he blends in with a Salvation Army march. The band features brass, woodwind and drums but no bagpipes. Were this scene shown by itself there would be no reason for the viewer to associate it with Scotland at all. The effect of this is to temporarily relocate the film: the viewer knows that Hannay is in Scotland yet there is nothing Scottish about the Salvation Army instrumentation or music. Hannay remains anonymous during this chase scene, he can slip easily into the crowd and even march with the band. Had the band been in full Highland regalia, the protagonist would be easily spotted. This also provides a further point of contrast with the novel in which Hannay runs to Scotland to hide and camouflages himself back into the

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<sup>124</sup> The use of music has been commented upon by James Wierzbicki (2011, pp. 160-161) who notes that Mr. Memory has a theme tune and that this is the tune that Hannay has had running through his head for most of the film. Hannay refers to this when handcuffed to Pamela in bed as he whistles the opening refrain and says, “There I go again. I wish I could this damn tune out of my head.”

Scottish culture where he, “was the living image of the kind of Scotsman you see in the illustrations to Burns’s poems” (Buchan, 1978, p. 90; Pittock, 2009, p. 32).

The Scottishness in *The 39 Steps* is stereotypical yet heightened in the character of the Crofter. The common traits of the Scotsmen are concerns with money and fear of the Lord. It is interesting to note though, that none of the Scottish characters are given names in the credits. Only two of them are given names on screen: the crofter and his wife (John and Margaret). The anonymity of these people is not truly important though; they are all plot devices, in common with Morrison’s assertion that nationality is a MacGuffin. Scottish characters exist merely populating a series of vignettes that allow the hero to complete his journey and finish his tale. That they all conform to stereotype is perhaps, hardly surprising given Hitchcock’s reticence to flesh out any character, even his heroes in his early films, preferring instead to concentrate on the suspense elements of his narratives (Cohen, 1995, p. 27).

### *The Ghost Goes West* (Clair, 1935)

*The Ghost Goes West* (Clair, 1935) provides the first truly modern Scotsman in cinema. For the first time there is Scottish man as a lead character who is not continually dressed in tartan; who is not affiliated with the military; he is not suspicious of technology; he is not reliant on whisky and he is presented as a modern, urbane gentleman who understands etiquette and acts with decorum and dignity. The film also presents a unique look at what Duncan Petrie (2004, p. 135) refers to as a, “fundamental national identity crisis, expressed in the concept of the Caledonian antisyzygy.” The term Caledonian antisyzygy was first used by G. Gregory Smith in 1919 as a label to gather together the polar twins of literature – fantasy and realism (Carruthers, 2009, p. 11). Laura O’Connor (2005, para. 5) views the term as, “a commingling of two contrary moods,” and in *The Ghost Goes West* it can be applied as the coming together of the past and the modern, with emphasis on the hold that the past has on the present. The basic plot of the film concerns an eighteenth century Scotsman (Murdoch Glourie, played by Robert Donat), killed in disgrace before a battle against the English army and condemned to walk the earth as a spirit until he can avenge himself, and his twentieth century descendant (Donald

Glourie, also played by Robert Donat) who has inherited the family home and the ghost that haunts it.

The film was released in late 1935 and proved to be so successful that it was also the highest grossing British film in the UK in 1936 (Kuhn, 2002, p. 252; Gritten, 2008, p. 265; Alexander, 2014).<sup>125</sup> *Variety* (1936, February 26, p. 7) recorded that it was a, “smash from the word go. Opening weeks around \$30,000. Now in its eighth week and still close to \$18,000.”<sup>126</sup> It was adapted from a short story written by Eric Keown, *Sir Tristram Goes West*, which originally appeared in *Punch* magazine<sup>127</sup> and was the French director René Clair’s first British film (Margrave, 1936, p. 50). In Keown’s version of the story a destitute Englishman is left with no option to raise money other than to sell his family castle to a wealthy American, who intends to transport it to the USA brick by brick. The castle is haunted by the ghost of Sir Tristram, a Royalist who was killed at the Battle of Naseby in 1645. The ghost was a coward in his lifetime and was cursed by his dying father to haunt the castle until he performs an act of heroism. When the castle is relocated to the USA it becomes apparent that the ghost of Sir Tristram has moved with the castle. Shortly after arriving in the USA he manifests in the library of the rebuilt castle where a number of gangsters are holding the new owner and his family hostage and the ghost scares off the gangsters thereby committing his heroic deed in saving the family and his curse is lifted.

In April of 1935 the film was still at its planning stage. The producer, Alexander Korda, had Clair confirmed as the director but it was Charles Laughton, not Robert Donat, who was to play the lead character and the film was still adhering to the original story’s characters and plotline (Lejeune, 1935, p. 10). During the pre-production process, Clair and the script-writer Robert Sherwood decided that the setting would change and that there was to be a romantic element incorporated into the storyline: Laughton was not deemed suitable to play a romantic lead and Clair’s first choice for the part, Laurence Olivier, was rejected by Korda who favoured Robert

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<sup>125</sup> The film was highly successful in the USA as well. A writer, Wallace Irwin, attempted to sue the producers of the film for copyright infringement, claiming that he had written a very similar story which had been published in 1910 (*Variety*, May 13, 1936, p. 27). I have unfortunately not been able to discover the result of the case.

<sup>126</sup> *Variety* adjusted cash figures from Sterling to US Dollars. They suggest a conversion of \$5 to £1.

<sup>127</sup> The story is reprinted in full in Seton Margrave’s 1936 book, *Successful Film Writing: As Illustrated by “The Ghost Goes West” [i.e. the Film by Robert Sherwood and René Clair Based on the Short Story “Sir Tristram Goes West” by Eric Keown. With the Text of the Story and the Scenario of the Film.*

Donat.<sup>128</sup> Donat had, of course, just been seen in *The 39 Steps* which had been remarkably successful both in the UK and the USA. Indeed, Donat was viewed, according to Land's review in *Variety*, as having, "b.o. voltage after this one" (1935, September 18, p. 15).

Victoria Lowe (2004, p. 119) notes that the importance of *The 39 Steps* for Donat was that it presented him as, "a uniquely modern leading man," but *The Ghost Goes West* presented Donat, playing Donald Glourie, as the first truly modern Scotsman on screen. The two performances by Donat stand in contrast to his work for Hitchcock. Whilst neither film can be regarded as particularly serious dramatic work, *The Ghost Goes West* allowed Donat to showcase not only his comedic abilities as a performer but also his ability to play a leading role that was markedly different from his last piece of work. Graham Greene's review of the film in *The Spectator* (1935, December, p. 1068) lavishes praise on Donat's performances of, "invincible naturalness." Mark Forrest, writing in *The Saturday Review* (1935, December, p. 672) declared that, "at the close of the year London Films has produced the best British film of it." The director, the star and the film itself had a charmed existence with some areas of the British press. David Sutton (2000, p. 212) notes that the film is based on national stereotypes: the Scots in the early, modern section are penny-pinching, miserable and superstitious: Americans are brash, vulgar and have more money than sense. Two cultures clash in the film; the old world of tradition, history and clan feuds and the new world of commercialism and cultural vacuity. Sutton (2000, pp. 212-213) states that even given such well-worn themes and story elements, "the end result is one of the most charming and...genuinely sophisticated comedies of the decade."

In the completed screenplay, the destitute castle owner and ghost are Scottish, members of the Glourie clan. The ghost, Murdoch Glourie, was, in life, an incessant womaniser. He is pictured with six different women the first time he is seen in the film; kissing one of them and then asking the ensemble, "whose turn is it now?" Murdoch's curse is to haunt the castle until he has made a member of the rival McLaggen clan bow before him. Donald Glourie, his modern counterpart, is not the hedonist his ancestor is. The catalyst for the castle's sale in the film is Peggy Martin,

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<sup>128</sup> Lou Alexander gives a brief overview of this period for BFI Screenonline, available to view at: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/453810/>

the daughter of an American millionaire who convinces her father to buy the castle but it is his decision to relocate it to their base in Florida.

The opening section of the film, set in the eighteenth century, lays out a number of Scots stereotypes: the passion for violence, the dislike of the English and the propensity to long running feuds with other Scottish clans.<sup>129</sup> The introductory music is characteristically Scottish: the rhythmic thrum that is played is reminiscent of traditional Scots bagpipe pieces: it is a drone that has an interval of a fifth with a glissando to imitate the sound of the bagpipe's windbag priming.<sup>130</sup> This builds in a major pentatonic scale from a drone to a lilting romantic melody. Pipes are featured and as the theme fades, it is pipes and drums that are left audible and the establishing shot after the titles is of a thistle, with the title, "Scotland in the Eighteenth Century." The change in instrumentation from an orchestra to pipes and drums has located the film geographically as well as temporally.

Scottish stereotypes are abundant. The thistle fades to show kilted pipers and drummers leading men in a march across the scene – the music that set the location over the titles has become diegetic and as this shot fades to one where the Glourie castle is seen the music also fades down. In keeping with the established location, the costume designer has seen to it that tartan is everywhere. The McLaggens are seen arriving at the castle: they are not wearing kilts, they wear trews coupled with tartan waistcoats, a plaid and opulent, very large frilly lace cuffs on their shirts. This, we are told, is the Chief of the Clan and his sons here to see "the Glourie." They are, like the Campbells in *Annie Laurie*, and the character of Auld Robin Gray, positioned and defined through their clothing as important and in a position of power within the hierarchy of the clans. The Glourie clan are next seen wearing kilts, the Chief of the

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<sup>129</sup> The Jacobite rebellions and the long standing disputes between Scotland and England are common filmic themes. 1935 saw the release of *Flame in the Heather* (Pedelty), produced by Crusade Films. Little can be found about this film, the BFI hold no footage at all and only one small pressbook. There is one review found, from the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (January 1935, p. 124) which recounts the plot of the film and critiques it as well. An English spy goes to Jacobite Scotland and falls for the daughter of the family he is staying with. She laments his nationality yet he eventually rescues her from death and they ride off together as lovers. The review does state that the language used by the Scottish characters is mostly "good modern idiomatic English...with an occasional touch of Scotch for local colour" but notes that although the acting is generally good the actress playing the elder sister of the heroine, "is too English to be really convincing." This is, as already seen in previous chapters a common pitfall of accents in film. The review also notes that, as an attempt to situate the film geographically through sound, "the bagpipes loom largely in the foreground of sound."

<sup>130</sup> Mark Brownrigg (2007, p. 320) noted this distinctive musical characteristic as being used in many large budget Hollywood films of the 1990s, particularly *Braveheart*.

Clan, the Old Glourie is dressed similarly to the McLaggen, his attendants are dressed in kilts although their social standing is defined by the lack of opulence in their clothing. They are clan members but not close familial relations.

Edward J. Fink's (2013, p. 48) positioning of stereotypes as part of the incongruity theory of comedy can be applied to the opening sequence of this film. Stereotyping can serve to provide a quick joke for an audience where time does not allow nuance or character development. It is made clear in the film that there is a long standing feud between the two clans. The McLaggen accuses Glourie's son, Murdoch of cowardice. He goads the Glourie, telling him that he is proud to know that none of their name will be involved in the upcoming battle against the English. The feud between the two clans seems perfectly realistic: after all, *Annie Laurie* (Robertson, 1927) is partially based on the real feud between the Campbell and MacDonald clans and there are still examples of Scottish characters being prepared to admit their distaste for all other Scottish people.<sup>131</sup> The gentle humour that is characteristic of the film's attitude to the Scottish is shown here: as the McLaggens leave, the Glourie throws his whisky glass at the door after them. He is about to throw the bottle of whisky as well, in his rage, when he looks at it and instructs his attendants to, "bring me anither glass", the line showing us the Scottish love of whisky but also has the first instance of a Scots word being used. The performer's accents have to this point been Scottish, but the use of "anither" marks the first time a Scots word is heard and it is heard from one of the older characters. Scots is positioned by this as not only the language of the old in society but also confined to the past as nobody in the modern section of the film uses Scots words.

Murdoch is sent for and dispatched by his dying father to join the massed ranks of Scots preparing to fight the English and is tasked to find the McLaggen clan and make one of them kneel before him for insulting the Glourie name. "My son is a man at last, I can die contented" as the Old Glourie says, "when I've finished this whisky", which underlines the importance of whisky to the Scottish but also, as Fink would have it, uses a stereotype as a baseline for jest.

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<sup>131</sup> A recent example of this comes from the US TV cartoon, *The Simpsons* (Nastuk, 2004). The Scottish character, Groundskeeper Willie, gives a passionate speech in which he points out that, "brothers and sisters are natural enemies. Like Englishmen and Scots! Or Welshmen and Scots! Or Japanese and Scots! Or Scots and other Scots! Damn Scots! They ruined Scotland!"

At the battle, Murdoch goes to retrieve a cannonball after the single Scots cannon, Old Terrible, has misfired. As he is doing this we see the McLaggens being told of his presence and the Old McLaggen orders his sons to go and get Glourie. The feud is more important than fighting the English. Of course, in line with Murdoch's stated characteristic of being more concerned with women than with battle, on his way to get the cannonball he is distracted by a young woman whom he immediately attempts to seduce. A confrontation with the McLaggen sons ensues, he is chased back to the massed armies and hides behind a barrel of gunpowder which is blown up, taking Murdoch with it. His groom returns his hat to the castle (all that is left of Murdoch) and the ghost appears before him. The ghost's eyes are left unlit and in shadow by Clair, an unsettling visual of a man condemned to walk the castle until he can lift the curse. Murdoch's eyes are not seen in light again until after the castle has been moved from Scotland.

Donat's Scottishness in the opening scene is really very well realised and performed. His Scottish accent is accurate within the diegesis: all of the other Scottish accents are similar. The only geographic location given is Scotland, nothing more precise. His interpretation of Murdoch's lascivious nature goes some way to sending up his image of the time as a romantic leading man. He has a lightness of touch in the early scenes which appears effortless, particularly when he is moving around the field full of women who are all there for pleasure. Clair had apparently had doubts about his leading man until he saw him in *The 39 Steps* and was impressed with Donat's ability with comedy (Lejeune, 1935a, p. 17).

The modern section of the film begins with the Glourie home in a state of disrepair. Clair marks the transition with a fade from the castle as we last saw it to its dilapidated state. There is an aural change as well as the soundtrack of the film changes to jazz, music which is eventually brought into the diegesis as it becomes clear that it is being played in a car. The twentieth century Glouries are different: their name is no longer held in regard or esteem. The family has fallen on hard times and the last remaining member is being pursued by his creditors. Six of the creditors are seen in the kitchen of the castle discussing their situation with the cook. There is no tartan in sight but they are all concerned with money: one is owed £150 for ales, wines and liquors over the past seven years; another is due "upwards of £200 for provisions" and a third asks "what about my loan?"

Throughout the meal with the Americans, at which the creditors act as servants, there is a series of comic vignettes that poke fun at the Scots in terms of the pomposity of the old men and the expected behaviours of on-screen Scotsmen yet there is a lightness of touch and feeling that makes this comedic and gentle. This is not superiority humour as Sheila Lintott (2016, p. 347) explains it: the audience is not invited to laugh at the Scots or to feel superior to them in these scenes, rather it is a form of knowing pastiche. The bagpipes are also given a gentle drubbing. Bagpipes are very loud when played and have a distinct tone when the windbag is being filled prior to playing. Two of the men are practising their bagpipe playing in the kitchen: the cook is aghast at this and orders them to go off to the piggery as it, “will sound more natural there.”

Donald Glourie appears dressed formally for dinner. This means he is wearing, of course, a bonnie Prince Charlie jacket, waistcoat and bow tie along with kilt and sporran. This is the reverse of *Auld Robin Gray* where tartan was everyday but not formal wear. Here the tartan is ceremonial. The host wears it, as do the pipers but the rest of the creditors (the staff) are dressed in evening wear of black tie code. This use of costume as occasional or ceremonial positions Glourie in the film as a modern Scot.

The characters' concern with money continues through the dinner. As Donald tells one of the men to open another bottle of champagne he is reminded that it costs twenty-two and six a bottle. The supporting Scots then, in the opening scene are played for comic effect. They are caricatures, men who are driven by money in one way or another. Donald Glourie is driven by the sale of the Castle to clear his debts, the creditors are driven by the sale of the Castle so they can get what is owed them. The Scots are painted with broad strokes, but played with a sense of light-heartedness throughout by the cast. It is in the treatment of the American characters that the humour becomes superior. Their lack of refinement and knowledge is shown by Mr Martin asking for more of the duck only to be told that it is grouse to which he simply responds, “well, what’s the difference?”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The Scottish obsession with money immediately comes back to play here as the provisions merchant, who is the waiter, replies, “eleven shillings and eight pence.”



It is the relationship between the old and the modern that presents the division that the Caledonian antiszygy embodies. Donald is literally cursed by his past, in the ghost of Murdoch, which follows him to the US with the castle. Ian Brown and Alan Riach (2009, p. 11) suggest that one function of the term is the split between the head and the heart of the individual. In this case the modern is the head where the past is the heart yet the two are ultimately seeking the same thing: resolution of their respective situations. The resolution comes when the modern helps the past to enact its vengeance and lift the curse, thereby freeing the present from the ghost of the past. An interesting moment in the dialogue comes when the two are conversing and Murdoch asks Donald if he fears him. Donald responds, "I haven't been afraid of you since I was five years old." The film can be read as suggesting that Scotland need not be afraid of the past but should accept it for what it is and be aware that it is irrevocably influential on the present.

The Scottishness in *The Ghost Goes West* is applied as a loving pastiche. There is good humour in its intentions once the initial establishment of the Scottish stereotypes has been dealt with. Donat's performances are remarkable. He provides two fully rounded characters who are both Scottish and manages to make each of them subtly different from the other. His accents are nearly flawless throughout, only very rarely wandering into the Harry Lauder imitated style. That does make his performances all the more noteworthy as he was the quintessential English gentleman of the screen at the time yet so effortlessly managed to pull off not one but two distinct Scottish voices in the film.

## Conclusion

The films examined in this chapter treat Scottishness in a variety of ways. *The Secret of the Loch* takes an overall tone of pastiche regardless of the characters or types it presents. That the film is low-budget and was hurriedly made in order to attempt to cash in on the boom of Nessie sightings is evident. The cartoon Scotsmen stand equally well alongside the cartoon scientists and reporters. Gibson Gowland shows a deft touch for comedy alongside his obvious ability to operate as a threatening force in the narrative. *Red Ensign* attempts to deal with a serious economic issue yet the Scottish people, those who are possibly the most affected by the changes in government policy and the fortune of the shipyards are neglected and

reduced to supporting roles. The Scottish voice is heard only rarely and when it is heard it is obeying the instructions of the upper-class, politely spoken characters.

In a similar manner Hitchcock's Scottish characters, with the exception of the Crofter and the Sheriff, in *The 39 Steps* are only heard when a neutral voice questions them. These characters remain nameless and powerless to instigate action. John Laurie and Peggy Ashcroft both give excellent, nuanced and multi-layered performances. Frank Cellier's characterisation is the opposite of Laurie's and reflects not only the difference in social class between the two men but also the change in tempo of the narrative and the situation that the hero finds himself in; he is though, also anonymous. The featured male Scots in Hitchcock's film, regardless of standing, are figures to be wary of, if not outright feared. They are duplicitous, untrustworthy and fiscally driven, traits that serve purpose in the diegesis and in Laurie's performance are brought skilfully to the fore. The female Scot is reduced to a figure that civilisation, in the shape of Hannay's international traveller, may be able to rescue but is ultimately, as with Annie Laurie and Jenny Gray, regarded and reduced to being the property of the male.

René Clair's take on Scottishness though offers a lighter perspective yet still charged with real world issues. Donald Glourie is simply a man that has fallen on hard times and is trying to do the best he can. Murdoch Glourie is presented as a figure of regret. He walks alone and is haunted by his failure in life, driven to succeed after his death. Whilst the characterisations are loose and stereotypical at the outset of the film there is never any sense of disrespect from the film-makers. Donat's vocal characterisations are very good, if only very good as forms of Lauderian mimicry. Yet in Donald we see a Scotsman who is of the modern world but with a very real unreal connection to his past and family history. He is not weighed down by this but manages to accept and work with it in order to reach resolution.

The Scottishness of these characters shows some progression from those examined in earlier films. The performance styles have changed and the acting has become more naturalistic. There is only one instance of the Scot as the truly savage, Highland warrior in these films yet, unfortunately, it is one of the more memorable moments. The use of tartan as a signifier has been diluted to a great extent. Only one character in *The Secret of the Loch* wears it every time they are seen; *Red Ensign* has none at all and similarly so for *The 39 Steps*. *The Ghost Goes West* uses kilts to set scenes and location in the opening sequence yet also introduces the kilt

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as formal rather than daily wear: Donald Glourie only wears it when protocol demands. He is not a savage, he is competent and engaged with his surroundings. More importantly he is acutely aware of the past and its influence on his present day existence. In this manner, the quintessentially English Robert Donat gives us the first, modern screen Scotsman.

## Chapter 8

### Scottishness in US Cinema, 1934 and 1935

American-produced Scottishness was left at the end of Chapter 4 as stagnant and reliant on the visual imagery of Scotland that was already universally accepted. I made the point that Hollywood had shown little interest in developing performances or representations that could challenge or develop what had gone before. As I have shown, nationality of character was either changed completely, as with Gary Cooper, in order to protect the studio's investment in a fledgling star of the screen from negative reviews. I have also shown that on occasion the performance of Scottishness rendered was so questionable, whilst the established star and their status was so powerful, as with Janet Gaynor, that it simply did not matter if the performance was inept. Vocal Scottishness was therefore either negated or accuracy was roundly ignored. Musically, bagpipes and traditional airs such as *Loch Lomond* or *Comin' Thro' The Rye* were sufficient to locate the films geographically.

To what extent has Scotland and Scottishness developed in US film by the mid-1930s? Are the conventions established in the earlier chapter on US cinema still holding sway or is there a new approach to the performance and representation of the nation? Are there any elements of performance that can be seen to have bled in from the Scottish stars such as Lauder or Fyffe? Or is it simply the case that American film continued to be entrenched with its tartan and kailyard sensibilities?

Noticeably fake accents create a sense of otherness and one way to counteract this is to develop the actor through vocal coaching (Holliday, 2015, p. 64). There is evidence that Hollywood developed actors' performances as the conversion to talkies solidified. Cynthia Baron (1999, p. 33) notes that in the early 1930s studios hired dialogue coaches or dialogue directors to work with actors and that these hired hands were an integral, if hidden, element of successful performances. In this chapter I show one of these coaches approach which highlights that for Hollywood, Scottishness might not be perfectly realistic but is accurate within the diegesis and deserves to be considered as such.

I am following Jane Sillars' (2008, p. 132) suggestion that previously dismissed or ignored texts may have intrinsic worth and value that can be discovered through analysis. Of the three films available for my analysis, two of them, *The Little Minister* (Wallace, 1934) and *What Every Woman Knows* (La Cava, 1934) were based on works by J. M. Barrie (previously seen in Chapter 5). Forsyth Hardy (1990, p. 21), considering these two works, suggested that it would require considerable effort to find virtue in either of them. This is unnecessarily reductive of Hardy as, as I will show, both films have elements that are worthy of consideration and both have their own virtues. The star of *The Little Minister*, Katharine Hepburn, was establishing herself as a leading performer and went on to a long career but the film is rarely considered by critics and is usually confined to being mentioned in a footnote.<sup>133</sup> *What Every Woman Knows* is even more rarely discussed, surprising perhaps given the lead in that was Helen Hayes, one of the bigger female stars of the time and widely regarded as one of the most important American actresses of the twentieth century. The third film, *Bonnie Scotland* (Horne, 1935), heralds the recurrence of the military theme that runs through representations of Scottishness and features the comic duo Laurel and Hardy (whose work we previously considered in *Putting Pants on Phillip* in Chapter 5).

The chapter opens with a brief discussion of "Hollywood Scots," David Bruce's 1996 blanket term for Scottish émigrés who worked in US cinema both as performers and behind the camera. After this I break with my chronological approach in order to discuss *Bonnie Scotland* before concentrating on the two films based on works by J. M. Barrie. My reason for this is simply to allow me to end my analytical chapters discussing films that have more to say about performed Scottishness because, as I will show, *Bonnie Scotland* is far from bonny.

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<sup>133</sup> In 2013, the Scottish actor Alex Norton presented a documentary on BBC Scotland entitled *Dream Me Up Scotty: The Scottish Accent on Screen* which pilloried Hepburn's performance entirely out of context of the scene that was briefly shown. The documentary itself was quite light-hearted in its treatment of many Scottish accents and included Norton taking RADA students in London through various Scottish phrases in order to illustrate the difficulties of performing non-native voice.

## Hollywood Scots

David Bruce (1996, p. 176) suggested that “Hollywood Scots” deserved a book of their own. This chapter features a small number of the Scottish ex-pats working in Hollywood. The majority of them had quite long and successful careers without ever becoming leading actors or movie stars in their own rights. Bruce identifies one of the better known performers as Ernest Torrence, who died in the early 1930s after complications from gallstones, but was carving a niche for himself as a lead villain, having played Moriarty in *Sherlock Holmes* (Howard, 1932). His brother David features in two of the films in this chapter and was previously mentioned in *King of the Khyber Rifles*. Andy Clyde started on the music hall stage, hence his comic turn as Wearyworld in *The Little Minister*. He continued to play mostly comedic, supporting characters but also appeared as California Carlson, Hopalong Cassidy’s sidekick (Bruce, p. 175).<sup>134</sup>

Success was to be found on both sides of the camera. Donald Crisp, who appears in *What Every Woman Knows* and *The Little Minister* also had a career as a director, with some seventy-two credits up to 1930 including *The Navigator* (1924), starring Buster Keaton. Crisp went on working on both sides of the camera, his most notable success being winning the American Academy Award as Supporting Actor for his portrayal of Mr. Morgan in *How Green Was My Valley* (Ford, 1941).<sup>135</sup> Mary Gordon, who played Mrs. McTavish in *The Black Watch*, was described by Bruce (1996, p. 119) as, “a perennial Hollywood character actor,” plays Nanny in *The Little Minister*, a film that was her big Hollywood break, partly due to her unofficial role as dialect coach to Katharine Hepburn. She also appears in *Bonnie Scotland* as the innkeeper, Mrs. Bickerdike, and went on to play Mrs. Hudson to Basil Rathbone’s Sherlock Holmes.

Lead roles and starring parts eluded these Hollywood Scots, as indeed they do many actors but the Hollywood Scots show that as supporting players they make the lead look good. What is of most importance is the observation that all of the Hollywood Scots featured here would change their voices, soften or harden their

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<sup>134</sup> Bruce states that Clyde was born and raised in Helensburgh where one newspaper article consulted for this chapter say he is a native of Blairgowrie (The Evening Telegraph, 1935, September 10, p. 10).

<sup>135</sup> Crisp was, according to Bruce (1996. P. 13), born in Aberfeldy and educated at Eton and Oxford before travelling to America to work in theatre and film.

accents to serve the stories that they were employed to tell and to bring verisimilitude to the work of the stars. Without these players' ability to maintain consistent persona, that realism as Naremore (1988, p. 72) described it, the films would lack verisimilitude.

### *Bonnie Scotland* (Horne, 1935)

*Bonnie Scotland* (Horne, 1935) can be comfortably viewed through Dudley Andrew's code of the probable. This is an ascetic code that suggests that only minimal detail is necessary in order to justify the events presented as being in a world that audiences believe to be real (1984, p. 65). In this instance, the minimal details are the familiar clichés of Tartanry, Kailyard and bagpipes. The film is a comedy, starring Laurel and Hardy as two men who break free from prison to visit Scotland. Laurel's character, Stanley MacLaurel, discovers that his grandfather has died and he is expecting a wealthy inheritance. Arriving in Scotland they discover that his inheritance is some snuff and a single bagpipe and then, whilst penniless and homeless, the pair accidentally enlist in a Highland regiment and are sent to fight in India. The film has a romantic sub-plot in which the heiress to the MacLaurel fortune has moved to India and her beau also joins the regiment in order to follow her.

One measure of the film and its impact on the representations and performances of Scottishness is that Forsyth Hardy (1990, p. 29) makes only a passing reference to it saying, "there were some amusing passages in the early sequences supposedly set in Scotland; but the film began to disintegrate with the introduction of a romantic sub-plot." By this point in the mid-1930s, Laurel and Hardy were global stars and proven draws at the box office. *Bonnie Scotland* though was not entirely successful.

Both Charles Barr (1967, p. 31) and Kyp Harness (2006, p. 180) place *Bonnie Scotland* in a subgenre of Laurel and Hardy military films in which the duo would join a military regiment or force, and ensure that chaos would reign as a simple result of their presence. Much like Harry Lauder, the duo had a tendency to rely on 'old' routines and to use gags and physical comedy that they knew would work because

they had done so before.<sup>136</sup> Yet critics were not condemnatory of this as, by this point, audiences knew what to expect from a Laurel and Hardy film.

Early reviews of *Bonnie Scotland*, such as the one attributed to 'A.R.' in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (1935, January 1, p. 121) noted that there were some good gags in the film but that, "it is doubtful if it will make converts to their cult." American critics noted that the film was too long. Both *Variety* and *The Billboard* commented on this, with *Variety* (1935, July 24, p. 2) giving a running time for the film of 80 minutes and noting that the film is, "back [in the edit suite] for added scenes and elimination of 1,500 feet from preview length. Romantic angle is being re-vamped." Blackford (1935, p. 22), writing in the *Billboard*, gave a running time of 93 minutes for the film and was quite scathing in their preview: "only an average picture that will have to depend on the popularity of Laurel and Hardy to put it over...the attempt to inject romance thruout [sic] becomes annoying." The review ends with the advice that, "pruning off about 40 minutes would aid this picture considerably," but the column goes on to report that, "Hal Roach has put *Bonnie Scotland* back in production following the above preview and expects to strike off 1,500 feet. Romantic plot will be cut so as not to interfere with the Laurel and Hardy antics." Other than there being a discrepancy with dates of these articles, it is clear that neither of the big hitting American publications was impressed with the film and this galvanised the studio into editing it to improve it.

The next review of the film was by Char (1935, p. 12), writing for *Variety*. This time the film was seventy minutes in length but the star appeal of the comic duo is still apparent: "love interest and the semi-serious 'Bengal Lancers' background providing for hostility sequences between the English and native warring forces, are mostly independent of Laurel and Hardy and evoke little attention."<sup>137</sup> Indeed the majority of reviewers found the romantic sub-plot to be a distraction from the marquee names of Laurel and Hardy. Lionel Collier (1935d, p. 18) described the

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<sup>136</sup> Charles Barr (1967, pp. 83-84) discusses the use of a routine involving hats and Jimmy Finlayson in *Bonnie Scotland* and draws a direct line between that routine and a very similar one in the film *Fra Diavolo* (Roach, 1933)

<sup>137</sup> 'Bengal Lancers' refers to the film *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (Hathaway, 1935), starring Gary Cooper who, much as in *Seven Days Leave*, played the lead role of McGregor as a Scotch-Canadian although in the source novel the character is just Scottish. Michael Bennett (1997, p. 18) notes that *Bonnie Scotland* is little more than a parody of that film.



romantic element as, “so much padding and very weak” and many of the local newspaper reviews of the film did not see fit to mention it at all.

The reactions to the portrayal of Scottishness in the film varied. Char (1935, p. 12) noted that James Finlayson and David Torrence provided good support but that other than those actors, “the Scots dialects are pretty sour.” Collier (1935c, p. 25) said that Torrence created a, “nice little character study as a lawyer,” and that Finlayson was, “quite amusing as a sergeant-major.” Mary Gordon, who plays the innkeeper Mrs. Bickerdike, was mentioned in passing by Watson (1935, p. 22) who told readers that she, “continues her belated but now rapid rise in pictures.” The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* (1935, December 31, p. 8) defended the film against any assumption that it was derisive and derogatory towards Scotland, advising that Laurel and Hardy, “would have been as funny in any branch of the army.” More to the point Scotland, and Scottishness, barely feature in the film at all.



Figure 8-1. *Bonnie Scotland*: The opening titles show bowlers and bagpipes.

The opening titles present the, by now weary, standardised Hollywood location signifiers (8.1). The strains of *Loch Lomond* play, but this is a more upbeat and less romantic version of the tune as this is a comedy, and the picture on-screen combines bagpipes with bowler hats, a combination of signifiers of both Laurel and Hardy and Scotland (Robinson, 1986, p.

173). As the titles end the music changes to *Comin' Thro' The Rye* and what can be seen as the Hollywood Kailyard is presented. Rural Scotland is a place of the past: there are no electric lights in the streets; no motor vehicles in use; people are dressed in everyday clothes with few instances of tartan, yet interestingly it is the older people seen that wear the cloth alluding to the elderly holding on to their past and there are men fishing whilst sitting on bridges over burns.

The protagonists are introduced with an aural joke. As a blacksmith hammers his anvil he begins to play the *Cuckoo Waltz*, the music that the pair are most associated with. The first inhabitant of the village that they speak to, a policeman,

has a clear English accent and he directs the pair to Mrs. Bickerdike's lodgings. Mary Gordon plays her and she uses a different voice from when she is heard in *The Little Minister* (to be discussed next). Her rhoticism is more pronounced and she speaks slowly and "clearrly" to the duo. The next Scottish voice that is heard is that of David Torrence, playing Mr. Miggs, the lawyer. Torrence's voice this time is more natural than in *What Every Woman Knows* (to be discussed later in this chapter), gone are the emphasised Scots words such as "weel," to be replaced by mellifluous tones of a middle-class, educated Central Belt dweller. In this scene, Torrence has two other "Scottish" characters with him, the young couple of the romantic sub-plot. They are childhood sweethearts and grew up together in the village yet both speak with Received Pronunciation accents, for little discernible reason.

The treatment of Scottishness in *Bonnie Scotland* is light-hearted. The bagpipes inherited by Stan are merely used as a comic prop. When Hardy sits on them they emit a sound of rapid deflation without having been filled with air first. Rapid deflation is a term that can also be applied to James Finlayson in the film. Finlayson was, for the most of their career, the foil to Laurel and Hardy (Harness, 2006, p. 78) although he first met Laurel working on Hal Roach's 1923 to 1924 season (McCabe, 2004, pp. 34-35). In *Bonnie Scotland*, Finlayson is the regimental sergeant-major who has to train and travel with the new recruits and he is very much a cantankerous authority figure who is brought down by the antics of the lead comic duo. Finlayson spends most of the film either despairing at them or being infuriated by them, but this was very much his role in almost all of the films the three appeared in. His character is a simple continuation of the military Scotsman, a career soldier, yet he is the one actor who is also in the films always known by his own name (or the contracted form, 'Fin'). It is a measure of his own popularity and the respect his co-stars held him in (Harness, p. 80).

The performances and representations of Scottishness, where they appear, in *Bonnie Scotland* show no signs of development. Mainstream globally popular acts in Hollywood, such as Laurel and Hardy, had little requirement for exposition or plot development and in this film Scotland exists solely as a plot function from the beginning in order to locate the start of the story. The majority of it is set in India and the Scottish connection is the British Army Highland regiments. Andrew Klevan (2005, p. 104) suggested that all Laurel and Hardy needed was each other and little else for comic creativity. Indeed, in *Bonnie Scotland* all that they have is each other

(and Finlayson) to work with. The reliance on the visual imagery of military men in kilts with little character development merely serves to highlight Hollywood's reliance on the conventions of the past, the shorthand signifiers that are all that was necessary in order to locate a "Scottish" film for its audience. As such it is a far from bonny affair.

### *What Every Woman Knows* (La Cava, 1934)

*What Every Woman Knows* (La Cava, 1934) is based on a work by Sir James Barrie, this one originally a four act play, published in 1908. This was the third production of a film version of Barrie's work and the second from the USA. The earliest production was made in the UK, directed by F. W. Durrant and starred Hilda Trevelyan, who had played Maggie in the original stage production in the same role. The second version, from the USA, was made in 1921, directed by William C. de Mille, and starred Lois Wilson as Maggie, although the first American to play Maggie was Maud Adams, on Broadway.

The cast of the 1934 version featured Helen Hayes as Maggie Wylie and Brian Aherne as John Shand. Hayes's credentials as a leading performer were, similarly to Janet Gaynor, indicated by her having won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1933 for her role in *The Sins of Madelon Claudet* (E. Selwyn, 1931). The Wylie family were played by David Torrence (Alick, the father), Donald Crisp (David, Maggie's brother) and Dudley Digges (James, Maggie's other brother). Lady Sybil, Shand's love interest, was played by Madge Evans and La Contessa la Brierre, Sybil's aunt, was Lucile Watson.

Barrie's play is based on a tale of the young man, John Shand, who has no education but wishes to receive one and enter politics.<sup>138</sup> He enters into an agreement with a Scottish family who say that they will fund his education on the condition that he marries the daughter, Maggie. He does so but upon arriving in London as an MP he is attracted to a society beauty. Maggie stands by him and he eventually returns to her, realising that she is the driving force and support that has taken him to the position he is in.

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<sup>138</sup> The political material for the play was based on Barrie's first-hand observation of the campaign of A. E. W. Mason who ran for Parliament in Coventry in 1906 (Brockett and Brockett, 1958, p. 416).

American reviews of the film were positive. Blackford (1934, p. 22), writing in *The Billboard*, noted that patrons who had prior knowledge of the play would greatly enjoy this adaptation and pronounced the film, “a delightful hour and a half of entertainment. The Scotch scenes are entrancing. La Cava has given his cast authentic Scotch dialog and against the beautiful scenes of Scotland the picture unwinds as a scenic gem as well.”<sup>139</sup> Abel (1934, p. 16), for *Variety*, praised the leads and noted that the supporting cast, “exact the utmost from their assignments. Digges is particularly impressive.”

In the UK, Weir (1934, p. 5) noted that Barrie himself had made no comment on the film adaptation of one of his plays.<sup>140</sup> Weir also notes that the cast perform admirably, saying that Hayes, “has been ably schooled in the tackling of the “och awa’ wi’ ye” kind of speech; she makes a very sweet Scots lassie,” and that Aherne and Digges, “both English, manage the “r” commendably.”

The title sequence opens with a pipe band who are not heard: the music that accompanies the image, *Loch Lomond*, is played by an orchestra (8.2).



Figure 8-2. *What Every Woman Knows*: Tartan only appears in the opening titles.

The visual image suggests location as per the conventions established in chapter 4 and the music instantly locates it geographically for the audience. This is the only time that kilts or tartan in any form are featured in the film.

A more insightful review comes from Charles

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<sup>139</sup> Blackford’s review, the comments about the scenic aspect of Scotland in the film are puzzling. The film only uses one exterior location which is meant to be the railway station in the fictional Borders town of Kilburnie and the station used is not in keeping with the architectural style of railway stations of the early twentieth century. It is, in fact, barely glimpsed as La Cava keeps his framing tight around the actors in all the scenes that feature the station.

<sup>140</sup> The film is credited in the opening titles as being by “Sir James Barrie” but the continuing titles reveal that the screenplay was written by three people: Monckton Hoffe, John Meehan and James K. McGuinness.

Davy (1934, p. 960) who draws attention to the translation of the work from the UK to the USA in stylistic terms. "All goes well with this American version of Sir James Barrie's play as long as the action stays in Scotland. The strains of 'Loch Lomond' do certainly threaten a rather too determined effort at picturesque atmosphere." This indicates that some critics are already slightly weary of the stereotypical, shorthand sound signifiers. *Loch Lomond* is repeated at one point in the film: the family gather around the piano and Maggie plays. They all sing solemnly, dour and uncomfortable, as if only doing this out of a sense of duty. As a moment of performance it neatly conveys a family that is doing something because it is what is done, a tradition that nobody particularly enjoys but all feel they must partake in. This is one aspect of Kailyard represented in a physical form by the players: the blind, unquestioning and accepting following of tradition. Weir (1934, p. 5) notes another aspect of Kailyard in the film, that of the temporally located realm, in that the opening sequences, those set in Scotland, "seem to belong in their whole atmosphere to a time before the war." The male members of the Wylie family are very much Kailyard inhabitants and played for comic effect.

The characterisation and accents of the male Wylies was also commented on by Collier (1935a, p. 12), writing in *The Picturegoer* that, "what will be thought of the accents in Scotland I am not Gaelic enough to hazard a guess." This point was reiterated when he noted that Hayes gave one of her best and most sympathetic performances, "in spite of the accent handicap." It fell to the anonymous writer for *The Scotsman* (1935a, p. 13) to note that, "it is, perhaps, a minor critical point that the majority of the Scottish accents in the film defy recognition and that Maggie's in particular is distressingly vague." This is unfair. The accent used in the film is recognisable as Scottish but it is a performed Scottish accent. This is most noticeable in the character of Alick (Torrence) who says, "weel," rather than, "well," and has over emphasised "r"s. The rhoticism is carried on by the other members of the cast who are playing his family. Helen Hayes performs an accent that is a close copy of Torrence's. She notably rolls her "r"s in the words, "broth," and, "first," and uses clipped vowels as well as the native Scots actors. Hayes is also capable of saying "faither" for father and, more intriguingly, she changes her accent slightly when talking to the Contessa. This small moment of change reflects her ability as an actor: to change vocalisation when talking to people is a subconscious decision dependent on societal values and situation and Hayes accomplishes this with aplomb. Her

realistic performance is, to borrow Baron and Carnicke's (2008, p. 183) term, transparent: the concrete aspect of performance elements are negated by her naturalism. We do not notice that she is acting the part, we see her as a Scottish woman.

Local Scottish newspaper reviewers were also full of praise for Hayes, and the film as a whole. Kinomer (1935, p. 3) suggested the production did justice to Barrie's original work and that Hayes was, "an actress of real sensitiveness and character." *The Evening Telegraph* (1935, p. 10) in Dundee recognised that almost every time American filmmakers attempted to portray the Scots there were innumerable difficulties with characterisation and dialect yet the producers of *What Every Woman Knows* had surmounted these gracefully and that the film had, "splendid acting and admirable casting."

The film moves away from convention immediately after the opening titles. The kilted pipe band are not seen again and nobody wears or sports tartan in any form in the film. The Wylie males dress in tweed (8.3) and Shand wears a suit. The conventional visual aspect of Scottishness is redundant in the film itself and as such *What Every Woman Knows* straddles boundaries. The scenes set in Scotland have an air of whimsy, as would be expected from Barrie's works. But whilst there are characters who can be clearly defined as Kailyard inhabitants there is also John Shand, a man yearning to better himself through education and who eventually rises to a prominent position within the government of the UK. Yet it is Maggie who is the central character, the person around whom the narrative is woven and the instigator of the actions of the men in the film. Her Scottish accent rings true as it is congruous with those of the rest of the performers. Hayes' performance of Scottishness is assured throughout the film.



Figure 8-3. *What Every Woman Knows*: The Wylie family wear no tartan in the film.

### *The Little Minister* (Wallace, 1934)

*The Little Minister* (Wallace, 1934) is based on the play that was based on the novel of the same name by J. M. Barrie. There were four film versions of Barrie's tale made prior to this one: a 1913 Vitagraph short directed by James Young, who was also credited with the scenario; a 1915 Neptune Film Company version, produced in the UK, directed by Percy Nash where Barrie is credited as the screenwriter; a 1921 version from Famous Players-Lasky Corporation and Paramount Pictures, directed by Penrhyn Stanlaws, adapted for the screen by Edfrid A. Bingham, and a 1922 Vitagraph production directed by David Smith with the screenplay provided by C. Graham Baker and Harry Dittmar. Barrie only has one writing credit for the screen and this is for the UK produced version of his tale which seems odd, given the popularity that Barrie had in the USA and the frequency with which he visited the country (McArthur, 2003, p. 14). Given that the popularity of Barrie's work was so great and his reputation so high that in 1921 Charles Chaplin, on a visit to London, requested to meet Barrie to discuss working in cinema and the possibilities of collaborating on a filmed adaptation of *Peter Pan* it seems even stranger that Barrie was rarely called upon to adapt his work for the screen. There may have been financial incentives behind Barrie's lack of screenwriting credits: even though his plays dominated the West End stage for decades he made most of his money from sales of his novels (Jack, 2001, para. 23; Jack, 2011, p. 110). The novel of *The Little Minister* grossed Barrie the equivalent in today's terms of £1.6 million whereas one of

his more popular plays *Walker, London* brought in a mere £21,000 (Jack, 2011, p. 110).

Barrie did, though, expend a great deal of effort in adapting his novel for the stage. Brockett and Brockett (1958, p. 414) suggest that *The Little Minister* represented Barrie's first attempt at properly structured writing, and he waited for four years after its publication before he attempted to transform the novel into a play. In 1897 Barrie was involved in an American stage production of *The Little Minister*, directed by Charles Frohman, and Barrie revised his work extensively during the rehearsal period. It is in the play-script of the text that the character of Babbie comes to the fore – Frohman saw the play as a vehicle to launch his leading lady, Maude Adams, to stardom – and when the play transferred to London, Barrie was in constant attendance for the entire rehearsal period and would write whole new scenes if the play would benefit from it (Brockett and Brockett, 1958, p. 420). The London adaptation was judged to be a success and Barrie's skills as a translator were widely appreciated: he had reduced what was originally a lengthy and complex narrative novel with a multi-stranded narrative into simpler structures and introduced mythical dimensions into the character of Babbie by relocating and centring the romantic scenes in the novel around wells, bridges and forests, all of which are traditional portals to the otherworld (Jack, 2011, p. 112).

Given Barrie's involvement with the stage adaptation of his novel on both sides of the Atlantic, it is odd that he refused to attend any screening of the 1934 version of *The Little Minister* (Jack, 2001). Amongst the possible reasons for this are that he was simply not interested in seeing an adaptation that he had had no involvement with: whilst the film is introduced as "The Little Minister, by Sir James M. Barrie," the screenplay is credited to three writers (Jane Murfin, Sarah Y Mason and Victor Heerman) with additional scenes written for the film by Mortimer Offner and Jack Wagner.<sup>141</sup>

The film stars Katharine Hepburn as Babbie and John Beal as Gavin Dyshart, the little minister of the title in his first major screen role. Radio Pictures chose *The*

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<sup>141</sup> There is a school of thought that Barrie was captivated by the possibilities for live entertainment that theatre offered (Howe, 1913, p. 120) yet Barrie worked on the principle that cinema must define itself mainly in its difference from drama (Jack, 2001, para. 14.). As discussed in Chapter 4, the majority of Barrie's stage works contain highly specific stage directions.



*Little Minister* as a vehicle for Hepburn to capitalise on her recent success in *Little Women* (Cukor, 1933) although she is known to have been uncertain about the role until hearing that it had been offered to another actor, Margaret O'Sullivan (Hardy, 1990, pp. 21-22). A large number of the cast was made up of Scots émigrés including Andy Clyde, Donald Crisp and Mary Gordon. Mary Gordon received press attention in the UK as the native Scot who was teaching Hepburn the dialect and was suggested for the role of "Nanny" by Hepburn as a result of this coaching (*The Picturegoer*, 1934).<sup>142</sup> Gordon's work as the unofficial dialect coach was commented upon in a letter to *The Picturegoer* (Jolly, 1934), which, in addition to declaring that Hepburn as Babbie was, "an excellent illustration of crazy Hollywood casting," also noted that Gordon's previous speaking roles had revealed a distinct Glasgow accent, "which is as far removed from the Thrums dialect of Angus as the Oxford accent is from Cockney."<sup>143</sup>

There is no question that Barrie and his works were popular with audiences in both the UK and the USA, however, some of the critical writing about the film reveals differences of opinion regarding the accuracy of the adaptation of Barrie's work. Shannon Wells-Lassagne (2015, p. 270) suggested that all adaptations must contend with audience expectations of a known text but in the case of *The Little Minister* it appears that critics were divided as to which text had been adapted.

Critics were determined to show their knowledge of the source text and judge the faithfulness of the adaptation. Blackford, writing for *The Billboard* (1934a, p. 18) argued that the film faithfully followed the book and waxed lyrical about the beauty of the production location, claiming that the imaginary Scottish town, Thrums, looked so beautiful that, "an artist would be counting his spare change to get a chance to paint such loveliness."<sup>144</sup> Chic (1935, p. 18), writing in *Variety*, noted that the film had the advantage of being based on a work that was already well known and highly regarded and noted that even with, "the ever present Scotch dialect, it can get and

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<sup>142</sup> Mary Gordon had been working on stage and screen in the USA for some time and had appeared in *Annie Laurie*, *Seven Days Leave*, *The Black Watch* (in a comic vignette as the soldiers are leaving for France she plays Sandy's wife) and many other films in mostly uncredited supporting roles. She went on to portray Mrs Hudson in the Sherlock Holmes films starring Basil Rathbone as the sleuth.

<sup>143</sup> The writer of the letter went on to suggest that, in his opinion, Scottish characters could only be played by 'great screen actresses,' and that the producers of the upcoming biopic of Mary Stuart should approach Greta Garbo to play the title character. That part that subsequently went to Katharine Hepburn.

<sup>144</sup> The film was made on location in California, USA, not Scotland and certainly not in the fictional village of Thrums.

hold attention.”<sup>145</sup> In *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (1935, January 1, p. 24), T.G. reported that Barrie’s novel had received, “a minimum of mutilation...the film stands on its own merits as a very fine piece of work in every respect.” Mark Forrest (1935a, p. 312) suggests that, “the balance of the original has been maintained.” Collier (1935c, p. 24), declared the film a, “wholly charming adaptation of Barrie’s famous novel.” The anonymous reviewer from *The Evening Telegraph* (1935, September 10, p. 10), in Dundee, sees the film as a version of the play, not the novel and the reviewer for *The Scotsman* (1935, September 10, p. 6) notes that, “it is surprising how much of the essential quality of Barrie’s original work the film succeeds in reproducing in its two hours.” As Andre Bazin (2009, p. 346) suggested faithfulness to the source is not as important as the equivalence of the meaning of the forms. This should render the question, “was the film based on the novel or the play?” unimportant.

The film itself is quietly remarkable in its treatment of Scottishness. The most striking stereotype presented in the film is in relation to its music. The opening titles feature a pastoral scene of a flock of sheep as the strains of *Loch Lomond* are heard. The lead cast are featured in separate titles, the actors’ faces framed in a mirror placed on a swathe of brightly coloured tartan placed before a tartan backdrop. The backdrop changes back to its previous picture of the flock and the titles announce, “The year is 1840. Our story is laid in the little weaving town of Thrums in Scotland, at a period when life was still simple.” The opening titles, along with the choice of music, sets expectations: the film will be awash with tartan as the main choice of clothing; the people will need to be guided by an authority figure, in line with Shepherd’s formula for Kailyard and that Scottishness will be bursting forth from the screen at every opportunity in manners following other Hollywood Scottish films so far discussed.

But this does not happen. No character wears tartan exclusively or excessively. Mary Gordon, as Nanny, wears a tartan shawl but other than that there are no immediately noticeable costumed signifiers of Scottishness in the film. Men do not wear kilts. The soldiers who are brought to subdue the weavers wear uniforms that are reminiscent of British Army redcoats, positioning them as an external force

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<sup>145</sup> Chic went on to suggest that the story was not *new* to anyone, even when Barrie wrote it, and that the chief element of fortune that Barrie had in the USA with this work was the Broadway version that starred Maud Adams.

imported to break the rebellion of the inhabitants of Thrums. The minister himself dresses in the outfit of a nineteenth century Church of Scotland minister. His only adornment is a taller than normal top hat which he wears, in the film, to make himself seem taller. Hollywood here has dispensed with continual visual reminders of the setting and nationality of the characters in favour of setting up the film as being set in a “realistic” Scotland of the nineteenth century.

This presents an intriguing opportunity to examine the differences between Hollywood’s treatment of Scottishness and UK critics’ reactions to Barrie’s work. Andrew Nash (1999, p. 77) notes that *The Little Minister*, in novel form, marked the change in critical response to Barrie as a realist. The romance between Babbie and Gavin was seen as improbable and unnatural; the introduction of high society figures into Barrie’s works (Lord Rintoul) was taken as a step too far as there was a prevailing critical attitude that writers of fiction should draw their work from personal observation (Nash, 1999, p. 78). In other words, the source text was seen by UK critics as a flight of fancy that lacked the realism of Barrie’s earlier works. The play, which the film was based on, had been highly successful in both the UK and the USA and did not differ from the novel in terms of its basic story which was the romance between Babbie and Gavin. Barrie’s work, perceived by UK critics as unrealistic, is accepted by the US filmmakers and audience as realistic. However, some Scottish critics were still not impressed with the adaptation. *The Scotsman* (1935a, March 5, p. 13) gave a preview of the film which suggested that the film had, “definite virtues though they may be most apparent to those who do not expect strict faithfulness to Barrie.” This reinforces Naremore’s (2000, p. 2) note that critiques of adapted works are, “inherently respectful of the ‘precursor text.’”

But *The Scotsman* critic is not solely concerned with the perceived slight of Hollywood’s disrespect for Barrie as the film itself is seen as accurate in its representations. The realism of the film is described as creating, “a Scottish – as distinct from a Barrie – atmosphere.” (1935a, March 5, p. 13) The main narrative drive of the relationship between Babbie and Gavin is not fully considered in the preview as its focus turns to the larger picture. He notes that, “the scenes in the Auld Licht kirk at Thrums are entirely convincing,” and that overall the film presents, “a camera naturally recording glimpses of the life of the people” (ibid.). A preview by Collier (1935a, p. 14) in *The Picturegoer* echoed these sentiments: “the atmosphere of the Scottish village is excellently maintained as are the characters which go to

make up its individuality.” The performed ‘real’ Scottishness is commented upon but there is a note of caution in the approach taken by the writer who states, “I am not Scot enough to be hypercritical about the accents of the artistes, but taken as a whole I should say the general impression given, is entirely satisfactory.”

Reviews of the film follow a similar tack whether in trade papers, magazines and national or local press: Hollywood’s representation of this ‘real’ Scotland struck a definite chord with the critical audience of the time. Lionel Collier (1935b, pp. 24-25) described the film as, “a wholly charming adaptation of Barrie’s famous novel,” and describing the Scottishness as possessing “fidelity.” The review in Dundee’s *The Evening Telegraph* (1935, September 10, p. 10) opens by stating that, “Hollywood, entrusted with a Barrie play full of Scots wit and sentiment, makes a wonderfully authentic effort in “The Little Minister.”” *The Fife Free Press* spoke of the attention to detail bringing the best out of Hollywood’s resources (1935, September 28, p. 9) and *The Scotsman*, on September 10, 1935 in its review noted that, “the little minister, the Egyptian wench, the gaunt Elders of the Auld Licht kirk, and the people of thrums really do live in the film.” The feeling of relief at Hollywood getting Scotland ‘right’ on screen is near palpable with *The Kirkintilloch Herald* (1935, October 16, p. 5) praising the accuracy of the representation: “no attempt was made to modernise it in any way and all the characters act, speak, and move in the little Scotch village of Thrums exactly as Sir James Barrie visualised them.”

A large part of the credit for this should go to the Technical Advisor, Robert Watson. A Scotsman living in California and working in the film industry, he was interviewed in *The Sunday Post* in February, 1935, where he reveals that he was asked to give would-be members of the cast a dialogue test in order to ascertain whether or not they could pass as Scottish in performance. The initial test was to, “see if any of them could say Auld Licht Kirk convincingly and most said Old Lickt Kurk,” (p. 17) but Watson went on to reveal that if the performers were successful in their first attempt then they would, eventually, reach the final hurdle. This was to say the following: “Oot o’my sicht, ye glaikit kailrunt, that they made a polisman because they didna ken ye were deid. Ye’re jist a dodderin dollop o’ saultless parritch. G’wa

hame, ye haverin body, afore I tell ye what I think o' ye." (ibid.)<sup>146</sup> Watson does not say which characters he tested actors for, but does note that in terms of accuracy of impression the honours went to Irishmen, then Americans and finally Englishmen. The test itself suggests that it was for supporting characters who would be following the Kailyard formula and speaking in Scots, however Watson does note that there was a degree of dialogue from the novel being anglicised for the film. This is understandable as there were potentially millions of spectators who would not necessarily know the nuances of Scots. The tactic ties in directly with Harry Lauder's decision to anglicise his speech to reach a greater audience.

The film itself performs Scottishness with little evidence of mockery. There is only one character who is used for comic effect, Wearyworld<sup>147</sup> the policeman. Andy Clyde, who plays him, was one of the native Scots in the cast. Wearyworld is reminiscent of Sandy MacDonald in *Annie Laurie* in terms of function: he appears as the comic foil, the Scottish clown in the piece, and in *The Little Minister* he serves the function of clown as well. He is belittled by others, as he has joined the police and has in the eyes of the people of Thrums betrayed them. When he is told by the Doctor not to repeat what he has told him his response is a weary, "how could I repeat it, Doctor? Nobody listens to me," which serves to underline his place in the society as an outcast within. His place in the film is as a peripheral character but one that serves vital functions for both the plot and the audience: it is Wearyworld who reminds Gavin that he is meant to be at a prayer meeting and it is Wearyworld who, at the very end of the film, is given the reaction shot to Gavin and Babbie finally kissing. In the same manner as Sandy MacDonald, it is Wearyworld, the comic foil, who expresses the delight that the audience feel at seeing the protagonists finally kiss.

Rob Dow is the village drunk but this is never used for comedy. Quite the opposite as he is a character of fierce determination and loyalty to the little minister who helps him through his addiction. Dow is not presented as a comedic, or anarchic

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<sup>146</sup> This translates as: Get out of my sight you stupid, worthless person, who was made a policemen by those that did not realise that you are so dim as to be nearly dead. You are nothing but an ineffectual lump of inedible porridge. Now go home, you dim-witted fool, before I tell you what my actual opinion of you is.

<sup>147</sup> In the novel this is his nickname, so given due to, "his forlorn way of muttering, "It's a weary world, and nobody bides in't," as he went his melancholy rounds." (Barrie, 1897, p. 25) The character's real name is Peter Spens.

Scot in any manner but as a man who is struggling with addiction and being a single parent, whilst also being a God-fearing member of the congregation. Yet Dow's character and actions present another way in which the film is clearly divergent from the novel: at the end of the film, Dow accidentally stabs Gavin instead of one of the Elders of the kirk. But at the end of the novel, Dow sacrifices his own life to save Gavin.<sup>148</sup>

The film is ultimately the story of the romance of Babbie and Gavin, played by Katharine Hepburn and John Beal respectively. US critics saw the pair's performances positively. Writing in *The Billboard*, Blackford (1934, p. 18) said that Hepburn, "adds a certain touch of comedy to her lines that makes them fairly sparkle," and that Beal, "is a natural for such a role." Chic (1934, p.18), in *Variety*, suggested that Hepburn's performance was excellent but noted that, "there is little variety to her scenes due to the lack of plot complications." Neither reviewer found any difficulty with the use of Scots in the film, a fact reflected and partially explained by the review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (1935, p. 24) which notes that, "much of the Scots dialect has been anglicised."

Hepburn's accent is, for the large part, accepted by critics. Forrest (1935, p. 312) notes that the Scottish accent is notoriously difficult to be accurate with and suggests that, "though Katherine Hepburn's struggle with the demon is not too successful, the rest of the cast manages excellently."<sup>149</sup> Collier (1935b, p. 14) felt that Hepburn was, "brilliant as Babbie," and goes on to explain that part of the justification of this statement is that Hepburn, as Babbie, plays dual roles in the film. Babbie is both a wild gypsy woman and the refined ward of Lord Rintoul. As such she changes her accent and use of language to suit the social situation that she is in, yet this also has the effect of reinforcing societal differences between characters (Kozloff, 2000, p. 27). In the company of Lord Rintoul, Babbie speaks with more care of pronunciation and fewer glottal stops yet when she is in the company of Nanny, very much a lower

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<sup>148</sup> Dow does stab Gavin in the novel but far earlier in the narrative. At the end of the novel, Gavin has leapt across floods to try to rescue Lord Rintoul from drowning and it is Dow who strides across the river to bring them a rope so that they can escape to safety. Rintoul's character in the film is, like several others from the novel, abridged quite heavily. The reasons for these changes to the source novel (and by extension any other adaptations) are summed up neatly by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007, p. 448) who say that, "when a vehicle is no longer adequate...a new vehicle is necessary to propagate the story."

<sup>149</sup> Forrest also reviewed *Seven Days Leave* yet makes no comment about accents in that film – he reserves his ire there for adapting Barrie, a tact that he does not use on this occasion.

class character, she speaks in the same manner as Nanny, that of Lauder's lowland Scots. This facet of Babbie's character is noted in both the novel and the film as an allusion to the mystery that surrounds her: Doctor McQueen, played by Donald Crisp, asks Gavin, "Who could she be? You saw how easily she took the Scotch tongue on and off?" as Babbie has just persuaded the Doctor not to evict Nanny to the poor house. This element of Hepburn's performance of Scottishness is naturalistic and effortless. In the scene, there are two native Scottish actors (Crisp and Gordon) and two American actors (Hepburn and Beal) and all of them are playing Scottish characters. What is noticeable is the emphasis that Crisp and Gordon use in their voices in order to naturalise Hepburn's. Both Scottish actors use exaggerated rhoticism in their speech which mirrors Hepburn's accent. As all of the actors are using very similar accents there is no sense of any natural difference in the characters; it is when Hepburn modifies her voice to address Nanny directly that this change occurs but this is, of course, a plot point anyway. All of this points to Hepburn giving an assured and controlled performance that fits the diegesis and is accurate.

Scottishness in *The Little Minister* is presented as an element of the story: it is set in Scotland and there is no emphasising or overtly ostensive attempts to highlight this. The use of costume is restrained and grounded in reality. There is no requirement for swathes of tartan in order to help locate the film geographically, none of the visual stylistic elements that Hollywood relied on only a few years previously. Characters and situations are presented with a degree of verisimilitude that is lacking in earlier US productions and the lead performer gives an assured and controlled performance that elegantly and simply presents a Scottish woman.

## Conclusion

The opening film of the chapter, if compared to the previous two, represents regression in the development of US portrayals of Scottishness on film. *Bonnie Scotland* relies on stereotype and cliché to establish itself and its themes but then falls almost immediately that the first Scottish villager's voice is heard in dialogue and proves itself to be English. Scottishness is not so much denigrated through cliché as it is in fact mostly entirely absent from the film. The Hollywood Scots of Gordon and Torrence are peripheral, fleeting characters; James Finlayson is the stooge he always was for Stan and Ollie and is a figure of fun and mockery. This is not

necessarily because he is Scottish but is down to his character's rank, and connotations of that rank, within the rigid structure of the British Army. As the Sergeant Major he fulfils a near universal, archetypal role of teacher and protector. The great pity is that Finlayson himself did not manage to tell the studio that simply putting "Mac" before "Laurel" did not constitute or represent Scottishness.

I stated near the beginning of this chapter that I was following Jane Sillars' suggestion of examining previously dismissed or ignored texts in the hope that worth or value can be identified within them. In the light of the knowledge gleaned from this chapter on US Scottishness the discovery that Radio Pictures employed a Scottish vocal coach to screen applicants for parts in one of their films is, to be frank, surprising. The attention to detail and level of care taken by the studio in committing to a version of Barrie's *The Little Minister*, coupled with the unassuming and restrained Scottishness in nearly all manners of representation that it displays suggest that further attention could be given to the text. The knowledge that a native Scottish actor assisted the star of the film is not especially revelatory but it does go some way to redressing the balance of negative criticism that Hepburn's performance has received. As stated, Hepburn gives an excellent performance but without the talent of the Hollywood Scots with her, her performance would be caricature and little else. It is the quality and consistency of Donald Crisp and Mary Gordon (amongst others) that support Hepburn as the star of that film.

Much the same can be said for Helen Hayes and her performance in *What Every Woman Knows*. Without David Torrence and Donald Crisp working so that their voices were close matches for her she would stand out for the wrong reasons. Brian Aherne also performs admirably throughout but it is Hayes' ability (like Hepburn) to shift her voice depending on the social class and status of the person that the character she is playing is speaking to and retain the vocal nuances and qualities of her accent that speak volumes about her talents.

These two films feature lead female characters who drive the narratives. Babbie is the feisty, independently spirited gypsy that falls in love and Maggie is the strong, dependable bedrock of both her family and her husband's success. In these two films US Scottishness continues its convention that women are strong characters with a far greater influence on narrative events than may be expected by today's critics. In the manner of Jenny from *Auld Robin Gray*, Maggie does what she knows



is morally and socially correct and in the manner of Annie Laurie, Babbie finishes the film saving the man she loves.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

Early representations of Scots and Scottishness have tended to be stigmatised and dismissed by Scottish critics rather than being closely read: too often there has been a core assumption that the image presented is banal and kitsch, and therefore unworthy of close study. The films have been quickly labelled a product of Tartanry or Kailyard or both. (Stenhouse, 2009, p. 174)

My research has provided a critical examination of the manners and modes of representations and performances of the national identity of Scotland in UK and US cinema from 1895 to 1935. The foregoing chapters trace relevant developments from the earliest cinematic portrayals and representations through the silent era, across the period of the transition from silent to sound cinema, and then for the two years immediately following the transition the developments in performances of Scottishness. My research offers insights into filmic texts that have previously been ignored as they were deemed irrelevant or unimportant by critical writers in addition to presenting analysis of films through the lens of performance and presentation of the national identity. In some cases, the films analysed have been examined for the first time.

As noted at the outset of this thesis, from its very beginnings Scottish film criticism has been dominated by questions of nation, national identity and of representation. The most influential works have overwhelmingly been reductive, generalised and condemnatory in their response. Those works that have urged for reassessment of previously condemned texts have done solely that and not attempted to re-examine those films.

My research findings contribute to knowledge in a number of ways. Firstly, it establishes a baseline for the performances and representations of Scottishness in UK and US cinema from which developments can be traced. Some may argue that this baseline is unnecessary; however, without establishing a foundation there could not be anything to build on. The literary influence was already acknowledged by previous commentators but this thesis proposes that in cinema the cultural specificity became convention through repetition of shorthand signifiers, for example near *ad infinitum*

use of tartan in tandem with well-known airs such as *Loch Lomond*. The simple reason that Scottishness is represented and performed in the manners that it is in early cinema is because Scotland was presented as being like that through the works and the global reach of writers such as Walter Scott and J. M. Barrie. The eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and novelists packaged and presented Scotland for the world and to the world in accordance with Hall's (1994, p. 402) concept of the imagined past, not the factual past. The second of the filmic texts considered, the advert for Dewar's Whisky which lasts only thirty-seven seconds latches onto the romantic ideal of the Scottish male in a variety of representations and, on one level, simply makes the transfer from printed advertising iconography to moving image iconography. It is the immediacy of the image, itself a repeated icon of Scotland, that lays the foundation for cinematic representations of Scottish men through costume alone. To paraphrase Robert Burns, the very earliest cinematic representations of Scottishness show that Scots did not see themselves as others saw them, they saw themselves as they said that they were.

The baseline indicates a marked difference in representations and performances by gender. Males are divided into one of three groups of character type: highland warrior, military personnel or clown. Females are nearly always domestic. They may be strong, noble or virtuous but they are little more than property of the men in the narratives. This observation leads me to recognise an opportunity for a further research project into the disparity between the representation of women in early cinema and the reality of some of the biggest cinema stars of the time being female.

The question of whether or not the representation of Scotland on screen was more than simply reduced to a garment of clothing, the kilt, hangs across the entire thesis. However, Chapter Three identified that in early cinema the kilt was sufficient as an indicator of nationality in professional productions. In terms of performance of Scottishness the UK and USA were not decidedly marked by differences, with both using a combination of Pearson's histrionic and verisimilar codes to communicate meaning. The varying social classes of the characters was not as important as it was in the works examined by Gledhill (2003) and there were broad similarities in the realisation, the performance of Scottishness as a constituted identity. This, however, is not to say that this was the universal approach taken by all performers. As shown, it was the amateur production, *Mairi*, which stands out as an early example of

realistic, naturalistic acting. There is the possibility that another distinction can be drawn on both sides of the North Atlantic Ocean between commercially aware productions, and amateur productions. The productions that exist to make profit rely on cultural stereotypes whereas those films made for the love of film present a more nuanced, stylistically open representation of Scottishness.

There is one name that is mentioned more than any other in my research: Sir Harry Lauder. His influence was felt globally during his career. He was the one person who also appears in nearly every piece of literature that considers Scotland in cinema and entertainment. Before the arrival of the talkies, Lauder's global popularity sealed a specific image of Scotland in the mind of the world but it was due to his embracing of the phonograph, as well as his early ventures in sound-on-disc cinema, that his performed voices became the expected Scottish male voices.

Given the reach across the English speaking world that Lauder had it is somewhat surprising that he does not appear in any of the films from Chapter Four, which concentrated on US produced Scottishness during the years of the transition to sound on film. Indeed, in aural terms that chapter found that voice and accent were of less importance than the use of music to locate films geographically. The pipes were very much skirling on the soundtracks of American Scottishness along with works attributed to Robert Burns; both in their own ways icons of the nation that were again used as specific cultural exports that became convention through repetition and were amplified by the reach of the American movie industry. This operated as an American cinematic equivalent of the Scotch Comic's garish outfit: the near immediate identification to the audience of the content and style of the entertainment about to be seen and, crucially, heard. In visual terms the representation of the nation had stagnated as the established stereotypes proved to be sufficient for filmmakers resulting in Hollywood hunks sweltering in the heat of California wearing approximations of the plaid.

Chapter Four highlights the different reception given by the diaspora to representations of themselves. My case study of *McFadden's Flats* shows that the Americans of Irish descent were far more vitriolic in their protestations than those of Scots lineage. In addition, the Scottish character, who in the stage version is very much a bit-part, is promoted in the film to the co-lead. The conventional stereotypical behaviour of Scotsmen concerning money, thriftiness and encyclopaedic knowledge of debtors, is usurped in the film where the Scotsman performs an altruistic act,

simply to help his friend. In this manner, this film stands out as placing the Scottish character as the emotional centre of the narrative. The comedies in Chapter Four show that whilst the stereotypes and clichés of national characterisation are effective for narrative purposes there is room for humanity and compassion in the characters themselves.

As sound technology was introduced, the Scottish voice, or, the expected Scottish voice, was heard in the cinema for the first time. The introduction of sound on film technology presented opportunities for a myriad of voices, accents and languages to be heard. The Scottish accent was one that proved to be problematic for the industry in the US. Where Janet Gaynor was nakedly inept in *Delicious*, Gary Cooper (along with every actor playing a military figure) in *Seven Days Leave* was excused even having to attempt a Scottish accent thanks to the simple expediency of the characters' origins being changed.

This study also offers for the first time a comparative analysis of two of Scotland's more successful music hall Scotch Comics: Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe. The umbrella term applied to the two, Scotch Comic, is as reductive as any other pejorative as it implicates the men as being homogenous. The close analysis of their acts reveals striking differences in modes, styles and execution of performance in addition to examination of the two men's uses of language. The most marked differences are in their material and delivery. Lauder performs his pieces solely in character and uses a performed Scottish accent. He is a master of character acting, never breaking from the character he plays yet his vocalisations emphasise his Scottishness. He uses Scots words frequently and freely. Fyffe provides ostensive performance: he introduces his character in his dialogue and then performs as the character. The crucial point for Fyffe is there, where he changes voice and his physicality to reflect the character he plays.

Whilst I show that the two are similar this similarity is most evinced in their adaptation from stage work to screen work. There is little more than a quantitative change in performance, one necessitated by acting on camera. Both men do play to and with stereotypes of the Scottish character as well yet it is Fyffe who is the more intriguing of the two. My research suggests that further exploration of his career, both as a stage veteran in Scotland and as a consummate character actor in film, could prove fruitful in ongoing work into performed Scottishness.

Chapter 6 contributes to knowledge on one of the earliest British sound films, *The Loves of Robert Burns*. The film has previously only been mentioned in passing, and this case study not only analyses it and its history and impact but also introduces the concept of diegetic vocal accuracy as a means of examining performed accents. That the film was not a success in box office terms is important as a milestone in recognising that attempts at verisimilitude bring their own limits. The use of mostly realistic and accurate Scots brogue simply did not work with the paying public but this was only one of the factors recognised in the film's failure. An important element that was missing was structure; the film had little in the way of coherent form and no method of guiding the audience. Instead it merely presented a series of vignettes that revolved around the titular character. As a document of the state of the British film industry, as well as the ambitions of producers working during the early sound years, my analysis of the film shows that the attempt to bring Scottishness, realistic Scottishness, with native voices and verisimilitude to the fore, was an attempt that failed.

The findings of Chapters 3 to 6 identify that performed Scottishness from both the UK and the US was fundamentally rooted in the past. Whether this stemmed from the literary influence or the hokum of the music hall the Scottish people were presented in specific manners. Chapter 7, which examined UK productions, begins to show the move to new manners of representation, although these can still be seen as reliant on cliché and stereotype to an extent. What is interesting is the manner in which other stereotypes and clichés operate in tandem to produce fully rounded filmic texts. The theatrical, pastiche-heavy nature of *The Secret of the Loch*, treats all of its characters as readily identifiable through behavioural traits; newspaper reporters file their copy from the public bar, academics and scientists are old, stuffy men who take a nap after lunch and the Scotsmen are drawn sketchily as tartan-wearing, whisky-guzzling Highland brutes. Yet the tone of the film, the equal targeting of types and the gentle mocking of them all works as a leveller. Equality was beginning to be found but my research shows that it was one of the more lauded directors of film history, Alfred Hitchcock, who then presented the Scot as a figure that was simply to be feared. Neither of the prominent male Scottish characters in *The 39 Steps* are to be trusted. One, the Sheriff, is a lackey who follows orders in a manner of subterfuge and the other, the Crofter, is simply out for all that he can get. Hitchcock immerses the Crofter into the environment of the film with the effect that although he only has a

short period of time on screen he is easily the most striking and memorable of the characters on the hero's journey.

It was another lauded director, René Clair, who brought Scottishness into modernity whilst keeping one foot firmly in the past. In *The Ghost Goes West*, Clair takes aim at types and nationalities with equal amusement. The Scots of the eighteenth century are driven by whisky, clan feuds and honour. Twentieth-century Americans are brash, uncultured, have more money than sense and are driven by personal gain. Their contemporary Scots are, for the most part, motivated by money but in the character of Donald Glourie cinema has its first modern Scotsman. My research into this film shows Stenhouse's assertion regarding the banal or kitsch being ignored needs to be addressed: *The Ghost Goes West* can be seen in Alloway's terms (1958, p. 84) as being kitsch, it was popular at the box office and it was a comedy. All three of these are factors which would mark it out as unworthy of critical attention to some. However, I argue that it does present Scottishness in a mature and progressive manner. My suggestion that Clair's film stands up to challenge Caledonian antisyzygy stems directly from Stenhouse's statement that texts, however trivial or jocular they may be on the surface, can offer new avenues of thought. Reductive critiques, à la *Scotch Reels*, miss the opportunity to analyse the popular at the cost of identifying stimulating presentation of ideas within a text.

The US produced Scottishness of the final two years of my study also operated from music hall or literary sources. Laurel and Hardy's *Bonnie Scotland* does little to advance presented Scottishness. Percy White's definition of hokum stands true in the face of the comedy performed by the duo: when they are funny, they really are funny but nowhere in the film is Scottishness shown to have been considered as anything other than an entry into a pastiche of another film, *The Lives of the Bengal Lancers*. It is the final two films in that chapter, both based on works by J. M. Barrie that offer an optimistic note to end on. The use of my idea of diegetic vocal accuracy in *The Little Minister* indicates that the film, and the central performance by Katharine Hepburn, has been unjustly maligned whilst the skills of the supporting cast has been roundly ignored. The same can be applied to Helen Hayes and supporting cast in *What Every Woman Knows*. Both films stand above other US representations of Scottishness through the lack of cliché and stereotype in their presentation. Scotland, the Scottish people and the country are accepted within the films as real locations and real people. Whilst there is still the use of music as a

geographic locator this is restricted to the opening credits of both films. It must also be remembered that as an author and playwright, Barrie was one of the more popular of the time. Scottishness in these films was assured simply by having his name attached. But it is the content of the pieces that speak of a more relaxed attitude to presenting Scottishness: an attitude that does not poke fun at the people or the tales told in the films but simply presents Scotland and Scottishness as a given.

The representations and performances of Scottishness analysed throughout this study show a clear development of both acting styles and styles of presentation. Where repetition led to convention being established in the early years of cinema through the repeated use of character types whether Highland warrior, noble hero or military personnel, always clad in plaid, it was across the years of the transition to sound-on-film that performances can be traced as developing. In the US, the stilted delivery of dialogue in *The Black Watch* is gone by the time of the release of *Seven Days Leave*, a period of only seven months. *Delicious* presents a further development in the speed of delivery towards a more natural flow and rhythm, if also delivering a backwards step in terms of *vérité*. The UK presented familiarity during the transition but this came in the form of two of the most assured performers of the early twentieth century, Harry Lauder and Will Fyffe, along with one of the most recognised writers the UK has produced, in the shape of Robert Burns. The performances, particularly Lauder's are suited to the frame. They are the right size and clearly communicate their message. The final two years show that in the US verisimilitude reigns supreme where in the UK whilst there was still an air of the theatrical from some actors, Robert Donat provided the stillness that centres characters and brings them to life.

My work contributes to the understanding of performances of Scottishness in film and establishes a baseline for these performances in early cinema. The methods employed in this thesis can be transferred to a similar study of the performance of any national identity. The findings of this thesis cross the disciplines of film history and performance on screen and display the transnational work of performers and an internationally performed, interpreted national identity. The value of my research is found particularly in its contribution to the understanding of the manners in which the performances and representations of Scottishness in cinema developed as Scotland found a voice on screen.



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