

Greer Garson: “The Great Story of a Great Woman!” Gallant ladies, and British wartime femininity.

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During the first half of the 1940s Greer Garson was a star with extraordinarily high visibility, appeal and timely cultural resonance. Audiences responded enthusiastically to her persona and its dominant characteristics that seemed to embody home front fortitude and resilience, and which struck such a resonant chord during wartime, that Garson and the iconic character she played in Mrs Miniver (1942), came to epitomize England and womanhood to enormous success on both sides of the Atlantic. Garson’s persona was so of its time and context, that it both rose and fell in line with the start and end of World War II.

“Metro’s Glorified Mrs” – The construction and success of Greer Garson’s persona.

There are a handful of words and phrases that crop up time and again in the innumerable discussions of Greer Garson and her stardom that have appeared in print since her small but star making turn as Katherine Chipping in her inaugural screen role in Goodbye Mr Chips (1939). Through latter day retrospectives and the myriad obituaries that followed her death in 1996, Garson continues to be described as gracious, poised, dignified, gallant, self-sacrificing, a great lady, the perfect wife and mother, and lovely. In fact, Bosley Crowther, the New York Times film critic throughout the 1940s described Greer Garson as “lovely” in his reviews of her films on six consecutive occasions from Pride and Prejudice (1940) onwards up to and including Random Harvest (1942). (Crowther 1939, 33; 1940, 19; 1941a 14; 1941b 19; 1942a, 23; 1942b, 36).

In 1955, the findings of an audience study that had been undertaken by the sociology department at McGill University into the uses and gratifications that audiences derive from their engagement with and consumption of Hollywood stars were published. A selection of high profile stars from the 1940s and early 1950s were chosen as representative of Hollywood's roster of bankable stars, and Greer Garson was among those selected. [1] One participating audience member was quoted thus:

“Greer Garson plays in serious pictures. She looks her age and doesn't try to act young or light-hearted. She tries to help people out. She gets what she wants and would tell people off when they needed to be told. She'd be quiet and dignified until pushed too far. But then watch out! She's a temperamental and quick-tempered person. She's not very finicky about her clothes, she's too independent a woman to worry what other people think about that.” (Elkin 1955, 101-102)

This response to Garson's star persona, which contains no direct references to any individual films that she starred in, serves as a useful and illuminating microcosm of Garson's persona itself, and of audience understanding and recognition of its defining traits and recurring characteristics.[2] Her pictures were “serious” in that they tended to be prestige pictures and melodramas with various literary, historical or contemporary origins, including literary adaptations such as Goodbye Mr Chips, Pride and Prejudice, Mrs Miniver, Random Harvest and That Forsyte Woman (1949), [3] and biopics like Blossoms In The Dust (1941), based on the life of a Texan benefactress to orphaned children, and Madame Curie (1943) based on the life of the revered scientist. Her personification of womanhood was both mature and often

matronly, prompting one journalist from the New Yorker to remark that Garson “really deserves the compliment of being called a woman, too; most Hollywood actresses are girls, and remain girls to the bitter end.” (Troyan 1999, 109) [4] This emphasis on Garson’s maturity and womanliness over and above the more commonly prized youth and recent girlhood of most female Hollywood stars, speaks to the virtuous maternalism that her dominant persona was imbued with, following the success of what would become her signature role as the eponymous Mrs Miniver. This saw her play an idealisation of middle class motherhood and stoic home front bravery during wartime, in a romanticised version of England that existed nowhere but on celluloid.

Garson’s screen attempts to “help people out” often required a great sacrifice on the part of her characters, and suffering on her part in order to benefit the greater good, whether a single individual or vast swathes of humanity (highly apposite thematic recurrences for a wartime audience). For example Random Harvest sees Garson suffer silently for years, on the advice of a doctor, as the secretary to her beloved amnesiac husband, and later his nominal wife in a loveless marriage, while she waits patiently, stoically, gallantly, for his memory of her to return naturally, with no guarantee that it ever will (it does). The “quick temper” referred to, while seemingly an unlikely aspect of a persona characterised by graciousness, dignity, poise and gallantry, was factored into her stardom as a corollary to her redheadedness, a physical characteristic itself presented as an upshot of her Celtic background, and seized upon by her studio, MGM, in its publicity build up of the star. As Garson’s career progressed Celtic ethnic inflections to her persona would function to counterbalance the potential for a staid and sober personification of womanhood that the matronliness of her dominant persona might develop into, by imbuing various

sexualised, exoticised or unruly dimensions to her image, of which the aforementioned quickness of temper was one.

While the costuming of Garson's characters was an important and meaningful addendum to her performance on a number of her occasions – Mrs Miniver's excited purchase of a new hat, Paula Ridgeway's dressing room transformation into a "highland lassie" in Random Harvest – it was nevertheless a part of her persona that she was not "finicky" about clothes. As Jeanine Basinger confirms, "Garson was never a clotheshorse." (Basinger 2007, 43) One fan magazine of the time stated bluntly that "Greer is not interested in clothes except for necessary decorative effect" and "she prefers them simple." (Picturegoer 1941, 6) The quoted subject of the audience study puts this indifference down to her "independence," and this is indeed something she is required, often in trying circumstances, to demonstrate. Time and again, her wifely characters are depicted bravely continuing their lives for the benefit of others following the absence, and frequently the death of their husbands, children or both. Edna Gladney in Blossoms in the Dust in fact withstands the deaths of first her adopted sister, then her son and then her husband, but continues her effort alone, working tirelessly on behalf of the parentless children of Texas, who she has made it her life's work to place in homes.[5]

Paraphrasing from the responses of various other participants, the author of the findings of the study summarises the most commonly identified facets of Garson's persona thus: "She represents the moral respected housewife and mother who voluntarily makes sacrifices to help other people." (Elkin 1955, 102)

With the regard to the way that her stardom was visually constructed, commentators have often referred to Garson's onscreen "luminosity." This came from the high key lighting that was used to light Garson's face, usually in such a way that

emphasised both her high cheeked bone structure, and the right side of her face by frequent collaborator, cinematographer Joseph Ruttenberg, who recalled that “Greer had one good side, and I recognized what it was. . . Metro even built sets to favor her right side.” (Davis 1993, 236-237) Gregory Peck, who starred with Garson in The Valley of Decision (1944) also recalled “every time I was in a scene with her, her face was a lovely luminous moon floating in the center of the screen and I was the rather dim figure beside her in semi-shadow.” (Freedland 1980, 66; McDowall 1992, 172) Similarly, in MGM’s make-up department, William Tuttle was responsible for designing Garson’s look, and in collaboration with the star, decided that “It was the angular lines of her face that we wanted to emphasize.” (Trojan 1999, 74). This combination of lighting and make-up thus led to Garson’s signature look onscreen that highlighted her “fabulous cheekbones” (Basinger 2007, 43) to optimum effect. So effective was the creation and repeated utilisation of Garson’s signature facial look, that the angularity of her seemingly sculpted high cheekbones were exaggerated in a cartoon caricature depicting Garson and Colman in Random Harvest as part of an advertisement for the film in the December 26, 1942 edition of trade paper, the Motion Picture Herald (23). In this way, the luminosity cited as characteristic of Garson’s lighting is a visualisation of her dominant persona in that the halo of light it produced around her within the frame was indicative of the saintliness that her characters were frequently imbued with, in their personifications of ideal womanhood.

It was the combination of these elements, that constituted Garson’s dominant persona and it saw her play a succession of heroines characterised by their nobility (of character if not heredity), indomitability, altruism, and stoicism. In due course, the unique context of World War II, and the attendant alliance of the United States and Great Britain, led to a period of extraordinary success and for a time, in the aftermath

of the twofold success in 1942 of the box office giants Mrs Miniver and Random Harvest, the prestige of Garson's star status was unparalleled in Hollywood. The scale of Garson's exalted position in Hollywood's star hierarchy in the first half of the 1940s, seems surprising from a retrospective viewpoint, given that it is little remembered today. Her stardom is seldom held up as an iconic personification of its period in the manner of Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn or Joan Crawford. However, the fact remains that Garson was dubbed MGM's "queen of the lot" with ample reason, that was recognised by her peers, her fans, the critics and of course the studio's bottom line.

Garson was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress six times in a seven year span from 1939 to 1945 [6] winning for Mrs Miniver. In 1942, Garson's vehicles Mrs Miniver and Random Harvest were respectively the highest and third highest grossing films in the United States, and each year thereafter at least one of her films featured among the top ten highest grosses of the year (Schatz 1997, 466-477).[7] The Motion Picture Herald's annual poll of film exhibitors on the top money-making stars of the year placed Garson among the top ten every year from 1942 to 1946, rising as high as third in 1945, which also and for the first time, placed her above Betty Grable, her only serious female competition at that time for a high place on this list (Weaver 1942, 13; 1943, 13; 1944, 12; 1945, 13; Schatz 1997, 470).[8] An annual readers' poll conducted by fan magazine Picturegoer saw Garson voted the favourite actress for an unprecedented three consecutive years from 1942-1944 (Picturegoer 1944, 11), something that no actress achieved again. Gallup polls twice found her "the most popular star in the United States" in 1942 and 1943 (Trojan 1999, 183), and trade journal Film Daily, which polled critics and reporters, found her to be their favourite actress of the year in 1942, 1943 and 1945 (New York Times

1942, 31; 1943, 26; 1946, 21). Notwithstanding the global turmoil effected by World War II, Garson achieved widespread popularity on as much of a worldwide scale as was possible given the circumstances, similarly topping 1944 polls in Canada, India, Mexico, Sweden, France, Portugal, Belgium, Africa, Australia, Argentina, and Palestine (Trojan 1999, 183).

Thus established at the height of her star power, Garson's dominant persona followed her throughout her career, in the years after it had peaked and declined, and to the end of her life. It now lives on in her absence, as the inscription on the headstone at her grave exemplifies. It reads: "Greer Garson Fogelson 1904-1996; Dignified Lady of Grace and Beauty." (Melzer 2007, 57)

Greer Garson was contracted to MGM for the duration of the 1940s, and her tenure at the studio saw her complete two full seven years contracts, after her transatlantic move from the London stage of the 1930s to the Hollywood studio most highly reputed for its stable of stars. This move followed an offer made by studio chief Louis B. Mayer. Upon seeing one of Garson's theatrical performances in 1937 while visiting Britain to inspect MGM's British studios in Denham, north of London, Mayer promptly offered Garson a contract with the studio, which she accepted. Garson set sail for the United States on November 16, 1937, eventually arriving in Los Angeles on December 4. There she joined a thriving community of British thespians who now made their living acting in Hollywood films, which included Ronald Colman, Cary Grant, Ray Milland, Leslie Howard, and later Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier and Deborah Kerr, to name only some. Garson's initial experience in Hollywood was disappointingly anticlimactic. When she arrived at MGM, they had no parts for her for the first year of her contract. Eventually, she was sent to England for a shoot in 1938, after reluctantly agreeing to accept the small role of Robert

Donat's wife in Goodbye Mr Chips. Garson was so disillusioned that she intended not to return to America on its completion. However, fortunately for her career she was persuaded to return, Goodbye Mr Chips was a success, she was widely praised for her performance, and received her first Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. After a successful turn as Elizabeth Bennett in Pride and Prejudice (and a less successful turn in Remember? (1939)), Garson's star was in the ascent.

So successful were Garson's film releases in 1942, that it was later dubbed the "year of Greer" (Troyan 1999, 163), and her persona became so fixed and identifiable from her characters in Mrs Miniver and Random Harvest, that she was nicknamed "Metro's Glorified Mrs." (Strauss 1942b, SM14) Her characterization of Kay Miniver, a wife and mother who steadfastly provides emotional support to her family during the early years of the war, led to her canonisation as "Cinema's blitz heroine." (Pepinster 1996) Mrs Miniver watches her husband go to Dunkirk, her son join the RAF, her daughter-in-law die in a bombing raid, all the while reassuring the smallest of her children that "It's alright darling," while she clutches him to her bosom in the family's makeshift bomb shelter. She also calmly deals with an inconvenient intrusion from a German pilot on her way to collect the milk for her morning tea. Mrs Miniver's interpretation of small town life in middle England during the war was fantastically popular (if not very realistic), and released on June 4, 1942 on the second anniversary of Churchill's famous "we shall never surrender" speech to the House of Commons (Troyan 1999, 147-148), was a clear message from Hollywood to its audiences as to where its allegiance lay. In this regard Garson's Kay Miniver was a persuasive figurehead to garner sympathy towards the British. As Siegfried Kracauer has noted in his discussion of Hollywood's treatment of Britain in its wartime output:

“Once the war was on, national exigencies encroached on the tendency toward objectivity. American public opinion endorsed the war effort, and Britain was now an Ally. For these reasons Hollywood could no longer afford to approach the English in that spirit of impartiality which is indispensable for an understanding of others. Rather it was faced with the task of endearing everything British to the American masses. The task was not simply to represent the English, but to make them seem acceptable even to those sections of the population whose pro-British feelings were doubtful.”

(Kracauer 1949, 64-65)

Garson herself was, in her words, “very worried about the anti-British feeling in America,” (Troyan 1999, 107) but she need not have been. Greer Garson, and her persona defining signature role as the eponymous heroine of Mrs Miniver became Hollywood’s poster girl (or rather its poster “lady”) for this change in the increasing number of cinematic treatments of the British (Garson’s image was even able to produce representations of various ethnic identities within Britain, and dissipate some of the tensions between them, as the subsequent section will deal with) . The enormity of the film’s success and the popularity of Greer Garson for the duration of the United States’ direct involvement in the war is testament to this. As Alison Light has noted

“If the name now conjured up anything, then it is probably as a byword for Britishness during the war that Mrs Miniver stays in popular memory. Greer Garson gamely seeing her family through the bombing

and her husband off to play his part at Dunkirk was for cinema audiences around the world the epitome of the wartime spirit of England.” (Light 1991, 113)

Also testament to Garson’s box-office pulling power during the war is that as well as Mrs Miniver, Garson vehicles Random Harvest and The Valley of Decision, “were the only films of the war years to achieve grosses of more than \$8 million and profits of more than \$3 million,” while Madame Curie, Mrs Parkington (1944) and Adventure (1945) were all among the top ten high grossing films of their respective years (Gomery 2005, 107-108). Of course it is true that the Hollywood film industry profited enormously from the economic boom that occurred in the United States during World War II, and average box office grosses were thus higher than they had been previously throughout the industry (Schatz 1997, 1-6). Notwithstanding this corollary of the war, Douglas Gomery helpfully contextualizes the extent of Mrs Miniver’s phenomenal success:

“Top grosses were usually in the range of \$3.5 million to \$4 million in the early 1940s, but Mrs Miniver earned the best gross (\$8,878,000), and the best profit (\$4,831,000) of any MGM film to this time.” (Gomery 2005, 107)

Its run at the prestigious Radio City Music Hall in New York “broke all previous box-office records, running an unprecedented ten weeks, drawing 1,499,891 theatergoers and grossing \$1,031,500.” (Trojan 1999, 148) It did not sustain this record for very long, but the film it was overtaken by later that year was Garson’s next vehicle Random Harvest. Garson’s stardom literally surpassed itself in this instance as the

film played at Radio City for eleven straight weeks to 1.55 million in just one single venue (Troyan 1999, 155).

Garson's later vehicle Madame Curie also found its way to strike a resonant chord with the wartime context. It was marketed on the re-teaming of Garson and Pidgeon, [9] capitalising on the marquee value of their now iconic characters from their previous vehicle, with the tagline "Mr & Mrs Miniver. . . together again!" Furthermore, the film was set in France (then occupied by Nazi Germany), told the story of a Polish heroine (Poland was also then occupied by Nazi Germany) who was a revered historical figure, and of course featured Garson, a British star (Britain was under constant threat of invasion by and was fighting against Nazi Germany) who had by now come to epitomise Hollywood's overly romanticized and idealized imaginings of British femininity. Madame Curie was thus, as Christopher Frayling has argued, "a hands-across-the-seas tribute to America's European allies." (Frayling 2006, 157) Further, characterisation of the film's eponymous heroine was another continuity of Garson's stock character type that had been developed from one vehicle to the next since Goodbye Mr Chips, and it prompted one journalist to quip that her Marie Sklodowska Curie was "'Mrs Miniver' in a French gown." (Mooring 1944, 8)

Contemporaneous with her onscreen efforts and wartime morale boosting, Garson, along with a gamut of other Hollywood stars took part in various fund raising war bond drives. In 1942, Garson went on a "morale boosting junket," for the "'Victory Loan campaign' raising \$58,500,000 in one day alone," (Strauss 1942a, X3) and later that year on "an extensive tour selling Victory Bonds as a representative of the United States Treasury Department." (Picturegoer 1943c, 8) She appeared in a six week run at Hollywood's "El Capitan" Theater in Noel Coward's "Tonight at Eight

Thirty” as part of a fundraising effort to make money for the British War Relief. The production raised over \$25,000 (Maxwell 1945, 27).

Ethnic Inflections to Greer Garson’s Persona

Greer Garson’s dominant persona painted a picture of her as quintessentially English, and it made frequent use of archetypally English motifs such as tea and roses in both visual and discursive contexts. Michael Troyan cites a journalist from the San Francisco Examiner who reported from the set of Remember? “Come what may the English must have their tea. . . Miss Garson has ordered it at the usual time of four o’clock, and when a kettle has to boil it boils regardless of movie scenes or what have you.” (Troyan 1999, 100) He later goes on to describe a tea party at Garson’s Los Angeles home, with “china teacups, saucers, cream, sugar, and a platter of sliced cucumber and cress sandwiches, with cream cheese, Banbury tarts, [and] marmalade rolls. . . Greer prepared her own tea (“two bags, the cream goes in first.”)” (Troyan 1999, 173) Ysenda Maxtone Graham also adds that while having “Tea, by the poolside. . . Greer Garson loved to chat about her favourite poet, John Donne.” (Maxtone Graham, 187) Similarly, one Picturegoer journalist, interviewing Garson in 1944, was comfortably accommodated by her attendance to this archetypal English social ritual and he attests, “Like two English people, hostess and guest, we had a cup of tea and talked.” (Mooring 1944, 6)

Roses featured equally prominently in the construction of Garson’s image as an English lady, predominantly due to the famous scene that introduces audiences to the “Miniver rose” in Mrs Miniver. On having the village station master James Ballard’s personally cultivated rose named after her, Mrs Miniver quite literally becomes an “English Rose,” that archetype of feminine Englishness, invoked to suggest the natural beauty and wholesomeness of the recipient of this label, “beauty

and sweetness” as Ballard describes his rose in the scene. Thus in this, one of the film’s most famous scenes, ideals of English femininity and the character of Mrs Miniver are conflated in the film’s signification of each, in the form of the “Mrs Miniver” rose. The rose motif would follow her throughout the rest of her career, continuing to invoke notions of idealised English femininity as it did. In fact, MGM was quick to pick up on the potential iconicity and obvious symbolism of the rose motif, and at the Mrs Miniver premiere at Radio City Music Hall in New York:

“The centrepiece of the Music Hall lobby display was a “Mrs. Miniver Rose.” Dr Eugene Boerner, an American botanist, had produced the rose for MGM publicity purposes. In many of the major cities in which the movie would premiere, such roses were presented to women on the home front who had made significant contributions to the war effort.” (Troyan 1999, 148)

Also part of the Mrs Miniver publicity drive, was a personal appearance by Garson at the headquarters of the Volunteer Army Canteen service on Sunset Boulevard where she posed for photographers with a shovel as she planted the first registered “Miniver Rose Bush.” (Troyan 1999, 178-179) It was reported in profiles that Garson would entertain guests over tea in her rose garden on the grounds of her home, in which “the Greer Garson and Mrs. Miniver roses grew.” (Troyan 1999, 173)

Despite the emphasis on Englishness in her dominant persona, Garson’s stardom demonstrated the ability to successfully traverse boundaries of British and Irish regional identities, that has allowed her to perform, and her stardom to epitomise such female ethnic/national archetypes as the Scottish “lassie” in Random Harvest, the Irish “colleen” in The Valley of Decision, and the English “rose” in Mrs Miniver.

The aforementioned ambivalence in the United States for supporting the British could in part explain the success of Garson's all encompassing British Isles ethnic markers, in that Irishness would have provided a site of identification to counter this ambivalence toward the Englishness of her dominant persona. So, operating multifariously across through her persona, her image was thus able to personify a composite of the beleaguered nations of the Allies in such a way that solicited identification, and offset ambivalence from US audiences.

However, she is denied the opportunity to extend this mobility of ethnic and/or national performativity outside of these roles, so synonymous is her star persona with Britain and Ireland. This phenomenon is exemplified by the fact that she remains English accented when playing Americans such as Edna Gladney in Blossoms in the Dust, and the Polish Marie Sklodowska in Madame Curie. Garson's appearance on a 1950s edition of television show What's My Line while publicising her then current film Julius Ceasar (1953) demonstrated that she was not incapable of adopting non-British accents when she affected a high pitched nasal New Yorker's voice to disguise her own deep and well-spoken King's English from the blindfolded contestants. Furthermore, Garson had earlier described herself as having "always been good at dialects" as part of an anecdote she told Picturegoer in 1943. Claiming to have performed with an American accent as part of her role in the London stage production of "Golden Arrow" in 1935 to such convincing effect, she goes on to assert that she was mistaken for an actual American in press write ups of the show (Picturegoer 1943b, 8)

Garson's Celticness, both Irish and Scottish, were frequently emphasized in publicity about her that contributed significantly to the construction of her persona. However, this emphasis was frequently placed somewhat disingenuously. While it

never superseded her dominant persona, Garson's Celticism was overstated to the point of fallacy in the widely disseminated public discourses about her background, ethnicity and nationality; her origins were in fact modified to accentuate her Celtic roots rather more pointedly than fact would allow. Such disingenuousness about stars' origins was by no means an atypical occurrence in the classical Hollywood studio era star system. On the contrary, it was fairly standard practice that, as Jeanine Basinger has documented, "A fake biography would be created, working as much from a basis of truth as could be logically saleable." (Basinger 2007, 47) Throughout her career and right up until her death, Garson claimed to have been born in County Down in Northern Ireland, and the publicity department at MGM, as well as innumerable popular press profiles of the star to appear in print in fan magazines, newspapers, trade papers and the like, all corroborate this falsehood. Garson was in fact born in London, the truth of which emerged only after her death in 1996, and was ascertained by her birth certificate, which is housed and, according to the British Film Institute, has been checked at St Catherine's House in London. [10] Garson had family links to Scotland and Northern Ireland through her grandparents on both sides, but claims that she was "Irish by birth" by Garson herself (Canfield 1946, 70), by MGM, or by the various others who claimed as such, are therefore erroneous. [11] It is not clear the extent to which, or even whether the studio was aware of the truth of Garson's actual birthplace, but the MGM archives confirm that it is clear that Howard Strickling, its head of publicity, acted upon information received that Garson was nominally Irish, in the publicity build-up he prepared while Garson's persona was being formulated and honed. As Michael Troyan documents, Strickling sent his research department "on a search for interesting Irish trivia" that could potentially be used in Garson's build-up and introduction to the press and fan magazines, and came up with the fact that "The

earliest native word for Ireland is Eriu. It means ‘the most beautiful woman in the world!’” (Troyan 1999, 74)

The hence fallaciously overstated Celtic side to Garson’s persona was constructed and disseminated both onscreen and off, and appeared across a variety of primary and ancillary platforms, in various guises that included genealogical, physical, nostalgic, discursive and performative, and in terms of Garson’s personality, palate, appearance and birthplace.

Garson’s Celtic genealogy was frequently discussed in terms of what was claimed to be her familial link to the Scottish folk hero Roy Roy MacGregor. One popular press profile of Garson printed in the New York Times at the time of the release of Mrs Miniver referred to the star as “An Irish-born descendant of Rob Roy MacGregor.” (Strauss 1942a, X3) [12]

Ruth Barton has pointed out that Irishness in Hollywood frequently played out as a narrative of diaspora, and that rather than treating the homeland as a “site of an old trauma”, classical era Hollywood’s imaginings of Ireland are often nostalgic and romantic, treating the “originating identity as the ideal” (Barton 2006, 7). This is also the case for Garson’s stardom and the way her memories of Ireland are posited as nostalgic in ancillary texts. As part of a 1941 Photoplay interview, Garson herself is quoted speaking about her childhood in London, during which she “longed for the summer months when we escaped back to Ireland for heavenly long visits to my grandparents’ home in the sweet green countryside,” (Troyan 1999, 13) while one obituary in an Irish newspaper quotes her as saying: “I remember playing under blue skies in County Down and even today, when I hear Irish music, tears well in my eyes.” (Troyan 1999, 15) This nostalgia also comes across in Garson’s evident partiality for Irish and Scottish cuisine, given that “her favourite foods [are] potatoes,

Irish stew, and haggis,” and according to Michael Troyan, “she still enjoyed a bowl of stewed fruit, which reminded her of her childhood on the farm in County Down” following her emigration to the United States (Troyan 1999, 173-174). She is similarly described as enjoying “a truckdriver’s helping of Irish stew (‘Ideal Woman’ 1943) following a long day at the studio, and serving “Scotch scones” with her tea (Troyan 1999, 173).

It has been established that fashion did not play a major part in Garson’s stardom, but when it came to “the wearing of the green,” she made sure to emphasize her fondness for attiring herself in Ireland’s signature colour: “Her favourite colour [is]. . . green,” and she fondly mentions her “green silk dressing gown” as the favourite item in her wardrobe (Picturegoer 1941, 6). The homeliness of her choice thus corresponds to her dominant persona, while the colour maintains its ethnic inflections. Responding to an interviewer’s question about what colour clothes she prefers, she is so enthusiastic for the ethnic signifier, that she names it twice: “Green, orchid, black, white, grey, yellow, blue – and GREEN!” (Canfield 1946, 70)

It was Garson’s physical attributes characteristic of Celticness, and frequently incorporated in stereotypical constructions of Celticness, that were most frequently cited in constructions of the Celtic inflections to her persona, namely her green eyes, pale skin and red hair. Barely a press profile of Garson seems to exist that does not describe her in such terms, as “flamed-haired Greer Garson,” (Fontaine 1978, 148), a “titian haired beauty,” (Harvey 2005, 18) a “green-eyed young woman [with] a thatch of bright red hair.” (‘Cinderella Is a Red Head’ 1943, 11). Fellow Hollywood actor Roddy McDowall has described Garson’s “translucently beautiful Irish complexion” (Troyan 1999, vii); a fan magazine profile that appeared around the time of the release of Adventure called her “the green-eyed, Scotch-Irish star, whose hair is the colour of

leaping flames” (Samuels 1945, 123). More direct publicity for individual Garson vehicles similarly foreground her redheadedness. One of the original posters for Pride and Prejudice is largely monochromatic but includes one noticeable splash of color to highlight Garson’s red hair. The cinematography in Pride and Prejudice is of course black and white, but Garson’s first Technicolor screen outing, Blossoms in the Dust and its marketing took full advantage of the opportunity show off its star’s red hair. One original advertisement for the film incorporated a quotation from the New York Herald Tribune’s review that described Garson as a “ravishing redhead” in large and prominent typeface. Similarly, although the black and white cinematography prevents the audience from seeing it for themselves, the screenplay of Random Harvest reminds them when Garson’s character Margaret Hanson’s hair is described as “bright red in the sunshine.”

Red hair, itself an archetype of Celtic identities, has similarly been stereotypically associated with quickness of temper or a “fiery” temperament, and this association was also used in constructions of the Celtic inflections to Garson’s persona, that described “the mercurial Garson temperament” (Troyan 1999, 174-175). One of the original posters for Pride and Prejudice marketed the film with the tagline “Greer Garson is lovely to look at . . . lovelier to love, but what a temper!” Garson’s fury that the press were speculating she was pregnant led her reaction to be described by one reporter as “red-headed mad” (Mary C. McCall cited in Troyan 1999, 167) In 1941, Garson described herself to Gladys Hall of Silver Screen as “Celtic by birth and temperament.” (Troyan 1999, 14). This temperament of which she speaks presumably refers again to shortness of temper and rebelliousness, in another reductive association with feminine redheadedness, to which she herself alludes when trying to recall what made her “rebel” against her family’s wishes for her to enter the teaching profession:

“Maybe it was my red hair.” (Picturegoer 1943b, 7). Like her redheadedness, her “fiery” temperament again features in her onscreen persona as well as in publicity discourses, when in Madame Curie, during one scene that that place at the Curie family home, Garson’s Marie Sklodowska is described by her future mother-in-law as “Fiery. Flame-like. Something like a flame.” In this way, the apparent contradiction of Garson’s short temper with her “great lady” persona speaks to the growth of greater independence for women during the war as contained within an overall sense of being ladylike.

Michael Troyan highlights audience responses to the Technicolor spectacle of Garson’s pale skin, red hair, and green eyes triumvirate by quoting from the 19 December 1939 issue of Screenbook reporting following the screening of a publicity preview for Blossoms in the Dust:

“Greer should be filmed in Technicolor to do her justice. Black and white gives no hint of the burnished copper tones of her mass of fine and fluffy hair, or the whiteness of her skin which portrays a natural red head or the oval depths of her eyes which. . . are green.”

(Troyan 1999, 113)

Similarly, Picturegoer stated in 1941 that “Greer’s red hair is her crowning glory, a Technicolor symphony with her green eyes and white skin.” (1941, 6) A publicity puff piece about Garson’s love life in Photoplay even went so far as to insinuate that it was these archetypally Celtic physical characteristics that first attracted the romantic attention of the man who would later become Garson’s second husband, actor Richard Ney who played her eldest son Vin in Mrs Miniver: [13]

“What he saw was a pale, humorous face framed in an incredible nimbus of red gold hair. His startled blue eyes flashed to her slender ankles, even as Greer’s startled green eyes took heed of the width of his shoulders; and then their delighted glances met again, met and locked and held.” (Trojan 1999, 128) [my emphasis]

As Diane Negra states “female redheadedness has come to signify a largely benign Irish-inflected whiteness,” (Negra 2006, 11) and this certainly seems to be the case in the way that Celticness was negotiated through Garson’s persona. This placed high visibility on the discursively prominent ethnic signifier of her red hair, often in tandem with her green eyes and/or pale skin. In Garson’s case, these ethnically signified physical characteristics allowed her to traverse boundaries across Celtic identities from Irish to Scottish as will or necessity dictated, in line with her personal biography that places her in both of these Celtic contexts. However, in the context of Hollywood, and the United States with its large and increasing number of Irish Americans, [14] audiences would more readily associate these physical characteristics with Ireland, unless Scottishness were heavily foregrounded or spectacularised, to the extent that it is by Garson’s stage performance in Random Harvest. As Amanda Third has pointed out in her discussion of the way that redheadedness functions as an ethnic signifier in women:

“In English-speaking cultures redheadedness is broadly associated with Celticness but in particular with Irishness. Indeed, the two are often conflated in the current era of high-profile Irishness, to the degree that

Irishness has colonized the meanings of Celticness,
including identity signifier of red hair.” (Third 2006,
229)

This said, while Irishness does tend to dominate the construction of Garson’s ethnically inflected persona in secondary publicity materials, notwithstanding her “Scotch scones,” and the “Scottish crests on the doors” of her Los Angeles home (Maxtone Graham 2007, 187), Scottishness did on one occasion feature quite heavily in a performative context in Random Harvest, one of her most successful films. Prior to this, Garson had been introduced to the viewing public wearing a Scottish style Tam o’ Shanter hat in her inaugural scene in Goodbye Mr Chips, but it is the music hall sequence in Random Harvest that really foregrounds Scottishness as part of her screen persona, which sees her give an accented and kilted caricature of a performance in the persona of a Scottish showgirl for the number “She’s ma Daisy.” [15]

Garson plays stage performer Paula Ridgeway who performs the lead role in a music hall act called “The Highland Lassies,” dressed in a costume that incorporates traditional Scottish garb including a modified version of a tartan kilt, and a sporran. Throughout the performance she speaks and sings in an affected and exaggerated Scottish accent and in Scottish vernacular. Promoting Random Harvest prior to its release, Garson told Gladys Hall, writing for Silver Screen of her delight in being afforded the opportunity to perform the Scottish number: “I love to dance. . . The Scotch and Irish are always dancing and their natural sense of rhythm was born in me.” (Troyan 1999, 141). Garson thus publicly demonstrated and willingly shared a somewhat essentialist approach to her perception of her own Celtic ethnicity rather oxymoronically given the highly performative nature of this particular ethnic

spectacle. Also indicative of her desire to draw on her Celticness to nuance the dominant Englishness of her screen persona is the fact that it was reportedly Garson herself who proposed performing “She’s Ma Daisy,” for this scene, and to do so dressed in a kilt (Troyan 1999, 141). This scene also aligns ethnicity with sexuality as Random Harvest was marketed around its promise to reveal Garson’s legs, usually with a picture of her in her Scottish garb, including its take on the traditional kilt, so short that today it would likely be termed a micro-skirt. Sexuality was not usually something that was foregrounded in Garson’s persona. On the contrary, her dominant “great lady” and “self-sacrificing” wife and mother persona was in many ways antithetical to the sort typified by stars like Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, for whose personae sexuality was a defining characteristic. So, ethnicity (and hence sexuality) in Random Harvest is a costume, to be discarded in order to allow the dominant persona to ultimately take control of the narrative, as lively showgirl Paula Ridgeway gives way to the tragic, but stoic Mrs Smith/Miss Hanson/Lady Rainier. Performative Scottisness has, however, served its purpose as a marketing hook for the film, and to keep the sideshow of Garson’s ethnicity functioning as a visible enough presence to remain saleable as an inflection in and nuance to her persona, but without threatening the dominance of the “lady,” for whom these ethnic inflections could have potentially troubling implications. Furthermore, the ideological function of ethnic performativity had implications specific to shifting gender roles during World War II, as Sean Griffin highlights:

“Considering identity as a role you can take up but then discard could also work as a hegemonic negotiation of gender roles in ultimate support of patriarchy: suggesting to all those Rosie the Riveters in the

audience that their new “masculine” behaviour was just a temporary persona that should be taken off once the war was over.” (Griffin 2006, 78)

In a similar way, Garson’s character in Random Harvest sheds her carnivalesque, sexualised and ethnic role as independent and autonomous showgirl Paula Ridgeway, lead performer of the “Highland Lassies” and dutifully assumes the roles of Mrs Smith (wife and mother), then Lady Rainier, constant long-suffering companion to the “industrial prince of England”, then back to Mrs Smith again. Similarly Mrs Miniver is relieved to absolve herself of the responsibility of having to disarm rogue German pilots in her kitchen (as she famously does in one scene), upon her husband Clem’s safe return from Dunkirk. Also comparable, is Garson’s own willingness to massively streamline her acting career (although the sharp decline of her stardom after the war probably contributed to this decision) in order to sequester herself in the Southwest to play the real life role of Mrs Fogelson on her husband’s, oil baron Buddy Fogelson, Forked Lighting Ranch in New Mexico. Garson’s stock character was hence well known for being a wife, fiercely loyal to her husband and his wishes, even in his absence or in the event of his death, a character that was of course highly culturally resonant in a wartime context. Shifting gender roles of course resulted from the dramatic change in the gendered make up of the workforce at this time, but Garson’s dominant persona seemed to operate to contain the potentially troubling (for the long term status quo) effects of these shifts. Garson’s “independence” was contained within a character type that was impossibly reverential toward a model of femininity that prized spousal loyalty and virtuous maternalism above all else, to the point that self-sacrifice was the norm for her characters. For example, Edna Gladney of Blossoms in the Dust and the eponymous Madame Curie devote their lives to a cause

(the placing of children in adoptive homes and the discovery of radium respectively) for the benefit of both individuals and humanity. Edna takes on the law and changes it, and Marie defies conventions of gender behaviour in her pursuit of science, but they are both portrayed as doing so at the behest of their encouraging husbands, who both subsequently die, leaving Garson's heroines to gallantly continue their personal crusades alone as obedient tributes to their deceased husbands. The end of the war meant that Garson's persona had served its ideological purpose to contain female independence within the aforementioned boundaries by presenting her qualities as admirable and righteous in the extreme. From a contemporary standpoint, the saintliness of the self-sacrificing Mrs Chips, Miniver, Rainier, Curie and Parkington seems utterly anachronistic in its conceptualisation of ideal femininity as wholeheartedly altruistic.

Thus, set pieces of spectacular ethnicity like the one in Random Harvest, as well as wider public discourses surrounding Garson's ethnicity that attempted to align her Celticness with her independence of spirit (as outlined above), served the larger ideological purpose of allowing ethnicity and its attendant suggestions of female independence, autonomy and sexuality to be sidelined. This was done in order that the virtue, maternalism and spousal loyalty of the "great lady" could take centre stage. Garson's ethnicity was therefore contained within safe boundaries of representation, and studio controlled publicity.

Garson overtly performs Irishness onscreen for the first time in The Valley of Decision, and is to some extent playing against type as Mary Rafferty in that the character is working class (a maid). However, in casting her as a newly arrived Irish immigrant, it capitalises upon the Celtic inflections of her persona that heretofore had been largely confined to extra-filmic discourses. Previously there had been only the

occasional nod towards the Celtic angle in her screen roles (as described above), which preferred to figure her as epitomic of middle class English femininity, and of course did so to extraordinary success. This also took place within the by then familiar narrative-of-immigration context widely used in Hollywood in its treatment of ethnically inflected subject matter. Garson's performance incorporates delivery of dialogue with an Irish accent throughout, but in Garson's case it is difficult to read this a mark of authenticity, [16] given that her roots were widely known to be in Northern Ireland, and nary a Northern inflection can be heard her cartoonish brogue, which incorporates well known colloquial speech ("darlin'" and "sure it is"). Thus the performance of ethnicity is in this case another example of the temporary adoption of a very particular form of Irish identity. This comes across in both Garson's performance, and the film itself, which sees Mary mischievously play up to mythical preconceptions about Ireland, when she jokingly relates her transatlantic voyage to her new employer:

"Oh, I didn't come steerage, sir. I'll tell you how I got here. Would you believe it – one night in Ireland I was strollin' and stepped into a Fairy-ring, unbeknownst. All at once I'm surrounded by the little people, the mischievous ones, and suddenly, in the midst of it all, the leprechauns raise me up and whisk me away over the clouds and out across the ocean – and here I am in the castle of my dreams!"

Latterly, both Ireland and Scotland have continued to treat and honor Garson as one of their respective native daughters. This can be seen by the University of Ulster's decision to award her an honorary doctorate in 1977, [17] and the American Scottish

Foundation's presentation to Garson of its "Wallace Award," which it describes as "a singular opportunity to recognize the extraordinary diversity of contribution that Scots have made to the world." [18]

"Mrs Miniver is Dead" – The Decline of Greer Garson in the Postwar Years

Garson's first vehicle to be released following the end of World War II, Adventure paired her with returning veteran Clark Gable, who prior to his enlistment had been MGM's most significant male star. For Garson's character, the film was a transformation narrative that saw her develop from prim and proper to playful and vivacious. This narrative scenario was actually quite indicative of the transformation that Garson hoped to effect to her own persona, tired as she was of being "Metro's Glorified Mrs." She hoped to move further into the realms of farcical comedy and slapstick, the antithesis of the sorts of film her stardom had thus far been confined to. Schatz describes her predominant genre as the "wartime woman's picture," and as he goes on to point out, for the duration of the war she worked "almost exclusively in that genre." (Schatz 1997, 229) Garson was right to want to develop her persona, given that the one that had typified her stardom had lost its resonance outside of the wartime context that gave rise to it. However, despite her efforts in films like Adventure and her subsequent comedy Julia Misbehaves (1948), neither audiences nor critics responded well, and her stardom dissipated almost as dramatically as it had ascended. At the time of the release of Adventure, Garson was still riding high on the prestige status of her wartime releases, and in pairing her with Gable the returning hero, the film had a lot going for it in terms of marquee value, and the film did solid business in 1945, grossing \$4.3 million, which placed it among the top ten highest grosses of the year (Schatz 1997, 468). However, the film had horrible reviews, and Garson's subsequent output would continue to suffer the same fate at the hands of the

critics, but without the high grosses to make up for it. After 1945, Garson never made a top grossing film, or featured in the “top money-making stars” list ever again. Louis B. Mayer still believed in her stardom enough to give her a new seven-year contract which she worked out through the rest of the decade and on into the 1950s (Trojan 1999, 206). He also granted her wish to do comedy, but to less than stellar results. The response of New York Times critic Bosley Crowther was indicative:

“it is hard to conceive of [Garson] attempting anything more impulsive or crude. . . when the dignified lady starts scrambling about on the heads of a troupe of acrobatic tumblers as Lou Costello might do; when she goes down gurgling into a lake in a leaky rowboat and then ends up wrapped in a tablecloth, she’s out of her element.” (Crowther 1948, 30)

Nothing drew a clearer line under the irrevocability of Garson’s A-list status than the disastrous commercial performance and popular and critical reception of The Miniver Story (1950), an ill begotten sequel to Garson’s most iconic film that catches up with the Minivers in the postwar years. It lost \$2.3 million for MGM (Trojan 1999, 238; Maxtone Graham 2007, 255), and killed off the beloved character that Garson’s performance had made so famous. Bosley Crowther broke the news:

“We bring you sad tidings this morning. Mrs Miniver is dead. That is to say, the English housewife whose graciousness and bravery during the war were so warmly and effectively manifested in the film, “Mrs Miniver,” eight years ago, finally succumbs to cancer

and painful inadequacies of her script in Metro's
postwar sequel." (Crowther 1950, 24)

Given the production and representational trends in postwar Hollywood, it is not a great surprise that The Miniver Story failed to find a receptive audience. In 1949 Siegfried Kracauer noticed what he refers to as "Hollywood's neglect of postwar Britons" (Kracauer 1949, 70). This followed a sustained period of time, contemporaneous with the duration of the war when Britain was an ally of the United States, and during which "Hollywood loved Britain." (Glancy 1999, 1) The astronomical rise and subsequent postwar decline of Greer Garson's stardom were a part of this phenomenon. [19] As Kracauer states, "The war over, one might have expected Hollywood to resume its relatively objective approach to contemporary Britons, yet it preferred, and still prefers, to ignore their existence." (Kracauer 1949, 64) A year later, Hollywood acknowledged their existence, and the dearth of Hollywood films that depicted postwar Britain, with the release of The Miniver Story, to disastrous effect for both MGM's investment in it, and any hope of a return to form for Garson's star status.

Greer Garson's stardom thus sharply declined contemporaneously with the arrival of peacetime and the postwar era in the United States. Her megastar status thus proved to be historically and culturally specific to such an extent that it was confined to America's World War II era, and the national feeling and appetite for her embodiment of femininity that went with it. [20] Garson's "type" chimed with a mood born of its World War II historical context that idealized the particular model of femininity that she embodied, exactly at the time it was under threat from both invading antagonists and from shifting gender roles that changes in the gendered make-up of the workforce prompted. Thus, the "gracious lady" and "long-suffering

wife” roles found extraordinary success, popular, critical and commercial, while obvious breaks from type (which increased in number after the end of the war left the self-sacrificing wife character type redundant, and her cultural resonance irrelevant) failed to achieve anything extraordinary on all the aforementioned counts. The spectacle of Greer Garson imitating hens and cockerels, flirting in bars, and breaking crockery over Clark Gable’s head in Adventure; naked in a bubble bath, performing a striptease for a roomful of drunken sailors and impersonating a sea lion (using both vocal and physical gestures) in Julia Misbehaves; and the ethereal and unwitting temptress of That Forsyte Woman, all were anathema to the “great ladies” that characterised Garson’s record-breaking, multiple Academy Award nominated, list topping box office heyday. Furthermore, these breaks from type, along with the coming of peace that altered the viewing context of the consumption of Garson’s stardom, both worked together to remove her from the privileged position and A-list star status, that had typified her career and her place in the Hollywood star hierarchy for the first half of the decade. Just as Garson herself had occupied and then individualized the space made available at MGM by the decline and departure of Norma Shearer and Greta Garbo, so Deborah Kerr arrived at the studio to take up aspects of the Garson persona that she had either grown tired of, or no longer had the marquee value to sustain. In fact, as a 1947 profile in Time magazine characterised her, Kerr was “really a kind of converted Greer Garson, womanly enough to show up nicely in those womanly roles which have always proved so soothing to Metro audiences,” (‘A Star Is Born’ 1947) roles heretofore the domain of Garson, and that her stardom was built upon in the earlier part of the decade, to huge profit and prestige for studio and star alike. Garson would continue to find regular work and sometimes moderate success in leading and supporting roles throughout the 1950s (at

the turn of the decade she still had four years on her second seven year contract at MGM to work out) and beyond, even receiving yet another Academy Award nomination for yet another “great lady” role following her performance as Eleanor Roosevelt in Sunrise at Campobello (1960).

The career of Greer Garson has not been retrospectively canonised, culturally venerated or nostalgically fondly remembered by latter day audiences to remotely the extent of so many of her contemporaries. Stars like Katharine Hepburn, Judy Garland, Greta Garbo, and Bette Davis are only a few female stars of Garson’s era, whose popular public identities and images have all achieved a level of iconicity that has eluded Garson. Conversely, she has been omitted from the collective cultural memory of the film stardom of classical studio era Hollywood, a memory that instead recalls, if anything, only ‘Mrs Miniver.’

From a present day standpoint, it is easy to dismiss the stardom of Greer Garson as trite, overly contrived, patronisingly propagandist at times, and inaccessibly dated; not to mention tainted by the widely disseminated anecdote that she is the all time favourite actress of George Bush Sr. However, the magnitude of her popularity with audiences, the real commercial gains for MGM that resulted from the marquee value of her name, the critical acclaim heaped upon her, and the cultural resonance of her persona in the context of the times that saw her stardom rise and peak, cannot be overstated.

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[1] In addition to Garson, the stars selected as objects for the participating audience members were: Betty Grable, Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, Rita Hayworth, Lauren Bacall, James Stewart, Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, Van Johnson, James Mason, and Errol Flynn.

[2] While it is true that Garson was commonly thought of, with some measure of justification, as a star with greater appeal for women than for men, the extent to which the study's participating audience members can be considered a representative sample is limited due to the fact that the published article deals only with responses made by those from a quite specific demographic: subjects were all "upper lower" and "lower middle" class adult American women, most of who were wives and mothers themselves, meaning that Garson's wifely and motherly persona would provide numerous sites of identification not necessarily available to audience members with different demographic profiles. Of course it is also true that audience demographics themselves shifted during Garson's box-office heyday, which occurred contemporaneously with U.S. interest in and then direct involvement with World War II, that removed a significant number of male audience members from cinemas.

[3] Adapted from novels by James Hilton, Jane Austen, Jan Struther, James Hilton and John Galsworthy respectively.

[4] Such commentators had in fact hit closer to home than they knew: Garson was four years older than her publicized biography stated. Born in 1904, not 1908 as was commonly believed, Garson was already 35 years old in the year that her first film, Goodbye Mr Chips, was released.

[5] In addition to Blossoms in the Dust, Garson's character loses her husband to death in Madame Curie and Mrs Parkington, who also loses a child; and to traumatic periods of extended absence in Mrs Miniver, Random Harvest and later The Miniver Story.

[6] For Goodbye Mr Chips, Blossoms In The Dust, Mrs Miniver, Madame Curie, Mrs Parkington and The Valley of Decision, respectively.

[7] Madame Curie in 1943, Mrs Parkington in 1944 and both The Valley of Decision and Adventure in 1945.

[8] This indication of Garson's marquee value is all the more noteworthy given that for the duration of the 1940s, the appearance by female stars on this list never equalled, let alone outnumbered, male stars (Schatz 1997, 469-471) despite the fact that some of the most bankable male stars like Clark Gable and Tyrone Power were absent from screens during the war, having joined the armed forces. In fact, for 1942 and 1943, Garson's most successful years, she and Grable were the only female stars to make the list.

[9] Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon were one of Hollywood's most popular screen couples in the 1940s and starred together in Blossoms In The Dust, Mrs Miniver, The Miniver Story, Madame Curie, Julia Misbehaves, That Forsyte Woman and Scandal at Scourie (1953).

[10] Information available from the BFI Film & TV Database states that Garson's "Birthplace [is] often given as Ireland in sources, but [her] birth certificate at St. Catherine's House, London has been checked," <http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/individual/15021>.

[11] Garson was not the only star to be deliberately Celticized during the 1940s. Australian born Errol Flynn, known at the time for playing Englishmen in films like The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938) and The Sea Hawk (1940), was similarly "remade as an Irishman" (Glancy 1999, 162). As Flynn attested in his autobiography, "They wanted me to be Flynn of Ireland." (Flynn 1960, 165) Another tangible manifestation of the Celtic vogue in Hollywood in the 1940s was the cycle of Irish themed musicals produced by Twentieth Century Fox such as Sweet Rosie O'Grady (1943) and Irish Eyes Are Smiling (1944) (see Griffin 2006, 64-83).

[12] Michael Troyan summarises the lineage that connects Garson and her mother's family to Rob Roy MacGregor from the early seventeenth century onwards, and also traces the migration of her ancestors from Scotland to Northern Ireland, where they remained until her mother moved to London, where Garson was born and where they lived (Troyan 1999, 8-10).

[13] This was one of many such articles to enthusiastically devote column inches to the story of Garson's relationship with Ney, after the release of Mrs Miniver. Garson had agreed to withhold the story from the press due to MGM's concerns that the implication by association of incest would damage the film's box-office (Troyan 1999, 147). Their marriage was short lived and dissolved in 1947.

[14] Irishness was a point of identification for many American audience members, with likely a significant proportion of Irish Americans among their number. Over 4.5 million people emigrating to the United States from Ireland over the centuries has led to many tens of millions of U.S. citizens who self identify as Irish American (Hout and Goldstein 1994, 64).

[15] 'She's Ma Daisy' was a well known song by popular Scottish 1910s music hall entertainer Harry Lauder, who would perform his novelty Scottish songs (other examples include 'I Love a Lassie,' 'Stop Yer Ticklin,' Jock,' and 'Wee Nellie McKie Frae Skye,' similarly accented and attired in kilt and sporran (Johnston 2001, 22).

[16] See Ruth Barton's Acting Irish In Hollywood (Barton 2006) for discussions of the function of accent as a marker of authenticity for Irish actors in Hollywood.

[17] BFI Film & Television Database, <http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/individual/15021>.

[18] American Scottish Foundation,

<http://www.americanscottishfoundation.com/tartanDay/wallace.html>.

[19] Glancy identifies over 150 films made between 1930 and 1945 that demonstrate Hollywood's interest in portraying British themed subject matter, with several Greer Garson stars vehicles among them (Glancy 1999, 1).

[20] In this regard, Greer Garson's stardom is comparable to that of Shirley Temple, whose stardom was as ideologically synonymous with its Depression era context, as Garson's was with its World War II era context (Eckert 1974, 1, 17-20; Dyer 1998, 25-26).