

Scotland as Screen: Vexed Projections in *I Know Where I'm Going!*

Wendy Veronica Xin

Martin Scorsese recalls the first time he saw a film made by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger—known collectively as The Archers—as a ‘formative experience’ (Scorsese 1994: xvi). He writes: ‘As the years went by, whenever I saw the logo of The Archers appear on the screen, I knew I was in for something unique, a very special kind of experience. I don’t think any other logo would fill me with such expectation of fantasy and wonder—not so much fantasy, but magic, real film magic’ (Scorsese 1994: xvi). Until discovering *I Know Where I'm Going!*, Scorsese thought he had exhausted cinema’s store of ‘masterpieces’. Tom Gunning has similarly described their 1945 picture (what he fondly calls ‘*IKWIG*’) as ‘quite simply, a film one falls in love with’ (Gunning 2005: 94).¹ *I Know Where I'm Going!* was shot following the wartime pastoral *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), after which The Archers admitted they ‘were not quite sure where they were going’ (Cook 2002: 8). Despite this initial lack of direction, once Pressburger (the screenwriter in the duo) hit upon a viable story the script was written in a burst of inspiration over the course of just five days. The plot was to be simple: a girl wants to go to an island in the Hebrides, is waylaid by a storm, and finds that when it clears she no longer wants to. Although the film is generally considered a minor work in the Powell and Pressburger canon—frequently overshadowed by classics as *The Red Shoes*, *Black Narcissus*, and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*—viewers have found it unusually stirring, conjuring an image of the Isle of Mull that is both personally affecting and regionally authentic. Indeed, even the hard-boiled Raymond Chandler had a soft spot for *IKWIG*, declaring, ‘I’ve never seen a picture which smelled of the wind and rain in quite this way, nor one which so beautifully exploited the kind of scenery people actually live with’ (Chandler 2012: 142).

Given the heralded realism of the film, it may come as something of a shock to discover that Roger Livesey, the male lead, never once went to the Highlands. Livesey was by then a widely recognisable actor, having just played Clive Candy in The Archers' *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. Scheduling conflicts kept him in London and prevented Livesey from ever setting foot on Mull, and the entirety of his scenes were shot at Denham Studios and then edited in with techniques ranging from rear projection and stand-ins to long shots and close cuts. Though *IKWIG*'s depiction of Scotland itself has inspired so much love for the place itself amongst viewers that have stumbled upon it, the place itself is often never more than a screen *against*, but never *in*, which narrative action takes place. The film distinguishes between what Martin Lefebvre has called 'setting' and 'landscape' by provocatively directing attention toward the technological illusions that belie the authenticity of cinematic representation: a contemplation of the Scottish landscape triggers spectators' recognition of the camera's illusory power to fully restore Livesey to the Hebrides (Lefebvre 2011: 61-78). Indeed, every time we gaze upon a long shot of the landscape, we get no Livesey; every time we get Livesey, we get no landscape. The picture resorts instead to the technique of rear projection, which superimposes Livesey *onto* the Hebrides but never inserts him *into* the Hebrides, thereby conjuring the anti-reality of both studio and screen at the same time. Beginning with this central paradox—that Powell and Pressburger's 'real film magic' relies as much on the authenticity of the Scottish landscape as on film's potential to create this authenticity out of base artificiality—this article focuses on the ways in which *IKWIG*'s very visible efforts to overlay the actor into the landscape proper—typically read as a function of rear projection's inadequacies—paradoxically enhance and invigorate the relationship between the film's content and its form, between the landscape as it is and the landscape as it is seen on film. In other words, the obvious simulation of the landscape has not hindered, but has in fact amplified, viewers' intimacy with it.

A brief interlude on the plot of *I Know Where I'm Going!* May help so that we all, so to speak, might 'know where we are going'. Asked to describe the events in *IKWIG*, one contemporary reviewer wrote: 'What happens? Precious little. Bad weather prevents Miss Hiller crossing to the island; a naval officer (local laird) makes it ultimately unnecessary. That's the plot. Atmosphere, literally and personal, is everything,' where he goes on to cite Scotland's 'misty shores (they even photograph a rainbow) with the bleak winds, rough seas and boiling whirlpool off Mull' (Anon 1945: n. p.). For those who have not seen the film, a brief synopsis is due. The tomboyish Wendy Hiller, a last minute replacement for Deborah Kerr, plays Joan Webster, a girl who always knew where she was going. So assured is she of her own desires that at the ripe old age of five she is already writing to Father Christmas to broker a deal: 'I don't want a doll, and I don't want a big red ball. What I want is a pair of silk stockings, and I mean silk, *not artificial!*'² At twelve, Joan catches rides home from school with the milkman instead of waiting for the bus with the other girls; at eighteen, she tells a boy she would rather he not take her to the movies twice a week; she would rather dine at the best hotel in town, 'even if it's only once a month'. At this early stage, it is already clear that Joan's meaningful 'knowing' must be ritually exposed as an even more meaningful not-knowing. On her way to marry Sir Robert Bellinger, one of the wealthiest men in England, Joan is waylaid first by fog and then by a gale warning that lasts several days. While she waits at Tobermory she finds she has fallen in love with an RAF officer on leave, who is also the laird of Kiloran and has 'only rented' the island to Joan's fiancée. Attempting to escape the pull of her fate and her love for Torquil, Joan hires a young man to row her to Kiloran in the midst of the gale, landing her dangerously close to the raging whirlpool; Torquil rescues her, they declare their love as the gale, and his leave, ends, while Kiloran lies unexplored by both.

In the midst of these wanderings, boundaries appear and reappear often in *I Know Where I'm Going!*, and more often than not trouble deeply-etched lines between the dream world and the waking world, the real and the mythic, 'total war' and post-war, this country and the other, the

voluntary and the fated/conflicting dichotomies. Even a matter of life or of death pivots on the edge of a single moment, with Ruairidh Mhór's exclamation holding true: 'In less than a second you could get from this world into the next!' Early in the film a voice Joan dreams of her marriage to Sir Robert Bellinger as a union to his company, Consolidated Chemical Industries, as pound notes swirl around in the foreground and she hears the distant chimes of sales clerks, 'Charge it, charge it...perfect fit, perfect fit!...Everything's arranged, everything's arranged!' During the eddying montage a solemn voice pronounces: 'Next stop, Gretna Green. You're over the border now', depicting Joan's train charging tartan-clothed hills. Spatial and temporal transformation and dislocation assume various levels of meaning that only escalate as the movie progresses and the line between Joan's knowing and unknowing gets increasingly fuzzy, and her certainty about what she wants is increasingly thrown into question ('I'm on the brink of losing everything I ever wanted, ever since I could want anything'). To her mind, Kiloran marks a way forward, to Joan's role as the wealthy, waiter-snubbing, gin and Dubonnet-drinking wife of 'the rich man' and imagines the possibility for any future at all after the end of 'total war' and where, gloriously, one can shout 'the war's a million miles away!' with genuine abandon.³ Torquil notes that the island 'is far enough away from the war'. Though it is unclear how far a place has to be to be 'far enough away', it is clear that Kiloran both supplies and transcends the limits of the spatial imaginary, acting as a site of obscurity, uncertainty, or self-doubt. A final example of this is, of course, the 'terrible strong curse' on the lairds of Kiloran that, if they should ever step into Moy Castle, they should be 'chained to a woman forever, and die in his chains'. As Joan herself stands at the entrance to Moy Castle, her silhouette backlit against the still-bright outside as the camera shoots her from inside the castle, we realise that individuals are not only often framed, but exemplified, by their relationship to doorways, portals, and other geographic and architectural divisions, as the contours of space come to inform the contours of character itself. One famous shot of Catriona standing against the night sky, holding her hounds in rein and almost fading into the landscape, strikingly and visually articulates her particular embeddedness in the very place itself, both in Scotland and on the screen.

Kiloran, like *Brigadoon*, problematises already uncertain distinctions between past and future, the nostalgia for the pre-war period and the possibility for post-war closure, as well as the differences endemic to urban materialism as opposed to a romantic, pastoral anti-realism, which reflect the broader divisions of private and public that had gradually been eroded in the arena of total war.⁴ Joan's uncertainty about marrying Sir Robert on Kiloran or staying with Torquil in Tobermory, Catriona's choice to either restore Erraig House to its original conditions after the RAF had 'knocked [it] about a bit' or to be compensated for the damage turns on her allegiance to either her family or to her husband ('No, they'll pay a lump sum, or do the place up as it was...That's the question, MacLaine versus Potts!'), and Kenny's impulsive gambit to take a boat out into the gale in order to earn the money to marry Bridie—each of these decisions implies that it is the small either-or differences that finally make all the difference in the end. We could say, too, that in contemplating the increasingly troubled distinctions of the post-war period, the film instantiates a meta-cinema, intent both on exposing and resolving its postulated problematics of boundary-crossing through film's formal desire, not only of crossing boundaries, but of one day stitching them together so that the distinguishing line looks like it had never existed. *IKWIG*'s thematic content and its plot implicate its formal and material undertext and, in a virtuoso move, transform one of its chief technological weaknesses into one of its most stunning displays of filmic mastery.

What is fascinating is that *IKWIG*'s meditation on marginal and liminal spaces finds an analogue in its employment of material screens, an example of which occurs early in the picture during Joan's famous dream sequence. The eddying montage of overlaid images and swirling banknotes prefigures, quite uncannily, a similar Salvador Dalí segment in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (which would be released only a month later). While our heroine sleeps in her train compartment, the camera pans over to her wedding dress, hanging in a plastic wrapper. Curiously, the dress disappears into thin air yet leaves a residue, the plastic coating that is itself made into a screen

through which we see the rest of her imagined life as Lady Bellinger.⁵ Gunning, in a fine essay on the film, has noted that ‘As the dress magically vanishes, leaving only this empty emblem of the shining world of visual attraction, the covering becomes a surface onto which desires are projected’—it is, in other words, a ‘literal “dream screen”’ (Gunning 2005: 100). Prior to the 1940s cloth screens crafted from a cotton muslin material were ‘webbed, eyeleted, and stretched across wooden frames’ in picture theatres, but these stained quickly from audience smoke and improper ventilation.⁶ In the 1940s, plastic replaced the cloth screens, rendering Joan’s ‘dream-screen’ especially apropos to the material advances of the time, yet commenting slyly that the very materiality of the screen that separates us from the filmic representation of ‘reality’ as such. Lingering over this for a moment, what appears is not just that the plastic casing reproduces the material of the screen, but that it is through this very screen—through the filmic imaginary itself—that provides the best meditation between Joan’s perception of the waking world and her anxiety-ridden fantasies.





However, the screen's status as both an obstacle and an aid is reflected by the wide use of rear projection in the pre-digital age. Before the development of such marvels as CGI and 3D, high definition and splicing, rear projection stood at the forefront of special effects cinematography. To accommodate stars' conflicting availabilities—and to surmount the technological hurdles of filming dramatic scenes in action (as, for instance, on moving vehicles)—rear projection was invented as a mode of stitching two screens together by filming one scene at one time, and then shooting the actors' scenes in front of the pre-filmed reels. The initial footage, which is taken on location, is fashioned into 'transparencies' or 'plates' that are enlarged and then stand behind the actors in the secondary studio shoots. Although it stands as one of the most gimmicky tools in the classical-studio film arsenal, the technique of transparencies was proclaimed 'perfect' in 1943 by the head of Paramount's rear projection department, the most prestigious figure in special effects technology at the time (Turnock 2012: 157). Though the method was easy to use it was, of course, exceedingly obvious to catch out in the final product. Julie Turnock notes that 'the primary problem contributing to obvious-looking rear projection is that of image quality: when filming the first-generation foregrounds, the pre-photographed projected image is always a second generation, or "dupe", and therefore a lesser-quality image [...] exaggerate[ing] any flaw in the project background plate'.⁷ The 'special effect' of rear projection has since been routinely dismissed by critics and universally

panned precisely because it allows us to see where a film's magical illusion of seamlessness starts to fray.⁸

To speak slightingly of rear projection in 1940s films is perhaps unfair, patronising and excusing it as a relic of a bygone era of film-making. After all, it would be unfair to criticise the aesthetic merits of *Casablanca* merely for the way that Rick and Ilsa drive through Paris, never bothering to look at the road. The physical car, with the actors inside, is too-obviously bumping along in front of a screen that projects (from behind the screen) a previously recorded image of a road. Other automobiles, pedestrians, houses adorning the street, and even the Eiffel Tower only appear to flit by—for, in actuality, they do not appear at all, merely projections of objects rather than objects themselves. This kind of poor driving constitutes reckless endangerment on two counts. It not only exposes how close many of Hollywood's iconic screen couples are to knocking a pedestrian over or hurling off of a cliff—on the brink of death at the pinnacle of the romance. Such kinds of 'bad' driving, more importantly, also call attention to the palimpsestic façade of the scene, interrupting the viewer's perception of depth-of-field, thus tampering with the aspirational ontology of cinema as itself possessing a measure of lived-in reality accessible on just the other side of its screen. Filling in the space outside the frame, we can envisage a wind machine just beyond the camera's gaze, generating nothing more than an *effect* of sustained movement, breeze-rippled hair and, most notably, a longing if not a convincing representation of two screens melding and melting into one unitary spatio-temporal illustration.

Yet the use of rear projection in *I Know Where I'm Going!* seems to resist these all-too-prevalent aspersions. In numerous instances the denaturalised, attention-eliciting use of rear projection in fact stitches actors to the background that hangs behind them, almost offering the Hebrides itself as the very medium that binds Joan and Torquil together in a formalised sort of intimacy. What straddles the gap between Joan and Torquil's opposed worlds is the presence of

the island itself, in the splashes that soak the actors and almost sink the boat, in the winds that sweep characters toward one another and the gales that keep them apart. It is not without a tinge of irony, however, that the most authentic effects of the island on the actors draw us back into the studio where they were manufactured, via wind machines, pools, water turbines, etc. Critics have often noted that, in watching *IKWIG*, even the gusts and gales and sea mists come alive, nearly lifting in a haze off the screen. Dilys Powell exclaimed:

I can only say that to me it communicates an overpowering sense of place[...].The stark sudden hills, the dark waters, the island seen through veils of spray and mist—landscape and seascape here are handled as if they had personalities of their own; one feels the presence of wind and shore in a manner for which I can think of no British parallel[...].The shots of the furious sea, the sullen curtain of the approaching storm, the whirlpool in whose gulf the little boat which plies between the islands is nearly lost, are as good as anything of their kind I can remember[...].I shall remember the piece as I do not remember many films, for a power of suggestion[...].(Powell 1945: n.p.)

Two moments of particular affective intensity bridge the film's narrative middle, a middle that fittingly resists the exterior spaces that puzzle cinematic and characterological form at the film's emotionally charged beginning and end. Fog and smoke swirl around Joan and Torquil's most charged encounters: their meeting at Port Erraig at the beginning of the film, the cigarette they share from their respective windows (where the smoke from the cigarettes seems even more luminous than the glowing light that illuminates their almost-touching fingers), and the scene-shattering encounter with Corryvreckan, where the whirl of waves crashing against the two characters at one point almost blackens the entire screen. As Ian Christie notes of this scene, 'the eerily lit bedroom in which [Joan] first admits her doubts about the marriage to Sir Robert, have a rare cinematic intensity that achieves the "magic" sought especially by Pressburger' (Christie 1994:

55). In the first instance, the cigarette smoke blends in with the fog outside, such that there is little separation between the cigarette that Joan and Torquil share—a series of close-ups of Torquil lighting a match, Joan’s meaningful look at him, are rendered in shot-reverse shots as the inexpressible content of a burgeoning romantic entanglement takes on a formal quality, a series of interlinked shots connected by a vaporous smoke that almost shades in gleams of light. As the smoke and the light become nearly indistinguishable, the cinematograph’s power of seizing light—of recording glimmers and flickers of light and turning it alchemically into film—plays the same role as the island’s mistiness that envelops the two characters.



We might also cast our minds to the notorious telephone booth scene where Torquil calls the Western Isles Hotel to book two rooms. During a 'dry summer', the telephone booth is placed right beside a waterfall. 'Why just *here?*', Joan asks Torquil amidst the din of the raging water. His answer is simple: 'It was a compromise. Post office wanted it up the hill, Catriona down below...It was a dry summer when they put it here, and they forgot that when it rained...' The following scene takes place at Moy Castle, where Torquil reveals that he is the Laird of Kiloran. Both scenes track the romantic tension between the two leads, yet what usually goes unnoticed is that the scenes are joined together by a slightly discordant tracking shot of waves violently crashing against darkened cliffs. This fleeting interlude lasts for a mere few seconds – if that – but it again tellingly inserts images of the island between establishing shots of the leads, almost as if it is not the cinematographer's stringing together of frames but the island itself that provides, like Colpepper's glue in *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), a binding agent attaching characters to their setting.





It is clear that Powell and Pressburger were interested in playfully acknowledging both the barriers and the possibilities of rear projection. Instead of dismissing it, there are several things to say about the theoretical implications of the procedure. Though film critics like Laura Mulvey qualify their judgment of rear projection, excusing its so-called badness by dubbing it a ‘clumsy’ sort of ‘sublime’, they nonetheless admit that the technique rendered actors ‘self-conscious, vulnerable, transparent [...and] almost immobilized, as if they are in a *tableau vivant*, paradoxically at the very moment in the film when there is a fictional high point of speed, mobility, or dramatic incident’ (Mulvey 2007: 3).⁹ Mulvey notes, importantly, that in rear projection the screen is doubled, thereby straddling two spaces and times. Though the screen occupying the space behind the actors shows a projection of footage captured in the past, process photography ‘montages’ the present time of shooting onto the backdrop. What results are rear projection scenes that always already gesture both forwards and backwards through time, registering all at once the time of the narrative, the time of viewing, and the time of the landscape that irrepressibly haunts both (Mulvey 2007: 3) As Pam Cook observes, memory itself relies on ‘a process of displacement and association of ideas, which in turn depends on a layering of images over one another similar to the cinematic technique of superimposition’ (Cook 2002: 48). The primary transparency comes to exceed its status as merely a surface of or for projection, and its new contribution lies in its status as an a object that makes the visibility and translucency of other objects possible at the risk of its own visual extinction.

Moreover, far from simply being superimposed onto the screen behind them, actors are taken out of time and occupy a cloudy realm between the processed shots behind *them* and the shots in process in front of *us*, between multiple partially filmed settings and the one finished film product.

In all of these key shots mentioned above, the artificiality of rear projection is offset by the studio-generated gusting winds, impenetrable fogs, and lashing rains that manage to compress symbolic, formal, and romantic levels by absorbing the actors into the panoramas behind them. Put another way, the very hurdles that attended Powell and Pressburger's technological and material means become self-commentaries on the obstacles that stand between Joan and Torquil, between dwelling in the past or letting go of it, and between the Glaswegian urban setting and the far-flung, edge-of-the-world anti-materialism of the Hebrides. Features of the natural world offer the only possibility to scale the boundaries between process shot, filmed action, and theatre screen—it is both part of the scenery filmed and projected onto the background, as well as material inserted into the secondary shoot. In a feat of bumbling virtuosity, the camera achieves an effect where the actors seem as if they're *enmeshed* in the action that they are more accurately *blocking*.



The manufactured fog, winds, and water act as Barthesian 'reality effects' for the film's content, deriving their primary motivation from a pleasure in being for nothing more than the denotation of

the world as it is, in its abiding solidness. Yet in a crucial turn, the studio soundstage intrudes upon the film's depiction of the world projected onto its screen precisely by way of this smoke, the sea's dewy crackle and the cigarette's soft wispieness drawing the spectator not into Scotland, but into the stunts and subterfuges manufactured in the studio. The smoke and steam supply the very 'masking pieces in the foreground' that Powell mentions—indeed, 'artificial wind, water, or vertiginous height' were popular forms of sewing together the two disparate temporalities endemic to rear projection—even as they are meant to recede into and reconcile the boundaries between past and present, here and there, foreground and background. In the presence of the Hebrides, then, we might say that these distinctions finally find it within themselves to vanish quietly altogether in a melodious pairing of reality and illusion.

Powell and Pressburger once described their films as constituting 'a crusade against materialism' (Moor 2005: 93). In *I Know Where I'm Going!* the synthetic artificiality of the screen and the deep-seated anti-materiality of the wind and water are fused in function. Roland Barthes has likened the rustle of the wind to the mutability and malleability of plastic, writing in *Mythologies* that plastic is '[...] more than just a substance, [it] is the very idea of its infinite transformation [...]'. And it is this, in fact, which makes it a miraculous substance: a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature. Plastic remains impregnated throughout with this wonder: it is less a thing than the trace of a movement' (Barthes 2000: 110). The plastic screen at once embalms and immortalises the nature of movement and the movement of nature. In a documentary on *IKWIG*, Wendy Hiller remembered the effervescent bustle of the Hebridean landscape, the beauty of its natural beauty mirroring the plasticity of the screen itself: 'Everything moved...The island was never still and I remember Emeric [Pressburger] standing there looking out and saying "That's what I want". And he was looking at a meadow. The grass was about...three foot high, and it was waving like the waves of the sea...the wind was moving it, as though it was moving the surface of the sea and he said, "That's the Hebrides"'.¹⁰ The actress's memory of Pressburger 'standing there

looking out' at the meadow elicits a renewed sense of the landscape as a picturesque object, much like the screen in its looked-at status, an object that receives and reflects the longingness contained within our gaze.

Rear projection continually reminds its viewers not only of the screen in front them, but of the screen *within* the screen behind the actors. Rather than obliterating our sense of the real, the film's formal integration of actors onto the set mirrors the characters' geographical immersion in the Hebrides. In both cases, threshold spaces between different times and places and scenes fill and flesh themselves out with landscape's lingering traces: air, wind, water, mist. The Isle of Mull does not only, therefore, offer a vision of an untainted history, guarding the principles for which the war was fought to defend, but progressively projects a breach between two times and places, a breach that is then sutured by the dynamic texture of the island that inserts itself in both (much like *A Canterbury Tale's* Glue Man antics that, against all odds, instigate characters' identification with the pasts they had been unwilling to confront). *IKWIG* harnesses the very limitations of screen technologies to depict a total visual field montaging merging temporalities and spatialities across a smooth surface, as well as allowing room for the narrative properties held within the regional elements themselves. Meditating consciously on the crossing over from screen to Scotland and back again to the screen, the film simultaneously breaches the barriers between the cinematic and the real, the fictive and the documentary, willed decisions and mythic destinies, proposing that Scotland itself reflects, relies upon, and resolves the antinomies of representation.

Of course, what has not yet been discussed is that rear projection was not just a material hurdle, but a matter of scheduling as well: 'Roger couldn't get out of the play [Peter Ustinov's *Banbury Nose*], and now came the greatest conjuring trick of all. Roger Livesey, playing Torquil MacNeil in *I Know Where I'm Going*, never came within five hundred miles of the Western Isles. I know that those of you who have seen the film won't believe it, but it's true' (Powell 1987: 476).

Powell himself admits to, and in fact boasts about, the ruses used to convincingly convey the reality of what could not be real:

Of course there were all sorts of tricks; sudden cuts and turns and masking pieces in the foreground, which we used to help the editor of the film. But so perfect is the illusion that I couldn't tell myself, now, which is Roger and which is his double in certain scenes.¹¹ When asked about Livesey's stand-in, the director replied: 'I'm not sure, but I think it is one of the cleverest things I ever did in movies [...] to double the leading man in all the exterior scenes of the film and intercut them with studio close-ups with such a distinctive person as Roger Livesey, was a miracle. We tested twenty young men before we found one who had Roger's height and could copy his walk, which was very distinctive. Roger came to the studio and taught him to walk and run, and hardest of all, to stand still [...]. The secret of doubling an actor is not to run away from the camera or turn your back on it; on the contrary, you walk straight up to it. The camera is just as easily fooled by calm assurance as most people are (Powell 1987: 476).

As a result, all of Livesey's exterior scenes were shot off-location rather than on, and there is absolutely no moment where Livesey truly lives in the reality of the space we only think we see.





Whether or not we, and the camera, are the dupes of ‘calm assurance’ is not as important as how, despite the camera’s flattening effect, collapsing the boundaries between two men into one, the film still stimulates a vivid impression of immersion: both Livesey’s and its audience members’.

Since the perspectival shot-reverse-shot is one of Hollywood cinema’s favourite techniques for continuity editing and has been discussed countless times, I will keep my remarks relatively brief. The technique captures the back and forth nature of dialogic exchanges while preserving and enhancing a semblance of visual totality: though the audience is presented alternatively with images of one speaker and then another in rapid succession, we are usually able to spot the source of the sound that we hear coming from the actor in that particular shot. The quick cuts between the faces of the actors replicate the conversation’s sonic and syntactic breaks. Working from Lacan, Kaja Silverman, amongst many others, has pointed to the affective oscillation involved in even a simple shot-reverse-shot. Shot I is marked by an ‘imaginary plenitude’, where the pure phenomenon of the cinematic spectacle inspires the viewer with a sense of his or her ‘unbounded gaze’, like the feeling of *jouissance* when a child sees himself in the mirror. However, suddenly, the spectator realises the limits of his gaze to move anywhere off-screen, and Shot I comes to signify an ‘absent field’ just as our previous euphoria of possessing an all-seeing eye dissipates and turns

to displeasure. Daniel Dayan describes this transition from satiation to insufficiency in 'The Tutor Code of Classical Cinema':

When the viewer discovers the frame—the first step in reading the film—the triumph of his former *possession* of the image fades out. The viewer discovers that the camera is hiding things, and therefore distrusts it and the frame itself which he now understands to be arbitrary [...] the unreal space between characters and/or objects is no longer perceived as pleasurable. It is now the space which separates the camera from the characters. The latter have lost their quality of presence. The spectator discovers that his possession of space was only partial, illusory. He feels dispossessed of what he is prevented from seeing (Silverman 1986: 221).¹².

Contemporary viewers of *IKWIG* would have been more than familiar with the shot-reverse-shot editing and, in a love story, would probably have expected sense-laden glances and gazes to orchestrate a mounting drama of discovery and mutuality. However, the shot-reverse-shot sequence is usually abruptly cut off in the midst of a sequence, flashing first from an individual close-ups of Joan, to another of Torquil. Just when we expect to be given a response in the form of Torquil's returned look, the camera zooms out to a long shot of them both, almost as if distracted by what lies beyond, or behind, the two stars. When it again resumes its original commission, the moment has passed, we receive no lone shot of Torquil, and Joan and he are reunited in a shot that allows them the intimacy of sharing in one single frame, even while it frustrates the typical three-part structure consisting of the initial look, the gesture toward the unseen, and the reaction shot, perhaps another moment in which our desire for 'total spectator involvement' results paradoxically in a 'phantomization of the experience of self and world' (Gunning 2010: 64). We may think, for instance, of several particular instances in *IKWIG*: when the two lovers finally meet in Moy Castle, when Torquil passionately embraces Joan before she finally departs to marry Sir

Robert, and even when Joan and Torquil first meet at Port Erraig. As Cook notes, '[...] the use of doubles and rear projection in *IKWIG* has another dimension too, reinforcing the sense of dreamscape, the hallucinatory quality that establishes this Scotland as Joan's fantasy projection [...] draw[ing] us in, emotionally and intellectually, to an imaginary experience in which there is no clear distinction between fantasy and reality' (Cook 2002: 36-7).



Now, the shot-reverse-shot has generally connoted the presence of a seen whole, a realisation of fragmentation and deprivation, and then a filling-in of the absent field. The oddness of *I Know Where I'm Going* is not only that we are not afforded the pleasures of an absent field restored, with its attendant feelings of relief and reassurance. Instead, the unexpected and intrusive shot of the landscape enlarges that absent field and, significantly, *fills it with the presence of a stranger*. For every long shot of Livesey that ends, by interrupting, the shot-reverse-shot cycle in fact always denotes no-Livesey, only stand-in. Though the miniscule size of the actor in this vast wilderness of sheer space impedes our faculties for facial recognition, the stand-in nevertheless stands in for a conscious system attempting to simultaneously cover and confess its boundary-awareness. To quote from Jacqueline Rose, this is the foundation of cinema's cycle of infinite regression: 'cinema as an apparatus tries to dose itself off as a system of representation, but constantly comes up against a vanishing point of the system where it fails to integrate itself and then has to refuse that

moment of difference or trouble by trying to run away from it or by binding it back into the logic and perfection of the film system itself' (Rose 2005: 219). The scenery endures and erases the leading man from the scene, as it moves from studio to setting to studio once more. Already entrancing the camera's gaze away from the two stars, there is also a peculiar fondness for the landscape itself, a landscape that is not just the backdrop but the very material that sutures actors to setting and, significantly, to one another.



The only time that the island of Kiloran appears in full view, it materialises not as a landscape but as a representation of one, in the form of a map that hangs in Catriona Potts's manor. A literal backdrop for a conversation between the two leads, the image of the island communicates a paradoxical cyclicity in the film's representations of space: landscape both exceeds and recedes into the background.



In the dialectical sway of this process (which resembles the ineffably swaying waves of the grass in the meadows), the Hebrides can no longer be told apart from the various screens that hold it on its surface, and uses its textures—the stormy winds of the gale, the sprightly spray of the sea, the tempestuous waves of Corryvreckan—to paint in all the gaps and cracks between ‘transparencies’, histories, stand-ins, and screens. If, as Lauren Berlant puts it, ‘Intimacy names the enigma of [a] range of attachments, and more; and it poses a question of scale that links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective’, then, as I have suggested, *IKWIG* poignantly creates this intimacy through the very attachments it discusses—to the idea of the romantic, to the national, to a way of life—through the illusion of the characters’ connections (or attachments) to their settings, fostered by technologies like rear projection, stand-ins, and long shots (Berlant 1998: 283). In other words, Powell and Pressburger cunningly vex traditional conceptions of subject, screen, and spectator as they posit a theory of filmic landscape that casts a spell over the camera itself, tantalising us with the transmogrified obstacle of a cinematic apparatus that more fully enriches the topography of both Scotland and screen through its very starkest subterfuges. The final shot, under the banner of the triumphant ‘The End’ titles, we see Joan and Torquil walking away together, perhaps this time knowing where they’re going. What we cannot overlook are the words, ‘Made in the Western Isles of Scotland and at Denham Studios, England’, taking up almost a fifth of the screen and emblazoned over the terrain behind it as a now-clear sky hovers above. It

is as if Joan and Torquil's happy union also merges together, in a happy reconciliation, the represented landscape of the Hebrides that Roger Livesey himself never visited, and the film studio's technological acts, its use of rear projection becoming a sort of conjuring magic. We might finally say, then, that only by badly blending and blurring different Liveseys can *IKWIG* secure its manifold—and enduring—*liveliness*.

Works Cited.

- Anon. 1945. Review of *I Know Where I'm Going*'. In: *Daily Herald* (17 November 1945), http://www.powell-pressburger.org/Reviews/45_IKWIG/Contemporary/Herald.html, (accessed Tuesday, 1 July 2014).
- Barthes, R. 2000. Plastic. In: *Mythologies*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Berlant, L. 1998. Intimacy: A Special Issue. In: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Intimacy (Winter 1998).
- Byrne P. 2005. "Real" vs. "Reel" Magic: An Appreciation of *I Know Where I'm Going!*. In: *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 36 (July 2005), http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/cteq/i_know_where/, (accessed Tuesday, 1 July 2014).
- Christie, I. 1994. *Arrows of Desire*. London, Faber and Faber.
- Christie, I., and Moor, A. eds. 2005. *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*. London, British Film Institute.

- Chandler, R. 2012. Letter to James Sandoe, 7 December 1950, In: Hiney, T. and MacShane, F. eds. *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Nonfiction 1950-1959*. New York, Grove Press.
- Cook, P. 2002. *I Know Where I'm Going!*. London, British Film Institute.
- Gunning, T. 2005. On Knowing and Not Knowing, Going and Not Going, Loving and Not Loving: *I Know Where I'm Going!* and *Falling in Love Again*. In: Christie, I., and Moor, A., eds. 2005. *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*. London, British Film Institute.
- Gunning, T. 2010. Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures: Early Cinema's Phantom Rides. In: Harper, G. and Rayner, J. eds. 2010. *Cinema and Landscape*. Bristol, intellect.
- Harper, G., and Rayner, J. eds. 2010. *Cinema and Landscape*. Bristol, intellect.
- Lefebvre, M. 2011. On Landscape in Narrative Cinema. In: *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2011).
- Moor, A. 2005. *Powell & Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morris, N. 2015. Raise a gin and Dubonnet to Powell and Pressburger's *I Know Where I'm Going!* at 70. Available from: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/raise-gin-dubonnet-powell-pressburger-i-know-where-im-going-70> (accessed Monday, 16 November 2015).
- Mulvey, L. 2007. A Clumsy Sublime. In: *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Spring 2007).
- Powell, D. 1945. Review of *I Know Where I'm Going!*. In: *The Sunday Times* (18 November 1945).
- Powell, M. 1987. *A Life in Movies: An Autobiography*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
- Puckett, K. 2008. 'The Life and Death and Death of Colonel Blimp', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35 (Autumn 2008).
- Rose, J. 2005. *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*. New York, Verso.
- Rosen, P. ed. *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Scorsese, M. 1994. 'Foreword', in Christie, I. *Arrows of Desire*. London, Faber and Faber.

Silverman, K. 1983. *The Subject of Semiotics*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Silverman, K. 1986. 'Suture', in Rosen, P. (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Thomson, D. 2012. *The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Turnock, J. 2012. 'The Screen on the Set: The Problem of Classical-Studio Rear Projection', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Winter 2012).

¹ Following a retrospective on Powell and Pressburger at the Museum of Modern Art, another critic, William K. Everson, proclaims in similar tones that the film 'was conceived and produced as a labour of love, and that love—for the countryside and for the people and their traditions—is reflected in every foot of the film'. David Thomson also notes The Archers' 'cheeky wit', 'irreverence in days of [war] rationing', and 'superb sense of craft collaboration'. (See Thomson 2012, 187.)

² All citations from the film taken from the Criterion Collection edition. *I Know Where I'm Going!*, Dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, Perf. Wendy Hiller and Roger Livesey (The Archers, 1945).

³ See the British Film Institute's recent article on *IKWIG*'s 70th anniversary—the film was released in theatres on November 16th, 1945—which mentions the 'unfashionable' gin and Dubonnet cocktail that Joan orders in the racy nightclub where she meets her father to tell him about her engagement. (See Morris, N. 2015.)

⁴ For more on total war and The Archers, see Kent Puckett, K. 2008.

⁵ 'As the dress magically vanishes, leaving only this empty emblem of the shining world of visual attraction, the covering becomes a surface onto which desires a projected. A literal "dream screen", this shiny surface remains superimposed over most of the images of the dream sequence.' (See Gunning 2010, 100.)

⁶ 'Cinema Projection from its origins to the 1940s,' www.projectionscreen.net, online, accessed Tuesday, July 1, 2014.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁸ A wonderful example of this disjuncture or discordance comes to close-viewers of *Citizen Kane*, who might recognise in the film's sequences of rear projection stock footage taken from *Godzilla*.

⁹ Mulvey continues: 'This paradoxical, impossible space, detached from either an approximation to reality or the verisimilitude of fiction, allows the audience to see the dream space of the cinema. But rear projection renders the dream uncertain: the image of a cinematic sublime depends on a mechanism that is fascinating because of, not in spite of, its clumsy visibility'.

¹⁰ Quoted in Paul Byrne 2005. See also *I Know Where I'm Going! Revisited*. Dir. Mark Cousins, Perf. Ian Christie, Petula Clark, Mark Cousins (BBC, 1994).

¹¹ Quoted from 'Roger's stand-in in *IKWIG*', The Powell and Pressburger Pages, http://www.powell-pressburger.org/Reviews/45_IKWIG/StandIn.html, accessed Tuesday, July 1, 2014. See also Powell, *A Life in Movies: An Autobiography*, p. 476.

¹² Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).