The Queen has two bodies: amateur film, civic culture and the rehearsal of monarchy

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'Well, this is grand!' said Alice. 'I never expected I should be Queen so soon – and I'll tell you what it is, your Majesty', she went on in a severe tone (she was always rather fond of scolding herself), 'it'll never do for you to be lolling about on the grass like that! Queens have to be dignified you know!'¹

This chapter will explore a range of amateur rather than professional film production: in this context, 'amateur film' serves as a broad category which includes a diverse number of films made by individual hobbyists, cine clubs and the more commercially minded directors of various 'local topicals'.² While the majority of amateur films (as home movies) are essentially private, featuring people and events emerging from the domestic context of the filmmaker (such as a birthday party, a christening or a holiday) there are many others made by non-professionals that concentrate on accessible, predictable and explicitly public events. In the British context, many of these public events are civic festivals and gala days, or royal visits to cities, schools and large sporting competitions. In the context of an anthology exploring the representation of the British monarchy on screen, the coincidence of these symbolic performances of monarchy in amateur film is particularly interesting. In the argument that follows, the amateur filmmaker's capturing of the real monarchy, as in the representatives of the British Crown, or the fabricated monarchy, as in the gala queen or princess, provide a fascinating comparative case study. Of particular interest is the role of the child who will be seen to have a central – if surprisingly ambiguous – function, with his or her presence both confirming and satirising the institution of the monarchy. In the looking-glass world invented by Lewis Carroll, the little girl Alice becomes queen and, as we shall discover, amateur films provide many similar instances where children function as a mirror or temporary surrogate for royalty.

The apparent preoccupation of amateur filmmakers with versions of monarchy is partly determined by the accessibility of the subject matter for the opportunistic camera operator. Yet they are also pervasive because these films have met with the needs and fascinations of the archivist and historian. From the extensive, diverse and often bewilderingly mundane range of amateur cinema, a specific value or interest can be assigned to a film when it records something (intentionally or unintentionally) that provides access to 'history', whether this is a ritual repeated over many years, or a photographic record of a known historical figure. There are therefore many real and fabricated queens in amateur film collections across the UK. Some of the earliest films held by the Scottish Screen Archive (SSA), for instance, record either actual monarchy (such as the *Duke of York visits Mavor and Coulson Limited: 12th October 1932*, bw/silent, 4.25 minutes) or they depict public rituals in which monarchy is faked or performed by the community (as in the many films recording the Bo'Ness Children's Fair Festival, including *Bo'Ness Public School: Queen Anne Petrie* (1923, bw/silent, 55 minutes).³ While these kinds of film are pervasive across the UK, this chapter is particularly concerned with the Scottish context of the films under discussion, incidentally exposing the complexity of the relationship of Scottish communities to the British monarchy and their imagining of a coherent civic history.

GLASGOW WELCOMES THE QUEEN

This film – 1953, colour/silent, 14.41 minutes – is entirely typical of the work of advanced amateurs such as the Scottish Association of Amateur Cinematographers, who are funded, in this instance, by the Scottish Film Council.⁴ The film features a young Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, on a post-coronation civic visit to Glasgow and is one of a number of similar films grouped together as *Scotland Salutes the Queen*. The film begins with the titles on a colourful tartan background, suggesting that George Square (the main public square in Glasgow, directly in front of the impressive buildings of the City Chambers) is 'transformed'. Certainly, there are many banners and flowers to be seen, and later in the sequence it is clear that an impressive crowd has gathered. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrive in an open-top car. The Queen is dressed conservatively, if fashionably, in a dark swing coat and small white hat, with white gloves and white shoes. Unlike many of the city dignitaries she meets, who are wearing long, dark ceremonial gowns decorated with gold brocade and white fur, the Queen is not wearing anything

that speaks specifically of her royal status, such as a crown or a more formal gown. The smaller numbers of women who are directly introduced to the Queen wear – like the Queen herself – smart coats or dresses, hats and gloves. About 50 metres from the Queen, policemen, some on horses, struggle to contain the surges of the crowd in the Square. The Queen then inspects a line-up of soldiers in formal dress – a small group of Scots Guards – who are wearing red military jackets and bearskin hats. Accompanied by an officer, she walks briskly up and down the lines of soldiers, as photographers hover at the end of the lines themselves. There is a clear distinction between people who come close to the Queen and those who are on the fringes of the event. Individuals or groups of people who are directly introduced or who are inspected by the Queen mirror her posture and attire, act stiffly and dress formally. In contrast, other individuals, such as the photographers and crowd members, are dressed informally and are much more relaxed and active in their behaviour. For instance, the film shows the photographers running around the royal grouping for a better shot, and there are many sequences in which individuals in the crowd chat to each other, peer over each other's shoulders, look at the camera or generally shuffle their feet, shoving each other and excitedly waving at the royal party.

For someone like myself – a British citizen who has grown up in the UK – the posture of the Queen, the behaviour and the dress of the dignitaries and onlookers seems entirely conventional, although there is an interest in seeing a younger Queen betray, at this early point in her reign, a stiffness matched with a manner that is both alert and brisk. This very individual performance of dignity has remained consistent and was still visible in the many televised news items featuring the Queen's royal visits and openings during the celebrations for her Diamond Jubilee in 2012, almost sixty years after this film was made. The reason for detailing this particular sequence, however, is to note how closely it follows the model that Ilse Hayden has identified in her anthropological study of the British royal family, in which she suggests that in these kinds of civic encounters, the Queen must balance precariously between appearing ordinary (accessible) and extraordinary (royalty).⁵ She suggests, 'Much of the appeal of the Queen as a symbol derives from her personhood, but the messiness of being a person must not be allowed to intrude upon the dignity of the institution of Queenship.'⁶ The Queen's peculiar status – as both person and symbol – is related to kingship (or, here, queenship) as an institution, as well as a biological inheritance that must be indelibly tied to the actual body of her person. As Joseph Roach suggests, in his historical study of processions, rituals

and other civic performance, this kind of balancing act is derived from, and a manifestation of,

the legal fiction that the king had not one but two bodies – *the body natural* and *the body politic* – [which] developed out of medieval Christology ... and into an increasingly pragmatic and secular principle of sovereign succession and legal continuity.⁷

Since in these events the Queen is not costumed to display her extraordinary qualities and, as Hayden suggests, since she appears superficially like any other ‘upper-middle-class matron’,⁸ she is required to signal her uniqueness and her institutional status through her posture and behaviour, which manifest as ‘dignity’. Indeed, as Hayden comments, referring specifically to Elizabeth II, ‘Her dignity, deriving in part from the almost suprahuman control of that body, is more impressive than if she were made of cast iron.’⁹

Equally important is the manner in which those physically closest to the Queen (her consort, her ladies-in-waiting and the various civic officials and soldiers she meets) conform to an explicit choreography. The men bow, the women curtsy and the soldiers stand rigidly to attention or salute. In a situation such as this event – where there is evidently huge general public interest – onlookers act as if the Queen, her immediate retinue and those she meets and greets all operate behind a theatrical ‘fourth wall’ in which the royal party’s interactions with a limited number of privileged individuals are clearly staged and are ‘to be looked at’. The work of the policemen is surely to establish this boundary. The significance and rather peculiar character of this fourth wall becomes even more evident in the following section of the film in which the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh visit the Scottish Veterans’ Garden City Cottages at Ralston near Glasgow.

In this sequence, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrive again in a large open-top car. The filmmaker is clearly positioned more closely to events than in the previous sequence and would appear to be just over the other side of the street from the royal party, so that the Queen is presented at a more intimate distance than before, through a series of mid- to long shots. The more ad hoc nature of the choreography at this smaller scale event means that the Queen herself is occasionally blocked from view as one or more dignitaries take their place alongside her. From this initial position, the filmmaker attempts to pan the camera to follow the royal party as they make their way down the street. Edits in the final film – there is a notable insertion of a sequence of children waving flags excitedly – suggest that additional sequences were captured by another camera

operator (or at a different time by the same filmmaker) and were used to bridge breaks in continuity as the filmmaker (or filmmakers) tried to keep up with the royal party as they made their journey down the street. Along the street, small groups of people stand on the pavement in front of low garden walls: these people are formally dressed. Directly behind these garden walls are other groups of people who are dressed much more informally. The distinction between the two groupings of individuals – behind or in front of the walls – is clear: those people who are presumably standing in their own front gardens (and behind the walls) are not presented to the Queen directly. Those people who are situated in front of the walls – and who are perhaps less likely to be actually resident in the street – are lined up to bow and curtsy to the Queen, who pauses to speak briefly to each of them in turn. The men are in smart suits, some wearing the chains of civic office, the women wear conservative formal coats and both the men and women wear hats. In contrast, the people standing in their gardens are much more informally dressed: they do not wear hats and several of the women appear to have stepped directly away from their work as they are wearing informal ‘house coats’ (thin cotton pinafores, often with a floral design, characteristically worn by housewives in the 1950s). These individuals do not greet the Queen directly and she does not appear to make eye contact with them. As she proceeds down the street the number of spectators becomes larger and the distinction between being in front or behind the wall begins to erode, and here the Queen no longer stops to greet anyone specifically, although she seemingly acknowledges the onlookers’ presence with smiles and a slight lowering of her head.

This sequence therefore repeats the careful choreography of the royal visit, where a tangible, if often invisible boundary is established between the Queen and the unselected majority who attend. In the earlier sequence in George Square, this boundary was established by the work of the police. In this later sequence, this boundary is initially realised by low brick walls that separate the majority of spectators from the privileged few who actually get to meet the Queen. As the cameras capture the Queen’s progress, the impression is of a conveyor belt (the Queen works her way in a straight line greeting people one after the other) but her close proximity to the onlookers also provides an unusual composition in which the on-stage of the royal visit – the meeting and greeting, the bowing and curtsying – is nearly undermined by the visibility of the off-stage, where the spectators talk to one another, take photographs, wave their hankies, smoke and fidget at a distance of only 2 or 3 metres from the Queen as she passes by.

Despite this unusual capture or inclusion of the off-stage activities, the event as pictured is entirely as would be expected from a royal visit and there is no anxiety or apparent confusion manifested either by the Queen or by the spectators as to how they should behave. However, filmed in a way that exposes the clumsiness and artificiality of the formal choreography, it also appears rather ridiculous, a fragile dance of *politesse* sustained almost entirely by convention and the performance of the Queen herself – something that becomes much more marked toward the end of her journey down the street. Indeed, as the superiority and special status of the Queen is not manifest in her dress or appearance, or through other expressions of power, her position might seem to be precarious.¹⁰

However, the film incorporates another familiar encounter commonly orchestrated to prop up the etiquette required by this kind of occasion. At a point that appears to be almost half-way down the street, the Queen is approached by a little girl, dressed in a white lacy dress, white shoes and socks, with a large white bow in her hair, holding a formal bouquet of pink roses. Introduced to the Queen, the little girl curtsies and presents her with the flowers. The Queen bows slightly (graciously) to receive them, at which point, the little girl curtsies again. The surrounding spectators applaud and cheer. The Queen – as recipient of the gift – should be indebted to the giver.¹¹ Yet, as Hayden suggests, as in this and many other royal visits, the Queen ‘gives nothing’ but her presence, yet apparently remains undiminished by this refusal to conform to a ‘gift economy’.¹²

The apparently unproblematic quality of this refusal suggests that the role of the child within this banal encounter may be significant. The giving child, here appearing as an idealised, mute, diminutive other, is clearly not a threat to the status of the Queen, specifically, to Her Majesty. It seems plausible to suggest, as Hayden does, that this child or any child will not be a threat because they are always less powerful than any adult they meet. Despite the twentieth century’s obsession and anxiety concerning the importance of childhood and the continuing idealisation of the child since the Romantic period, politically, socially and even biologically, children (since they are generally small, inarticulate, without rights, lacking money or physical strength) occupy the lowest or most deviant social and cultural status in Western culture of any other living being aside from non-human animals.¹³ The child’s symbolic gift giving thus serves to reinforce rather than undermine the Queen’s natural (biological and institutional) superiority. As Hayden suggests:

The few pictures that I have seen that contrast the socially superior (i.e. the similarly attired Queen, royal retinue and hosts) with the socially inferior (i.e. the contrastingly attired rank and file) involve children. On these occasions,

the privileged individuals can be shown in proximity to the Queen because the distinctions between the *hoi ogloi* and the *hoi polloi* would not be easily recognised as those of class. Rather, they appear to be the difference of child and adult. Children are so deviant that all adults outrank them.¹⁴

The child's deviancy and inferiority mirrors and bolsters the extraordinary and superior status of the Queen herself. In this film, in terms of their composition, child and monarch present an inverted symmetry: the adult Queen in a long, dark coat, performing graciousness and dignity despite the intense scrutiny of the on-looking crowd; the little girl dressed all in white, petite, similarly suppressing any possible exuberance or inappropriate body language, rigidly repeating her formal curtsy to the acclaim of an appreciative audience. Primped, prettified and obedient, the little girl is performing a version of childhood in the same way that the Queen performs a version of monarchy. They are individuals but also representatives of highly visible institutions or mythologies. As captured on this film and in many similar encounters, the child and the Queen have real bodies while, at the same time, they function as if they were inanimate emblems, sites for the projection of history and memory, acting as screen and mirror for social convention and hierarchy. As such, although Hayden here refers only to the monarchy, she might also be referring to the child:

They are both persons and symbols; and because they are persons they cannot be used as can inanimate symbols. But this intractableness does not distract from their symbolism. It intensifies it, for the power of symbols emanates from their ability to reconcile the irreconcilable.¹⁵

In the following section I want to further explore the symbolic aspect of the monarchy and the similarly two-bodied aspect of the child by addressing a number of amateur films in which children – mostly young adolescent girls – become queens.

DUMFRIES GUID NYCHBURRIS DAY: THE INSTALLATION OF THE
'QUEEN OF THE SOUTH'

Dumfries is to celebrate its Guid Nychburris Festival on Friday, 22nd July and Saturday, 23rd July, when the programme will include the riding of the marches, a procession and pageant representative of historical incidents and personages, a pageant of the seasons by school children, and prizewinners of

sports and horse racing. There has been a generous expenditure of money to ensure the success of the festival and between 700 and 800 people will participate in the procession and pageant.¹⁶

In the films of Dumfries Guid Nychburris Day, the living representatives of the British monarchy are absent. Instead the films capture a series of repeated and fictional coronations, civic processions and make-believe queens. Although there are many similar events across Scotland and there are many films capturing festivals and gala princesses over a long period of time (notably perhaps the previously cited Bo'Ness films), here I concentrate on the films held by the SSA depicting the Dumfries 'Guid Nychburris Day' as an entirely fabricated civic festival that has been filmed almost from its first inception – in 1932 – and which is still running today.¹⁷ One of the earliest films the SSA holds picturing the festival is *Dumfries Guid Nychburris Day: Riding of the Marches and Pageant* (1933, director unknown, sponsored by the ABC cinema, black and white/silent, 13.46 minutes). As the credits for the film suggest, it is a good example of what is now termed a 'local topical' – a film sponsored by a local cinema recording something of apparently intense local and historic significance but not co-incidentally also capturing many local individuals, including those participating in the ceremony and many others who feature as spectators to the event itself.

This film, like others of its type, features several long sequences in which the camera pans across gathered crowds. It was clearly made with the explicit ambition of encouraging people to attend its exhibition at their local cinema, since having been filmed as part of the crowd they might hope to see themselves on the big screen. Indeed, in one sequence, a man can be seen handing out leaflets to a crowd, who are waiting for the 'Queen of the South' (the festival's queen) and her retinue to arrive. The man wears a long overcoat advertising the fact that the 'Pageant film' can be seen in the Regal Cinema. Not only is this a rather neat self-reflexive image for the film historian (the film has incorporated its own promotional intent which will then inevitably be rescreened as part of the final product) it also confirms there are directly commercial motivations as well as mythical/historical conceits that underpin the festival. Indeed, later films of the festival, from the early 1950s, include parades of lorries from a number of local businesses, more or less imaginatively dressed as carnival floats, further confirming the festival's commercial importance as opposed to its apparent historic significance for the town. In relation to my previous argument, the focus on the crowd suggests that in this film the conventions of recording an actual royal visit or event have been subverted. Here the off-stage activities and those

22 The crowning of the 'Queen of the South' on Guid Nychburris Day 1952 in Dumfries, Scotland.

individuals behind the fourth wall are not captured *accidentally* while the filmmaker is attempting to capture the significant figures in the foreground: rather, the spectators, as much as the fabricated queens, *are* there 'to be looked at', a fact which they seem (un)comfortably aware of, as many of the crowd members present self-conscious smiles, or wave and point at the camera.

In her study of a similar Scottish Borders festival – the Peebles Beltane Festival – Susan J. Smith notes that this kind of event should not be seen as akin to the carnival, which in the famous study by Bakhtin is seen as an opportunity for resistance.¹⁸ 'Rather than providing a programme of confrontation and change, it seems akin to those elements of the Medieval and Renaissance Festival which represent through procession, competition and performance, a ritual of stability and continuity for an old order.'¹⁹

To further reiterate the conservative and law-abiding aspects of the festival it can be noted that 'Guid Nychburris' can be interpreted as 'good citizens', implying that the community is being celebrated as both civilised and 'neighbourly'. Like the Beltane festival that Smith describes, Guid Nychburris is held in the summer months (June or July) but in this instance, in Dumfries, a small town in Galloway near the border between England and Scotland.²⁰ The day itself – now part of a

week-long festival – was conceived by the town's librarian, G. W. Shirley – who also penned the festival song 'Queen of the South'. Primarily celebrating the town becoming a Royal Burgh (in 1186 under the aegis of the Scottish king, Robert III), the events incorporated into the festival include the 'Riding of the Marches', a reading of the declaration, the crowning of the Queen of the South, the singing of the song and various ceremonial parades around the town, as well as a ball.²¹

Smith suggests that the centrality of the coronation of a 'virgin' queen in these festivals testifies to the sense of security attained when people 'reaffirm the rightness of the moral rules by which they live or feel they ought to live' in a society 'held together by its internal agreement about the sacredness of certain fundamental moral standards'.²² The 'Queen of the South' as a title or as a position has no historical basis, although its legitimacy may appear rather confusingly confirmed by the existence of the local football team, Queen of the South, a name derived from a poem by local poet David Dunbar (1828–73) which pronounces the town of Dumfries 'Queen of the South'. It is entirely likely that Shirley adopted the title for his festival queen for the same reason, and in that sense this ceremonial queen fulfils a key function of perhaps any monarch, which is to represent the both the land (here the town) and the community. She also symbolises the ambition of the festival itself, which 'is the moment which secures the attachment of local history, shared meanings and common aspirations to a bounded space, through a pastiche of ritual formality and festive frivolity'.²³

As Smith indicates, the employment of a young girl to fulfil this role possibly represents the community's desire to imply and uphold a particular moral order and to establish a strictly gendered choreography in which the queen is generally passive, surrounded and supported by men, including the 'cornet', the (usually young) man elected to lead the 'Riding of the Marches'. The queen's elaborate dress is, unlike the conservative but contemporary wardrobe of the actual Queen in the previous films, closer in appearance to the ceremonial dress of royalty, and is therefore a mish-mash of different periods and fabrics. Notably however, as seen in the films, there is a distinct shift from the earlier mode of dress in the 1930s and the 1950s films, where the relatively simple medieval style of the earlier queens is later replaced by a much more elaborate (and obviously uncomfortable) Tudor look, including a fixed collar, a corset and wide skirts, presumably in keeping with the emerging and popular conception of a new 'Elizabethan Age' with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

The crowning and ceremonial function of the Queen of the South is therefore much like Alice's own ascension: at once obvious, uncomfortable and surprisingly

complicated at the same time. In Lewis Carroll's fantasy, Alice moves – in accordance with the rules of a game that she seems largely to be unaware of – across a chess-board and is finally crowned queen once she reaches the right square; in the festival and films, the close association between the Queen of the South and her territory (whose boundaries, like the chess squares in Alice's world, are carefully policed) reveals that this crown is also secured as much by geography as by biology. Yet, like Alice's, this 'queenliness' is also produced through the performance of dignity. Among the most charming and inadvertently comical aspects of these films are the different ways in which the various queens manage their posture, the weight of the crown, the length of their dress and the attention of the crowds and camera. In one particular sequence from the 1952 film, the queen arrives – in what would seem to be a further extension and elaboration of the ceremony – by boat.²⁴ She then proceeds carefully up the street with an elderly gentleman accompanying her. As they walk together, her hand is held by this gentleman at a ridiculously awkward angle, with her arm tilted upwards and across her body, clearly making her progress even more difficult. It is in moments such as this that terms such as grace and poise in relation to the performance of monarchy are revealed as necessary skills and not just window-dressing, since the amateurish aspects of the choreography recorded here reiterate and unintentionally deride the elaborate *politesse* that we have seen is essential to the maintenance of royalty in public.

At the end of *her* journey Alice discovers, much to her dismay, that she has to contend with two queens at once, as both the Red Queen and the White Queen tire of teaching manners or playing riddles and fall asleep. Alice remarks to herself, 'I don't think it ever happened before, that anyone had to take care of two Queens asleep at once! No, not in all the History of England – it couldn't, you know, because there never was more than one Queen at a time.'²⁵ The Queen of the South generates similar tensions – most obviously in the 1952 film. While we see the young Queen of the South being crowned, elsewhere in the film there is another queen depicted – sitting on a throne – on one of the carnival lorries with a large sign on the front proclaiming 'Elizabeth is Queen' – a clear reference to the new (but not yet crowned) Elizabeth II. She is not present of course, but her presence is implied. So in a sense the 1952 film contains three queens – the proudly local Queen of the South; a proxy for Queen Elizabeth II; and the monarch herself, implied but held just out of frame. At one and the same time, therefore, the film contains performances of loyalty to the locality and a performance of loyalty to the (British) Crown. In essence the film allows

us to ask which queen is the real queen or to suppose (like Alice), that anyone can be a queen if they are in the right place at the right time. What the films reveal about the festival and thus about its central figure are the mixed motivations and contested histories that are manifest in the marginalised Borders cultural identity. As Smith suggests, for instance, in relation to Beltane, 'The Borders are neither Highland nor Lowland in character, and they are spatially marginal to, and socially marginalised by, both the "high" cultural image of Edinburgh ... and (to a lesser extent) the revival of an urban enterprise culture in Glasgow.'²⁶

In line with Smith's argument, the conflation of histories in the Guid Nychburris festival reflects the position of Dumfries as a Border town. Dumfries is in Scotland but it is not necessarily defined by the dominant signifiers of Scottishness. In itself the title the 'Queen of the South' is rather indeterminate: it neither refers directly to the Queen of Scotland or the Queen of England but it could be either. At the same time the queen (and the body and performance of the costumed young girl) are used to represent an intensely local and closely bounded space that as a community is actually quite incoherent and porous – in terms of the border between Scotland and England, in terms of its actual historical legacy and increasingly, as made evident in the films, through the community's exposure to other cultural myths and narratives relayed through broadcast media such as television. Although at least one of the Guid Nychburris films makes specific reference to Robert the Bruce and the festival itself celebrates the award of Burgh status to the town from another Scottish king, and the Riding of the Marches is a wider Scottish tradition, other elements in the festival draw on associations and popular terms of reference that have broader and less specifically Scottish characteristics. One way in which this distinction from the Highlands and Central Belt tradition of Scottishness can be seen, for instance, is in the conspicuous absence of tartan in the dress of any of the participants in the festival; as a material strongly associated with Scottish aristocracy and the British monarchy's association with Scotland, its absence is especially significant since, as we have seen, it features prominently in the amateur record of the actual monarch's visit to Glasgow in 1953.

Other less localised and non-Scottish associations are also evident in the earlier films, showing many of the town's children involved in the celebrations. In these films (for example the film from 1934) there are extensive scenes of boys and girls dancing around maypoles and performing practised routines dressed as nymphs, pirates and birds. In the later films from the 1950s, these larger-scale displays seem to be less frequent and the fancy dress has become competitive,

with children dressed up as mythical characters and contemporary celebrities – including Elizabeth II, Little Bo Peep, Edmund Hillary and a little boy dressed (with sign attached) as Gilbert Harding's 'Char Lady'.²⁷ In these charades, parades and competitions, the community would appear to acknowledge and celebrate its universal attributes (the changing of the seasons and representation of fantastic figures) and equally its modernity as the children's appearance makes knowing references to the wider contemporary popular culture available through the mass media.

Dressing-up is familiar practice occurring in many civic occasions, village fêtes and in school-sponsored events across the United Kingdom. Captured on film, however, and across so many films – in terms of their historical and geographic spread – the motivation for this dressing-up of children is cumulatively more peculiar and more multi-layered in its effect than it at might first appear. In the films many of the children appear bewildered and bedraggled – particularly when it rains, as it so often does in the summer in Scotland – and they very often appear bored. Hunched together in the downpour during straggling parades, milling about in halls, awkwardly controlling their elaborate dresses in the wind, or desperately clasping the more ambitious costumes together, the children in these films frequently stare at the camera, fidget and sometimes cry. As is frequently an issue in the presentation and performance of children on film, their appearance prompts questions about consent, agency and intention: simply put, while it is evident that some children appear delighted to take part, other children's behaviour makes the viewer conscious that in many instances there may have been considerable coercion involved.

The purpose of the dressing-up in these films must surely be mixed since, while it may allow the child to take part in a celebration with their peers, it may also be to win the competition, or serve as an opportunity for the knowing parent to make a contemporary 'in-joke'. In this sense, then, the child's appearance is not about restoring or reaffirming a coherent sense of Scottishness or a straightforward celebration of the status quo. Costumed as royalty or as celebrity, the appearance of children in these events and later on film reflects their potential to operate or act as an effigy. As Joseph Roach has explained, 'effigy' implies several things at once:

Normal usage employs the word *effigy* as a noun meaning a sculpted or pictured likeness. More particularly it can imply a crudely fabricated image of a person, commonly one that is destroyed in his or her stead, as in hanging or

burning in *effigy*. When *effigy* appears as a verb, though that usage is rare, it means to evoke an absence, to body something forth, especially something from a distant past (*OED*).²⁸

By dressing up their children, adults may oblige the child to fulfil one aspect of the effigy, presenting a ‘crude likeness’ of celebrities or royalty. However, as the films demonstrate, the child’s appearance also speaks to the wider resonance of the effigy, in which the child is used both as a potentially vulnerable surrogate for some other (and usually powerful) person and also to ‘body something forth’. A child performing the monarch through events such as the mock coronation reflects a tradition that is perhaps more ancient than many other aspects of the festival itself, as child performers dressed as nobility and monarchs are known to have appeared in medieval and early modern pageants, such as the Chester Midsummer Show in the decades before and after 1600.²⁹ In the Scottish context there is a similar history of child actors in early modern plays and pageants, with the ambiguous nature of the child’s presence allowing the expression, if not necessarily resolution, of different communities’ mixed emotions and frustration about their shared local history and the authority of the various monarchs they were subject to. As Meredith T. McMunn suggests, in her study of child performers in early Scottish drama and ceremony:

The symbolism of these child characters – innocence or its opposite, satire made more trenchant by the use of youths in roles of respect, such as kings, popes, or priests, reinforced the message of the speeches and dialogues. Thus, the child who spoke such parts helped to bring together the meaning of the pageant.³⁰

In the twentieth-century pageants and parades that these films depict, we can see that this tradition continues and that the children operate as

performed effigies – those fabricated from human bodies and the associations they evoke – provid[ing] communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through specially nominated mediums or surrogates: among them, actors, dancers, priests, street maskers, statesmen, celebrities, freaks, children, and especially, by virtue of an intense but unsurprising paradox, corpses.³¹

I am not suggesting that the representation of the child as a more ghastly version of effigy was the (mostly unknown) filmmakers’ intent in picturing Guid Nychburris (or other festivals). Rather, it is an effect generated or amplified by the amateur quality of the filming (which features odd compositions, abrupt edits and poorly constructed narratives) along with the frequent lack of sound, the stilted

nature of the performers and the uncontrolled intervention of the weather, which accumulate to disrupt the viewer's understanding and unconscious acceptance of the ordinary conventions of this kind of civic event. The uncanny or rather gruesome alliance to which Roach refers – between the child figure in fancy dress and the corpse, or between the freak and the child – is also a very familiar trope in professionally executed fictional and documentary films, and its naive execution here is haunted by these other modes of representing children on film. In their capturing of the contingent contexts for the event (the wind, the rain, the boredom and fidgeting of children and crowds) amateur films may be seen to undermine the more conservative ambitions that otherwise motivate these civic festivals and expose, via their awkward representation and in the capturing of its amateur choreography, the peculiar mechanics and consensual suspension of disbelief that elsewhere serve to maintain and sustain the illusion of royalty. The use of the child or young adolescent girl as a substitute for the monarch may not seem problematic – since it is so common, so 'past remarkable'. Yet the messiness of the child's body and the charming inadequacy of the child performer frequently upset the illusion, belittling the institution they seek to promote.

CONCLUSION

The child and the monarch and the child *as* the monarch perform specific roles in civic rituals. While the child's presence may appear to either bolster or celebrate the institution of the monarchy, amateur films frequently capture a less certain or coherent display and portray a more ambivalent investment in that authority. What these amateur films specifically capture – indeed, what the filmmakers seem drawn to again and again – is the ambiguity of the animated child. Animated in that they are lively, vigorous, fidgety; animated too in that are akin to marionettes, puppets, motivated not from within but under the instruction of their parents or teachers. These animated children expose a tension between repression and order (doing as they're told, being civilised, successfully reproducing the past and the future of the community) and tension and disruption (the slippages in their performances, the excess of their real bodies as they are exposed to the vagaries of the climate, reminding us of their potential to satirise as well as to exemplify 'noble' qualities such as innocence and virtue).

The films themselves generate similar tensions. This is because as amateur films they are, in one sense, 'copies' – the amateur filmmaker is standing in for the professional news camera operator for the royal visit; in the recording of a

civic festival, the filmmaker records an invented civic ceremony as if it were a significant and coherent historical event when in fact it is no more than a fabrication of this kind of ritual. In their focus on the child – who may appear as mirror or surrogate for the monarch – the films, of course, adhere to the tradition of using children as lively, animated subjects both for film and in live performance. What they can't quite contain, however, is the way in which the child's presence reflects and exposes the precarious being of the monarch herself, who, like the child, has not one, but two bodies.

NOTES

- 1 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (London: Puffin Books, 2010) p. 134.
- 2 See for instance Snowden Becker's short intervention for *In Media Res*, 'I love a parade', mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2012/10/17/i-love-parade, and Andrew Prescott, 'We had fine banners: street processions in the Mitchell and Kenyon Films', in Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell (eds), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI, 2004).
- 3 More details of these films, including clips and selected full-length films – including many of the Bo'Ness Fair Days – can be accessed via the Scottish Screen Archive's online catalogue, ssa.nls.uk.
- 4 The actual director of the film is uncertain as it is likely that there were various filmmakers involved. The film and further details as to its content and origins can be accessed via the SSA website.
- 5 This distinction between ordinary/extraordinary mirrors the work of the film star as described by Richard Dyer in his book *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979).
- 6 Ilse Hayden, *Symbol and Privilege: The Ritual Context of British Royalty* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), p. 10.
- 7 Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 38. Roach is referring to the concept originally identified by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).
- 8 Hayden, *Symbol and Privilege*, p. 7.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 10 In fact the Queen is accompanied by an older man in uniform who carries a ceremonial sword. Nonetheless, she herself has no evident weaponry on her person and carries only a handbag.
- 11 See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1990).
- 12 Hayden, *Symbol and Privilege*, p. 103.
- 13 See Chris Jenks, *Childhood* (London: Routledge, 2005).
- 14 Hayden, *Symbol and Privilege*, p. 101.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 77–8.

- 16 *Scotsman* (13 July 1932), p. 13.
- 17 See the website guidnychburris.co.uk/output/home.asp and video of the festival in 2013 on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=162n4Z8mE_0.
- 18 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1965).
- 19 Susan J. Smith, 'Bounding the Borders: claiming space and making place in rural Scotland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18:3 (1993), p. 295.
- 20 In a letter to the *Scotsman* (21 January 1932), p. 9, 'G.W.S' (presumably G. W. Shirley) writes: 'There is a sound historical basis for the name. We now use the word neighbor to denote a person living next door, but in the 16th Century it meant citizen, or fellow townsman.'
- 21 'Riding of the Marches', usually conducted on horseback, refers to a ritual re-enactment of the guarding and marking of the boundaries of the royal burgh from neighbouring landowners, that was conducted by the Provost, Baillies, Burgesses and others in the town.
- 22 Smith, 'Bounding the Borders', p. 295.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 293.
- 24 The SSA catalogue suggests that the date for this film (cat. no.: 0878) is provisionally 1951; however, a reference in the film, 'Elizabeth is Queen', would seem to suggest that in fact it was 1952 – George VI, Elizabeth II's father died on 6 February 1952, so while she was not crowned until 1953, Elizabeth was Queen by the summer of 1952.
- 25 Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, p. 143.
- 26 Smith, 'Bounding the Borders', p. 301.
- 27 Though from New Zealand Edmund Hillary was a member of the British expedition that reached the summit of Mount Everest in 1953. Gilbert Harding was a well-known panellist on British television in the 1950s, known as the 'rudest man in Britain'. The reference to his 'char' is obscure but this may have been an oblique reference to the fact that Harding – a closet homosexual during a period when male homosexuality was still illegal in the UK – did not appear to have other women, aside from his cleaning-lady, in his life.
- 28 Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 36.
- 29 See, for instance, Susannah Crowder, 'Children, costume and identity in the Chester Midsummer Show', *Early Theatre* 10:1 (2007).
- 30 Meredith T. McMunn, 'Children as actors and audience for Early Scottish drama and ceremony', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 10:1 (1985), p. 23.
- 31 Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 36.

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- Duke of York visits Mavor and Coulson Limited: 12th October 1932* (black and white / silent, 4.25 minutes).
- Dumfries Guid Nychburris Day: Riding of the Marches and Pageant* (Sponsor: ABC Cinema, Dumfries, 1933, black and white / silent, 13.46 minutes).
- Dumfries Guid Nychburris Day* (Sponsor: ABC Cinema, Dumfries, 1934, black and white / silent 8.28 minutes).
- Glasgow Welcomes the Queen* (members of the Scottish Association of Amateur Cinematographers, 1953, colour / silent, 14.41 minutes).
- Guid Nychburris Celebrations* (Sponsor: Lyceum Cinema, Dumfries, 1951* (1952), black and white / silent, 11.20 minutes).
- Guid Nychburris Festival* (Sponsor: Lyceum Cinema, Dumfries, 1956, black and white / silent, 13.04 minutes).