

(Un)Becoming Isabella in Christopher Marlowe /

Derek Jarman's *Edward II*

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1. Interrogating the Image

At about the midpoint of Derek Jarman's 1992 film adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, King Edward's spurned queen Isabella (Tilda Swinton) appears in one of the resplendent evening gowns that are her trademark dress throughout the film. Stunningly beautiful, flawlessly made up and glittering with jewels, she maintains the bland facial expression and cultivated tones.⁽¹⁾ Isabella's glamorous dress and demeanour in this sequence are in striking contrast with the violence of her words as she declares that her husband's "looseness hath betrayed the land to spoil, / And made the channels overflow with blood / Of [his] own people" (*QEII* 124).⁽²⁾ Such startling contradictions between image and word, gesture and discourse, are the keynotes of Swinton's performance throughout the film.

The prevalence of contradiction and disjunction in the representational vocabulary of Jarman's *Edward II* is appropriate, for the film's sources lie in Marlowe's examination of the political contradictions that "make white black and dark night day" (iv.247). Like Jarman's film, Marlowe's playtext imagines a rigidly hierarchical world thrown into chaos. Boasting that his adaptation constitute an "improvement" on the original, Jarman exacerbated this sense of disjunction in *Edward II* by ruthlessly cutting and re-arranging Marlowe's text. The scene in which Isabella appears as I have observed above is typical in this regard. The Queen's harangue in this sequence combines two speeches from Marlowe's *Edward II*: one is Isabella's own, the other is delivered by her supporter and lover, Young Mortimer. In order to splice these speeches together, Jarman cuts the words with which Marlowe's Mortimer interrupts the Queen, "Nay, Madam, if you be a warrior, / You must not grow so passionate in speeches" (xvii.14-15). He also gives

some of Young Mortimer's words to Isabella: "And for the open wrongs and injuries / Edward hath done to us, his Queen, and land, / We come in arms to wreak it all with the sword" (*QEII* 124, *EII* xvii.20-22). In Jarman's film we are given no sense of Isabella as an overly 'passionate' woman. Rather, the shifting of Mortimer's lines to the Queen accentuates the stark contradiction between the cool, elegant artifice of Isabella's public persona and the increasing brutality of the action in which she is implicated. Swinton's performance offers a brilliant interrogation of the void behind the *soignée* image of the society woman.

Jarman described his *Edward II* as primarily "a film of a gay love affair," and the placement of Swinton's coldly heterosexual Isabella within this framework has occasioned a great deal of debate among the film's critics. According to Colin McCabe, the homosexual Edward's (Steven Waddington's) spurning of his queen is mirrored in the homosexual Derek Jarman's refusal of any redeeming factors in Marlowe's representation of Isabella.⁽³⁾ Susan Bennett agrees that the film is "breathtakingly misogynistic."⁽⁴⁾ Kate Chedzgo, on the other hand, views such complaints as resulting from "a confusion of Jarman's critique of what has been called compulsory heterosexuality with an attack on individual heterosexual women [i.e. misogyny]."⁽⁵⁾ Chedzgo argues that "Tilda Swinton's performance as Isabella incarnates an understanding of the simultaneous excess and lack of femininity as it is constructed in a patriarchal culture."⁽⁶⁾ These two interpretations see polar, and the smooth, blank face of Swinton's Isabella offers few clues as to which is the more just.

Then again, the Isabella found in Marlowe's playtext offers no greater ease of interpretation. Critics

have often complained that “it is impossible to decide with any certainty whether . . . Isabella does try to be a loving wife in spite of her husband’s indifference or whether she is a scheming hypocrite throughout irrespective of all sentimental speeches (including a few confessional soliloquies!).”⁷⁾ In this essay, I argue that the disjunctive effect in Marlowe’s representation of Isabella reflects his, and his culture’s, sense of identity as a *process*, constantly fluctuating with the shifting tides of personal and political power relations. Jarman’s *Edward II* may well be called misogynist in comparison with its source, for the film isolates and reifies feminine identity, depicting it not as a process but as a static state of being. However, Jarman’s film joins Marlowe’s play in depicting gender and sexuality as a series of socially imposed roles, but going further in outlining the terrifying results of woman’s entrapment inside these roles. Jarman’s *Edward II* and its source share an intensely bleak vision of social constraints on identity, but they also partake of a faint glimmer of hope that it might yet be possible to “forget” the imprisoned self.

2. The Displacement of a Lady

The first scene of *Edward II* presents the spectator with an equation from which woman is conspicuously absent. The first words of Marlowe’s *Edward II* (and of Jarman’s film) are those of the new-made King Edward’s rapturously hopeful invitation to his beloved favorite, Piers Gaveston: “My father is deceased; come, Gaveston, / And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend” (i.1 – 2). Gaveston responds, “Sweet prince, I come; these, these thy amorous lines / Might have enforced me to have swum from France, / And, like Leander, gasped upon the sand, / So thou wouldst smile and take me in thy arms” (i.6 – 9). Imagining himself as one of the leading (male) protagonists of classical romance, Gaveston tacitly casts King Edward in the feminine role of the welcoming Hero. In the next scene, Edward dissolves even these distinctions between himself and Gaveston, bidding his favorite, “Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee! / Why shouldst thou kneel; knowest thou not who I am? / Thy friend, thy self, another Gaveston!” (i.140 – 42).

Many critics have attempted to determine the

sexual and class transgressions implicit in this last declaration: Are Edward and Gaveston really engaged in what the twentieth century would think of as a ‘homosexual’ relationship? Does such a relationship even exist in the discourse of sexuality of Marlowe’s own era? Many critics have argued that Edward’s declaration of equivalence between himself and Gaveston distresses England’s nobles not so much because of its romantic implications but because it erases the social boundaries between the King and a man Lancaster describes as “base and obscure” (i.100).⁸⁾ What most readers ignore, however, is the similarity between Edward’s mode of describing his relationship with Gaveston and the discourses that surround marriage in a society where, as Edmund Tilney wrote in 1573, the *wife* was expected to make her husband’s face “hir daylie looking glasse.”⁹⁾ Edward makes Gaveston’s face his looking glass and asks his favorite to do the same for him. In the process, he transgresses not only class (and sexual) boundaries but gender boundaries as well. He declares his identity interdependent with Gaveston’s, but the woman to whose existence his masculine identity should be bound — his wife, Isabella — is nowhere in the picture.

Isabella’s first appearance in Marlowe’s *Edward II* makes it clear that her position in this scenario is, in fact, so bewildering as to be well nigh unbearable. As she enters, Young Mortimer (significantly the first character to speak to her) asks, “Madam, whither walks your majesty so fast?” (ii.46). With the titles “Madam” and “your Majesty,” Young Mortimer draws a discursive sketch of Isabella as a married woman and a Queen. Isabella’s response, however, suggests that this traditional picture of wifely identity is fracturing under the pressure of her husband’s love for Gaveston. She tells Mortimer that she is hurrying to “the forest” (a singularly “unqueenly” location), there “To live in grief and baleful discontent” (ii.47 – 48);

For now my lord the King regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps his cheeks and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears;
And when I come he frowns, as who should say,

'Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston.'
(ii.49-54)

Edward's pointed demonstrations of affection for Gaveston exclude Isabella from her given place in a rigidly signifying universe. Suddenly, she is neither maiden, widow, nor (quite) wife.

This displacement is in no way liberating for Isabella. No matter what Edward's looks suggest, the spurned wife is not free to go "whither she will." "Madam, return unto the court again," advises Mortimer (ii.56): like everyone else in the play Isabella is enclosed within a royal court distinguished by its highly evolved and brutal systems of surveillance. Although it is her husband's sexual inclination that have pushed her into the no (wo)man's land where we first encounter her, Isabella's own sexuality is policed all the time, perhaps even more so than Gaveston's. In fact, as Dympna Callaghan notes, the man who has assumed Isabella's place at Edward's side actually "endeavors to control how Isabella is represented."⁽¹⁰⁾ When Edward rejects her, snapping, "Fawn not on me, French strumpet; get thee gone," Isabella responds with a pitiful appeal to her identity as virtuous wife, asking, "On whom but on my husband should I fawn?" (iv.145-146). When Gaveston jumps in and calls Isabella "ungentle Queen" (147) and branding her an adulteress, he effectively deprives her of the aura of nobility that is her last defense against the erosion of her identity as aristocratic and virtuous queen. She is left rudderless, displaced from the self to which she has been schooled. Where her identity has been, now there is only a void.

According to Martin Wiggins, Jarman's film portrays "the Queen and barons as repressed establishment figures" and is "strongly sympathetic to Edward and Gaveston."⁽¹¹⁾ Thomas Cartelli notes Jarman's "indifference to contemporary efforts to reconcile queer and feminist agendas" and quips that, in Jarman's *Edward II*, "as far as women are concerned, it is every man for himself."⁽¹²⁾ It is true that Jarman takes *Edward II* out of the renaissance context (where woman's identity and power depended on her relationships with men) and into the contemporary world (where a "wronged," glamorous figure like the

late Diana wielded a considerable amount of control over her own image). However, the life of the Princess, like a cautionary tale, reminds us that the contemporary woman's sense of self — as well as her power — are still frequently constructed in terms of romantic or marital relationships. Jarman's film seems far from indifferent to the effects the destruction of such relationships can have on feminine identity.

Not one word from Marlowe's play serves to introduce Swinton's Isabella to the spectator in Jarman's film. Rather, as Jarman himself described it, her first appearance is in an entirely silent scene "showing two characters in bed when it's not working out and there's no dialogue."⁽¹³⁾ Swinton, first seen shot in close-up and clad in an alluring negligee, attempts to kiss and caress Waddington's Edward only to be repeatedly rebuffed. Finally, overcome with frustration, Waddington gets out of bed and bangs his hand violently against the wall until the blood flows. The filmmaker's sympathy for Edward's predicament is palpable — presumably one of the reasons why Colin McCabe describes the scene as a "truly chilling" depiction of the King's fateful inability to be aroused by his wife's body.⁽¹⁴⁾

However, McCabe ignores the fact that Jarman has established Edward's all-consuming passion for Gaveston long before Isabella appears. He also ignores the ambiguities that surround Swinton's first appearance in *Edward II*. Responding to McCabe's remarks, Jarman himself evoked Swinton's authority, commenting, "Colin McCabe thinks of it as my misogyny in a way. I'm not certain it is. We discussed this with Tilda . . . I was trying to keep up this psycho-sexual tension all the way through. All this people trapped in a merry-go-round of conflicting emotions."⁽¹⁵⁾ Read in terms of physical action, the sequence allows space for Isabella's "emotions": her vulnerability as she bares her shoulders in an attempt to arouse her husband, her despair as she finally flops down on the bed and turns her face to the wall. Like Marlowe's Queen, Swinton's Isabella first appears as a woman suddenly excluded from the marriage relationship on which her identity depends. Here, however, the resemblance ends. Marlowe's Isabella responds to her rejection with a kind

arguing that Isabella's " 'strength' as a woman lies in refusing the limits of marriage."⁽¹⁹⁾ On the other hand, Dymna Callaghan notes that Isabella merely trades her dependence on Edward for dependence on Mortimer, who silences her at Harwich and later smugly asserts, "The Prince I rule, the Queen do I command" (xxiii.46).⁽²⁰⁾ Judith Weil, meanwhile, argues that Isabella "seems to act without definitive, responsible choice."⁽²¹⁾

While chronic inability to agree is endemic, and indeed essential, among critics, the case of Marlowe's Isabella seems an extreme one. Perhaps the problem lies in critics' insistence on seeking "definitive, responsible choice" in the character at all. Thus, Wiggins remarks that "actors, accustomed to taking their characters on a linear 'journey,' are sometimes perplexed by the discontinuous way in which they behave" in *Edward II*.⁽²²⁾ He argues that, in fact, "[t]hese characters don't change according to internal factors which might provide a clear through-line of psychological development: they are subordinate to the shifting dispositions of power in the broader progression of the action."⁽²³⁾ I suggest that Marlowe represents in Isabella a woman who, having been suddenly made redundant in the signifying system of her world, repeatedly seeks new relationships through which to define herself: Identity itself is a process in continual flux.

The first section of Marlowe's play finds Isabella attempting to cling to her husband as the ordained source of her sense of self. She depicts Edward's will as the source of her actions, her *performances*. She tells the barons:

I am enjoined
To sue unto you all for [Gaveston's] repeal.
This wills my lord, and this must I perform
Or else be banished from his highness' presence.
(iv.199-202)

It is clear that there is a severe disjunction between Edward's wishes and Isabella's, for, as she admits to Lancaster, it is against her will that Gaveston should return (iv.217). On the other hand, the favourite's repeal may also prove a repeal of the King's banishment of his

wife, so, like a good wife, she moulds her actions to conform to his will rather than her own. However, the nobles are disinclined to do anything to please either Edward or Gaveston. Once this becomes clear, Isabella performatively adds, " 'Tis for myself I speak, and not for [Gaveston]" (iv.219). For Young Mortimer's benefit, she de-emphasizes her relationship with Edward and underlines instead the "thou" and "me" of her burgeoning relationship with this rebellious peer: "And therefore, as *thou* lovest and tend'rest *me*, / Be *thou* my advocate unto these peers" (iv.211-212, emphasis mine). As before, Isabella depicts herself as dependent on a man's voice and favour. Already, however, it is becoming clear that Mortimer's is the voice more likely than Edward's to complete the Queen's being and to give her a public role. If Edward has defected to be "another Gaveston," Mortimer will become in a sense "another Isabella," or, as the Queen herself puts it, "Sweet Mortimer, the life of Isabel" (xxi.15).

However, there are a number of complex steps to be taken before this process is complete. Isabella turns to Mortimer only after attempting unsuccessfully to reestablish a rather more conventional relationship of dependence and support between herself and her brother, the King of France (viii.66-68). When this project fails, she leans on Sir John of Hainault and his brother (xv.31-33) before finally cementing her alliance with Young Mortimer. Even the speech in which Isabella refers to Mortimer as her "life" makes it clear that her identity is not dependent in a straightforward or exclusive way on man who is soon her lover, nor does her "strength" lie only in "refusing the limits of marriage."⁽²⁴⁾ Isabella bids Mortimer

Be thou persuaded that I love thee well,
And therefore, so the Prince my son be safe,
Whom I esteem as dear as these mine eyes,
Conclude against his father what thou wilt,
And myself will willingly subscribe. (xxi.15-20)

Whereas before her performance was dependent on Edward's wishes, here Isabella literally gives Edward up to Mortimer, identifying her will with her lover's.

However, she relates her choices to her son's existence and safety: her identity is dependent not only on her relationship with Young Mortimer but also on her role as mother of the next King.

When these two relationships become contradictory and Prince Edward condemns Young Mortimer to death, Isabella even attempts the same rhetorical stratagem with her son as she played with Mortimer when pleading Gaveston's case. She begs, "For *my* sake, sweet son, pity Mortimer" (xxv.55). As before she quietly shifted her allegiance away from her husband toward Mortimer, now she attempts to negate her guilty involvement with Mortimer by emphasizing her relationship with her son, claiming that "for loving *thee* / Is this report raised on poor Isabel" (xxv.74 - 75, emphasis mine). Finally, when the Queen moans, "too long have I lived / Whenas my son thinks to abridge my days" (xxv.83 - 84), Prince Edward rather than Mortimer becomes at once both "the life of Isabel."⁽²⁵⁾

Clearly, Isabella's sense of self — or at least her rhetorical construction of it — depends on a series of relationships which shift according to the fluctuating power dynamics of the play. But is she conscious and calculated about these shifts? Is she really the Machiavel as Anderson describes? Marlowe's Young Mortimer unquestionably becomes more and more the calculating villain, and the playtext gives him multiple soliloquies to delineate his determination to retain power and to "do it cunningly" (xxiii.5). Isabella, on the other hand, never has *one* such soliloquy; nothing in her characterization suggests that her early declarations of love for Edward are *necessarily* false. Rather, Marlowe depicts a woman who, expelled from the relationship which defines her, spends the whole of *Edward II* seeking new relationships which can do the same. In a culture where William Whately could write that "it was the end of [woman's] creation to be an helper," this is hardly surprising.⁽²⁶⁾ In the final scene of Marlowe's *Edward II*, Mortimer is able to go to his death with a defiantly resolute construction of himself as fortune's victim. Isabella, on the other hand, clings to the possibility that she might yet be (in the Pauline formulation) redeemed by childbirth.⁽²⁷⁾

Derek Jarman's "improvement" of *Edward II*, on

the other hand, seems to offer a much clearer case for the interpretation of Isabella as a Machiavel. For one thing, Jarman repeatedly chooses to shift Young Mortimer's lines and actions to the Queen. She, not Mortimer, becomes the leader of the sumptuary police. Always draped in the most conspicuous signs of her gender and class, Swinton's Isabella takes up the bitter complaints about Gaveston's extravagant taste in dress given to Mortimer in Marlowe's text.⁽²⁸⁾ Marlowe only *implies* that the idea of killing Gaveston originates with Isabella (iv.225 - 299), keeping the vital negotiation between Isabella and young Mortimer out of the audience's view. Jarman, on the other hand, is very explicit about this issue. In a masterful sequence, Mortimer's admission that the murder of Gaveston had not until now been "thought upon" (*QEH* 80, from *EII* iv.274) is greeted by a reverse zoom on Isabella's impassive face and the sounds of the nobles applauding her acumen. Over the course of Jarman's *Edward II* Swinton also delivers Mortimer's speech about wrecking Edward's realm with swords, takes on his responsibility for plotting the death of Edward, and actually murders the hapless, vacillating Earl of Kent. Judith Weil argues that Marlowe's Mortimer "eventually . . . achiev[es] the radical — and sub-human — freedom of the Machiavel"; in Jarman's film, Swinton's Isabella gains not only some of Mortimer's lines but also some of his machiavellian quality.⁽²⁹⁾

Certainly, Swinton's Isabella becomes an almost uncanny figure as she is increasingly implicated in the cruelty around her. Thus, for instance, Jarman's film situates Isabella's great shift of allegiance from Edward to Mortimer in a sequence the filmmaker himself described as having "an element of a real horror film."⁽³⁰⁾ As Mortimer walks down a darkened corridor of Jarman's great ghost-palace, Swinton appears as a Gothic heroine: her white dress recalls Wilkie Collins' Anne Catherick and her face is covered by a white veil embroidered here and there with ominous blotches of red. Her identity, usually telegraphed by her lavish costumes, is so far obscured by this bizarre attire that Mortimer starts: "Who's this, the Queen?" (*QEH* 90, from *EII* viii.23). Swinton nestles against Terry's chest

and casts her veil over his head; as she begins to kiss him, the eerie image is of two people tangled together in the woman's spider-like web. Isabella seems less a woman than a beautiful mummy, a strange and malignant spirit, a ghost — all figures associated with the terrors of female sexuality on countless pages, stages and screens.

The association of Isabella with "sub-human" images of female sexuality comes to its climax in Jarman's infamous version of the murder of Kent (Jerome Flynn).³¹ Whereas Marlowe's Isabella allies herself rhetorically with the most powerful available men but remains largely absent from — and possibly ignorant of — their cruelest acts, Swinton's Isabella, wiping Kent's blood from her face, has a bite terrifyingly worse than her bark. Here, her costume of the runway model becomes the costume of the vampire; the glamorous upper class woman is explicitly constructed as a destructive and heartless parasite. Marlowe's Isabella may in some sense be a parasitic figure living off her associations with various men, but by this point Jarman's and Swinton's Isabella is much more: a truly evil force whose viciousness forces even Mortimer to flinch.

Is McCabe right to see this as misogynist? Is Swinton's Isabella any more in control of her performance of evil than Marlowe's Isabella is in control of her series of betrayals? A Machiavel, I would argue, is a cynically performative figure who believes in none of the myths and codes that hold society together but who is cheerfully ready to manipulate them to his or her own ends. Machiavelli's own infamous dictum reminds his putative Prince "to seem merciful, trustworthy, humane, upright and devout, . . . But if it becomes necessary to refrain, you must be prepared to act in the opposite way, and be capable of doing it."³² Swinton's Isabella never exhibits this type of understanding of, or distance from, her public personae.

Thus, when Mortimer (Nigel Terry) stabs Gaveston (Andrew Tierman), Isabella wrests the knife from him as if to perform either her support or her hypocritical criticism of his act, but then freezes in mid-action like her son's battery-operated robot when its power-source sputters out. In this sequence, as throughout Jarman's

film, Swinton is a lone figure. The camera frames her in isolation from those around her. Her face, however, registers no loneliness, remaining smooth and expressionless. She is an automaton, playing out given feminine roles from that of the weepy abandoned wife to that of Dracula's consort. Underneath this elaborate exterior Swinton gives us only the most remote glimpses of anything resembling interiority.

4. The Difference/Similarity Between Gaveston and Isabella

The strange blankness and emptiness of Swinton's Isabella are emphasized by Jarman's use of intercutting during her lone, mournful soliloquy. As Swinton speaks Isabella's resolution, "I must entreat him, I must speak him fair, / And be a means to call home Gaveston" (*QEII* 74, from *EII* iv.183-184), the static close-up of her face is interrupted by an image of Andrew Tiernan's Gaveston crouching on a cliff in the pouring rain, howling. The spectator has already seen this image of Gaveston in isolation and knows it to reflect something of Gaveston's own violent reaction to his banishment from King Edward's court. Instead of providing a sense (which Jarman never gives) of Isabella's interior life, his intercutting here depicts Isabella and Gaveston as contrasting figures, opposing signs: Isabella is impassive and static: while Gaveston is passionate and unpredictable. But is the juxtaposition of Isabella and Gaveston in Jarman's film — or in Marlowe's playtext — really this simple?

At the heart of Jarman's *Edward II*, Andrew Tiernan's Gaveston is an explosive and contradictory force. Simultaneously waiflike and abrasive, vulnerable and contemptuous, he plays out all the dangerous and attractive energy of the figure Marlowe's Mortimer describes as "Proteus, god of shapes" (iv.412). He first appears in an ironically virginal, almost biblical white robe, exulting in King Edward's invitation while John Lynch's Spencer (buttoning unambiguously 'male' clothing) eyes him fearfully. From then onwards, neither his reactions nor his costume are ever predictable. Cartelli remarks that "Tiernan's Gaveston generally keeps the space of lovemaking free of the impulse to travesty that characterizes his other

appearances . . . [where he] variously plays Gaveston as loutish, vicious and demonic.³³ In mint-green pajamas he is quietly rueful, even affectionate, sighing, "'Tis something to be pitied of a King" (*QEII* 62, from *EII* iv.130). In leather jacket and jeans, a rebel with a hopeless cause, he is spat upon by a row of bishops. In a sharp black suit and looking "as if he'd stepped from 'The Krays'" (*QEII* 44), he brutally abuses the Bishop of Winchester. Naked, he "turn[s] himself into a frightful clucking demon" (*QEII* 30) on Edward's throne and mocks Mortimer with the ultimate Protean threat: "Were I a King . . ." (*QEII* 30, from *EII* iv.27). He is the subversive young hustler. There could hardly seem more distance between this Gaveston and the elegant, conservative figure of Queen Isabella.

Cartelli speaks of "Jarman's desire to insist on differences to which Malowe was indifferent": and the extreme contrast between Gaveston and Isabella in Jarman's film is one such difference.³⁴ In Marlowe's *Edward II*, Isabella and Gaveston are perhaps more than anything else rivals struggling for the same place from a similar position. Both are notably disqualified from independent social action: Isabella by gender and Gaveston by class. Both can succeed only through alliance with a powerful man. Isabella's claim to Edward has the social recognition and approval that Gaveston's lacks, but Gaveston has Edward's affection, and, as Isabella discovers, "'tis something to be pitied" (and something quite different *not* to be pitied) by a King. Both Isabella and Gaveston are foreigners in the court world, their public lives under continual surveillance and scrutiny. Isabella is branded a "French strumpet" by her husband (iv.145), and Gaveston, "that sly inveigling Frenchman" (ii.57), is compared by his murderers to "the Greekish strumpet" Helen (ix.15). Their furious exchange in iv.160-161 plays out in its titles and pronouns the gender and class differences between them. In its thrust and counter-thrust, however, it suggests the similarity of the rivals' positions.

Moreover, like Isabella's, Gaveston's identity is represented as relational and theatrical.³⁵ "It is no pain to speak men fair," muses Gaveston in the playtext's first scene (i.41), and he spends much of Marlowe's *Edward II* trying to form alliances which will keep him

powerful and alive. His primary association, of course, is with Edward: an alliance never ruptured as Isabella's is by Edward's indifference, but one finally insufficient to give him the invulnerable self he seeks (i.15). Gaveston also speaks fair, not only to the poor men at the play's opening, but to Edward's niece Lady Margaret, who becomes his adoring bride. He is even willing, at certain strategic moments, to attempt a *rapprochement* with Isabella via Edward, whom he successfully bids "dissemble with her, speak her fair" (vi.226). In fact, his dissembling seems almost to inspire Edward's Queen, for Marlowe's Isabella actually takes up Gaveston's language when she resolves to speak her husband fair (iv.183). By the end of the play she becomes, like Gaveston, a fine dissembler (xxi.73). Thus, Marlowe draws parallels not only between Gaveston's and Isabella's dependent situations, but also between the tactics each chooses to ameliorate them. In both cases, identity is a Protean process, governed by Isabella's "charming Circes" and fluctuating depending on the demands of the situation.

Jarman's film, by contrast, seems to freeze the identities of its characters. One of Jarman's scene shot descriptions from *Queer Edward II* suggests the kind of schematic, iconic differentiation that obtains in the film between Gaveston and Isabella: "Gaveston blocks the Queen's way in the staircase, his jeans and T-shirt in sharp contrast to her lavish black dress. His action belligerent, he kisses her contemptuously" (*QEII* 46). Tierman's performance expands on this scenario: he corners Swinton and begins to touch her mouth and neck with his lips, urging her to respond in a sensuous whisper. When she tentatively raises her mouth to return his kiss, he bursts into derisive laughter, prompting her response:

QUEEN:Thou wrongst me, Gaveston.

Is't not enough that thou corrupts my
lord,

And art a bawd to his affections,

But thou must call mine honour thus in
question?

GAVESTON:I mean not so; your grave must pardon
me.

QUEEN: Villain, 'tis thou that robb'st me of my
lord.

GAVESTON: Madam, 'tis you that rob me of my lord.
(*QEII* 46, from *EII* iv149- 152, 160- 161)

Backed into their dark corner of Edward's castle, these two characters are locked in an opposition. In this round, Tierman's Gaveston scores a victory as lord of misrule: his little performance points up cracks in Isabella's professed strict faithfulness and makes this woman's 'respectable' heterosexuality appear nothing more than indiscriminate promiscuity. The scene, however, worried Jarman, so often depicted as unequivocally sympathetic to his homosexual characters: "I'm certain most will see this sequence as an assault on Isabella, though Gaveston's reaction is understandable. . . . I'm not going to make this an easy ride" (*QEII* 46).

Indeed, the confrontation between Gaveston and Isabella in Jarman's *Edward II* is so powerful largely because of its balance: the attractions of Gaveston's subversiveness are tempered by his utter brutality, while a little vulnerability glimmers out from behind Isabella's cold mask. Gaveston does not wear the screenplay's "jeans and T-shirt." Rather, he sports the black suit which Jarman describes as "rather unusually and beautifully cut" (O'Pray 10), every bit Isabella's match for elegance. Nose to nose, black-clad, pale-faced and auburn-haired, the rivals begin to look disconcertingly "similar."

Their costumes, both distinguished by eye-catching style and cross-references to images of movie glamour, offer some suggestions as to why this should be. Caetelli argues that Jarman's Isabella is the very opposite of Gaveston: she is "well-practiced in the protocols of self-regarding mastery and royal control, and repeatedly placed in the company of the most banal representatives of social conformity" (221). True, but this formulation ignores the increasing excessiveness of Tilda Swinton's Queen: the sense, as she becomes first ghostly lover, then the Evita-like heroine and finally vampire, that she is playing out all the most extreme cultural constructions of feminine identity. In this, she resembles Tiernan's Gaveston. In his black suit,

Tiernan's Gaveston is gangster; in her lavish black dress, Swinton's Isabella is *femme fatale*. Torturing the Bishop, Gaveston reflects past cinematic images of masculine brutality; sucking Kent's blood, Isabella performs a deadly parody of images of feminine brutality. Thus, while Marlowe brings Queen Isabella and her husband's lover together in a manner that suggests the contingency and fluidity of all identity, Jarman brings them together in a manner that suggests the constructed nature of identity through its determination by pre-existing cultural images. In Jarman's film, Isabella and Gaveston are so different partially because they are so much the same, each fitting into the various roles constructed for them by their gender and sexuality.

However, Swinton's Isabella and Tiernan's Gaveston are also distinguished by their radically different relationships to these pre-ordained roles. Gaveston plays *with* his given parts as well as *playing* them; his behavior is more exuberant, more volatile, and more self-conscious than Isabella's. His anarchic sense of play initiates parodic sequences like the dance between Edward and Gaveston that pays tribute to *Some Like It Hot*. He is given license to disrupt Marlowe's venerable text with expletives: "As for the multitude, that are but sparks / Raked up in embers of their poverty / Fuck them!" (*QEII* 10, from *EII* i.20- 22). Jarman remarks that "these light-hearted decisions endear you to a character or should do, and it's what we need" (O'Pray 10). Isabella, on the other hand, seems totally unconscious of her similarity to Evita as she stands before her microphone. The spectator laughs, she does not: a relationship which can hardly be called endearing.

In other words, both Tiernan's Gaveston and Swinton's Isabella might be described as 'camp' figures insofar as camp has been defined by Susan Sontag as involving exaggeration, artifice, and the privileging of style over content.³⁶ However, they are in no way the same *kind* of camp figure. Pamela Robertson's astute analysis of the gendering of camp is useful in this connection:

Most people who have written about camp assume

that the exchange between gay men's and women's cultures has been wholly one-sided; in other words, that gay men appropriate a feminine aesthetic . . . but that women . . . do not similarly appropriate aspects of gay male culture. This suggests that women are camp but do not knowingly produce themselves as camp and, furthermore, do not even have access to a camp sensibility. Women, by this logic, are objects of camp and subject to it but are not camp subjects.⁶⁷

Tiernan's Gaveston generally appropriates images of excessive masculinity rather than "a feminine aesthetic," but he does stand in the knowing, parodic relationship to these images that Robertson associates with camp. Swinton, on the other hand, portrays a woman who becomes more and more excessive without ever seeming to notice. As far as her Isabella is concerned, she is a normative representative of the *Status quo* even whilst biting out her brother-in law's neck. Marlowe shows an Isabella quite as fluid as his Gaveston and possibly quite as conscious; but Jarman shows an Isabella frozen into the most grotesque and distorted cultural projections of what it means to be a woman. Does this make Jarman a misogynist?

5. Our Lady of Celluloid

A look at the sequence in Jarman's *Edward II* in which Isabella employs the assassin Lightborn (Kevin Collins) to kill King Edward suggests both reasons why many critics have accused Jarman of misogyny and reasons why I believe it is, on the contrary, important to read a certain kind of feministic reading into his *Edward II*. Jarman chooses in this sequence to saddle Isabella, rather than Mortimer (as in Marlowe), with the guilt for the planning of Edward's murder and with the callous determination to kill his assassin afterwards:

LIGHTBORN: I, I, none but I shall know which way he died.

ISABELLA: I care not how it is, so it be not spied.
Commend me humbly to his majesty,
And tell him that I labour all in vain
To ease his grief and work his liberty.

She cuts a lock of her hair.
And bear him this, as witness of my
love.

ISABELLA: (Decisively)

He shall be murdered when the deed is done.

(*QEII* 148, from *EII* xxiii.24, xxiii.40, xxi.68-71, xxiii.20)

As in the 'Evita' sequence, the splicing of Marlowe's text in this scene seems designed to underline the radical disjunction between Isabella's words and actions. Young Mortimer's determination to see King Edward dead nestles right next to the Queen's expression (already hypocritical in Marlowe) of concern for her imprisoned husband. Moreover, the sequence shows Isabella apparently manipulating her sexuality in order to encourage Lightborn's murderous resolution. Enticingly clad in a gorgeous white negligee, she more than once leans toward the kneeling assassin, her lips inches from his. Swinton's action, almost (but never quite) kissing Lightborn, echoes Tiernan's in the scene where Gaveston sexually entices and mocks Isabella. Here, however, the sexual feinting is even less sympathetic, for Isabella, unlike Gaveston in the earlier scene, seems to get no subversive pleasure from it. Rather, her gestures have their usual mechanical quality, as if she were going through long-accustomed motions of desire and coyness.

Jarman describes his favorite actress' performance in this scene as "dream-like" (*QEII* 148): one might go further and call it somnambulistic. She is represented simultaneously as hypocritical and manipulative and as fundamentally lacking in understanding of her own actions and situation. No male character in Jarman's *Edward II* — not even Mortimer — is constructed as so evil and yet as so conspicuously lacking in interiority. If we take this as a sweeping judgement on the nature of women, then Jarman's film is misogynist indeed.

On the other hand, Jarman's comments on the scene suggest the necessity of placing Swinton's performance in a wider context. Jarman writes, "Ian [Wilson, Jarman's Cinematographer] said afterwards,

'She's a cross between Joan Carword and Christine Keeler.' It's strange how the echo of period in [Tilda's] costumes had everyone remembering movie history." (148). Not so strange at all, perhaps. Here, Jarman and his coworkers associate Swinton with a number of actresses from the classical Hollywood era. This was, after all, a period of movie history which perfected a number of the negative images of femininity into which Swinton's Isabella fits. On the other hand, classical Hollywood actresses are also frequently associated with a mode of performance which has been theorized by Mary Ann Doane as "feminine masquerade."⁽³⁸⁾ Doane describes the masquerade as a mode of behaviour in which "a woman might flaunt her femininity, produce herself as an excess of femininity," arguing that masquerade "constitutes an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as a mask — as the decorative layer which conceals a non-identity." Doane's enormously influential essay attempts to apply the concept of the masquerade, but also associates it with the performances of such actresses as Marlene Dietrich, Bette Davis — and Joan Crawford.⁽³⁹⁾ Pamela Robertson remarks that "the concept of the masquerade allows us to see that what gender parody takes as its object is not the image of the woman, but the idea — which, in camp, becomes a joke — that an essential feminine identity exists prior to the image."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Like Doane, she singles out Joan Crawford as a practitioner of feminine masquerade, or, in her formulation, of "feminist camp": a form of camp that reclaims agency and understanding of the image for the female subject.⁽⁴¹⁾

How can we associate Tilda Swinton's Isabella, who evidences a total *lack* of distance from her own image, with such a style of performance? The important point here is that the theory of masquerade associates the "acknowledgement that femininity itself is constructed as a mask" not with the character portrayed, but with the actress who portrays her, and the spectator. Michael O'Pray notes that "Brechtian acting theory — the notion that a distinction between the actor and his or her role must be enforced — has been particularly influential on Swinton's approach."⁽⁴²⁾ In *Queer Edward II*, Jarman remarks on Swinton's response to the

association between her performance and classical Hollywood actresses: "Tilda said as long as they don't all agree on the reference — she's happy."⁽⁴³⁾ Swinton refuses the idea that her performance might be a mechanical reproduction of *one* given image, *one* reference; she does not refuse the implication that her mode of representing Isabella engages with a performance tradition that "manufactures . . . a certain distance between oneself and one's image."⁽⁴⁴⁾

In an interview with Lizbeth Goodman before filming of *Edward II* began, Swinton suggested her commitment to a mode of representation capable of establishing just such a distance. She declares that, in contemporary society,

[t]here are deeply ingrained ways of seeing. I am very interesting in images of women, in getting to the root of them. . . . Deconstruction has to be interested in structures. . . . I suppose it's the images I'm interested in, and creating them is only a part of knocking them down. . . . So long as they come down.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Those critics who have accused Jarman of misogyny in *Edward II* ignore Jarman's and Swinton's *distance* from the image of Isabella, the fact that filmmaker and actress are interested in creating an extremely negative and artificial image of a woman only to reveal it as such — and thus to knock it down. To call their portrait of Isabella misogynist one must believe that Jarman and Swinton suggest that Isabella's evil shows something essential about all feminine identity. On the contrary, Swinton's performance and Jarman's *mise-en-scene* endlessly depict Isabella as a figure of excess — one need only think of the sequences where Isabella appears decked in a truly ludicrous array of pearl necklaces (*QEII* 82–83) or where she staggers determinedly down an incredibly steep ramp in a designer suite and "a pair of high heels, clutching a little black bag by Hermes that cost 3,900 pounds (!) — more than the set" (*QEII* 38).⁽⁴⁶⁾ The figures say it all: Swinton's Isabella is not a woman but a product, a commodity, a constructed figure so overdetermined by limiting cultural images of femininity that she becomes a parody of them. Along

with Swinton, Jarman is not criticising women but criticising the social order that produces such appalling images of feminine identity and then sells them to women as mirrors in which to find themselves.

Jarman's and Swinton's representation of Isabella critiques social constructions of feminine identity and sexuality in quite an exceptional manner. Perhaps this suggests something important about the different possibilities for feminist performance in the theatre and on the screen. The stage actress, after all, exudes that palpable, individual physical presence described by Walter Benjamin as "aura."⁽⁴⁷⁾ Of the film actor, on the other hand, Benjamin remarks that he "has to operate with his whole living person, yet forgoing its aura."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Framed by the camera, sliced up and manipulated by editing, reproduced a thousand times on a thousand different screens, the film actor's body is transformed from a reality into an image. As a film actress, Tilda Swinton can suggest that what we think often of as feminine identity is *only* an image, a lie, a mask covering the void of a subject who has never learned to understand or question herself. Swinton's Isabella is literally a lady of celluloid, put together out of past images of femininity, obsessively reproducing the gestures she has been taught are normal and becoming instead an inhuman creature, a monster.

In saying this, I am in one sense arguing that the relationship between Jarman's film and its early modern source is fundamentally disjunctive. In another sense, however, I have just arrived at precisely the point which most closely links Marlowe's *Edward II* to its late-twentieth-century avatar. Marlowe's playtext deals with an elaborate system of signification, a world of rigid social roles and codes which falls apart under the pressure of Edward's transgressive refusal to follow the script set out for him. Thurn argues that self and state in *Edward II* "both appear to rely upon gestures of expulsion and inclusion to sustain an illusion of integrity," but that with Edward's refusal to perform these gestures correctly (when, instead of expelling Gaveston and including the barons and wife who lend him kingly identity, he does the opposite) the illusion of integrity breaks down.⁽⁴⁹⁾ McAdam, along similar lines, suggests that "*Edward II* explores the idea of role-

playing in the sense of establishing socially viable, if ultimately illusory identities."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Within the context of this crumbling kingdom of signs, Marlowe's Isabella is a woman clinging to one after another of the roles offered to her by social dictates — wife, mother, sister, even adultress — on a stage where none of these roles offers her any fixed meaning. At the heart of Isabella's role-playing, one might argue, is her determination to remain Queen: she is not only tightening for power but also struggling to remain part of the *status quo*, part of the system into which she was born. But Marlowe places Isabella in a universe where the King is no longer a king, where even royal identity becomes a void, a sham: "But what are kings, when regiment is gone, / But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?" (xx.26–27). Staying Queen in this unstable world means allying oneself with figure after contradictory figure until finally one is no longer a member of the status quo at all. In deed, the whole idea of the *status quo* has been so thoroughly undermined that the old roles no longer have any meaning.

At the end of *Edward II*, Isabella attempts to perform her last *volte face*; trying to forestall her son's determination to send her to the tower, she cries:

ISABELLA: Shall I not mourn for my beloved
lord,

And with the rest accompany
him to his grave?

SECOND LORD: Thus, madam, 'tis the King's will you
shall hence.

ISABELLA: He hath forgotten me; stay, I am his
mother.

SECOND LORD: That boots not; therefore, gentle
madam, go.

ISABELLA: Then come, sweet death, and rid me
of this grief.

(xxv.87–92)

Isabella is forbidden to take back her role as Edward's wife, the role from which she was excluded at the beginning of the play and for which she fought so long. Fair enough; her protests of love for Edward sound conspicuously hollow after her association with Young

Mortimer. But she is still Young Edward's mother. As it turns out, not even that relationship "boots." Even the most hallowed of feminine roles has become meaningless, and nothing is left for Isabella but death. At the last, the world of Marlowe's *Edward II* is a world in which no performance of feminine identity (or of any stable identity) seems altogether plausible.

In Jarman's film, we last see Swinton's Isabella imprisoned with Mortimer in a huge cage, covered with flour, still reaching up toward the uncaring little figure of her son. Jarman's comment on the scene could hardly be clearer: "I wanted to turn everyone into a mannequin as if they'd been drained of life. Tilda wanted the dead flowers in her hands It looked like she had received a banquet for some performance and I like that."⁵¹ Nothing seems "natural" or "real" any more. The whole thing has been a deadly "performance"; as in Marlowe's *Edward II*, the old actions continue to be performed, but in a context which emphasizes their artificial nature. Marlowe's play and Jarman's film rehearse the gestures that establish gender and class only as "a means of making these gestures and poses fantastic, literally *incredible*."⁵²

6. Charming Circes, or, The Art of Forgetting

Imprisoned in such ossified gestures, it is no wonder that Marlowe's Isabella sighs, "Would when I left sweet France and was embarked, / That charming Circe, walking on the waves, / Had changed my shape" (iv.171 - 173). The dream of escaping the bounds of given roles haunts Marlowe's *Edward II* from the beginning. It is first voiced by Isabella's great rival Gaveston, a figure described by Thurn as "a force fluidity and displacement that undermines crown and country alike."⁵³ Gaveston fantasizes about presenting King Edward with "Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows" (i.55), including one in which

Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful hands an olive tree
To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring; and there hard by,

One like Actaeon peeping through the grove,
Shall by the angry goddess be transformed[.]

(i.60 - 67)

As Brady remarks, Gaveston's dream pictures "erotic bliss as spectacle, as an ideal confusion of gendered boundaries His is a theatrical aesthetic, a culture of play where all likenesses are *trompe d'oeil*."⁵⁴ In his projected spectacle, members of one gender are no longer frozen within their given roles; they are able to imitate the gestures of the other to the delight of onlookers. Transformation, terrifying or titillating, worked by an angry Artemis or a charming Circes, is the order of the play.

Critics generally ignore the fact that Gaveston's fantasy functions partially as a reference to the material realities of the Elizabethan stage. In the original productions of Marlowe's *Edward II*, the part of Isabella would of course have been played by a boy, a boy undergoing the same transformation into the figure of a fair lady that Gaveston describes. Thus, for all her bewildered imprisonment within conventional feminine roles, Marlowe's Isabella may also have spoken covertly in her original cultural context for a more fluid way of imagining gender. This was the context in which J. Cocke, even if only in cynical satire, could write of an adult male actor "mistak[ing] the Boy . . . for the Woman."⁵⁵ In the person of the boy actor, gender was figured not as an absolute but as a question, a shifting series of roles that could be taken up and discarded at will. All very hopeful — at least for men. Of course, Gaveston does not fantasize about a woman impersonating the gestures of masculinity, nor does the early modern theatre (except in the fictional forms of cross-dressing heroines) ever materially body forth that possibility. The hidden parts of the actor remain male. On the other hand, it is no longer clear that gender is attached in any essential way even to those part both in Marlowe's playtext and Jarman's film.

At an early point in his planning for *Edward II*, Derek Jarman wondered, "Should Isabel be played by a boy?," but finally gave the part to his longtime collaborator Tilda Swinton.⁵⁶ This choice had the effect of fixing gender in a manner which Marlowe's play —

— and Marlowe's theatre — perhaps avoided. At the same time, it allowed Swinton to make the point that gender is not essential even when one is “playing oneself”; an actress, too, can manufacture the crucial distance of feminine masquerade between herself and the roles assigned to women by society.

At the end of Jarman's *Edward II*, Isabella is locked in a cage. Swinton's performance critiques imprisoning images of femininity, but does not point to any way out. That part is left to her son, the diminutive Edward III (Jody Graber), who at the end of the film dances on the cage which holds his mother and Mortimer. He also claps his hands, as Jarman remarks, “as if he's applauding some mad performance. The little boy is always there. He is a witness and a survivor.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ Alone among the denizens of Jarman's *Edward II*, the little boy is an observer who finally appears to understand that all the terrible events that have taken place have merely been the fallout from a struggle between those who wished to go on performing the old roles and those who tried to find some other way of identifying themselves.

Prince Edward seems to function in Jarman's film as a link between Marlowe's theatre and Jarman's film: he is the boy actor who stands for gender fluidity. Over the course of the film, he tries out both masculine roles (sitting on Gaveston's knee and making believe that the sword of state is a machine gun) and feminine roles (trying on his mother's hat and crown). In his final appearance, he wears a Gaveston-esque suit incongruously paired with silver pumps and a slick of bright-red, Isabella-esque lipstick. Young Edward is an androgynous little figure willing to experiment with all the costumes and gestures he has observed over the course of the film. Cartelli speaks of “Jarman's . . . inspired treatment of the young Edward throughout the film, whose questions, perceptions, and experiments in gender displacement speak eloquently on behalf of subjects and sexualities still in the process of formation.”⁽⁵⁸⁾ Bennett argues that the little boy “tests and exceeds the traditional iconography of power and of gender identity. He shows them as only performative.”⁽⁵⁹⁾ Such formulations may overstate the positive aspects of Jarman's characterization of Prince

Edward. After all, the little boy is shaped by all the horrors he has seen, a point chillingly made when, wearing his mother's make-up, he curiously tastes the blood of his murdered Uncle Kent. Escape from this cycle of brutal emulation is not simple or direct. However, the boy Edward, like the boy Isabella on Marlowe's stage, at least suggests that the possibility of transformation is there to be interrogated and perhaps explored by the spectator.

“How to make a film of a gay love affair and get it commissioned. Find a dusty old play and violate it,” writes Derek Jarman at the beginning of *Queer Edward II*. His language is worrying, both in terms of his gender politics (the careless use of the word “violate” evoking all the accusations of misogyny made against him) and of his brusque attitude toward Marlowe's playtext. In the long run, however, Jarman's *Edward II* is neither simply misogynist nor simply dismissive of Marlowe's *Edward II*. It ruthlessly interrogates both the gender and sexual roles which society so complacently accepts and the usual reverent attitude toward early modern text in production. Jarman brings Marlowe's play, with its sense of all identity as a performance desperately carried on against the dissolution of an increasingly meaningless social structure, into dialogue with the contemporary world. He uses the early modern text as a tool in his indictment of a repressive culture in which man, in Althusser's formulation, is “interpellated as a free subject in order that he shall . . . (freely) accept his subjection.”⁽⁶⁰⁾ The last words of Jarman's *Edward II*, spoken by Steven Waddington in voiceover as the camera scans a group of quietly determined Outrage members, invoke a sense of the hollowness of existing roles, as well as a longing for death or escape:

But what are Kings, when regiment is gone,
But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?
I know not, but if this I am assured,
That death ends all, and I can die but once.
Come death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,
Or if I live, let me forget myself.

(*QEH* 168, from *EII* xx.26–27, 152–153, 110–111)

The sense of one's identity as it stands as a “perfect

shadow,” and the plea for forgetfulness, unite Jarman’s film and its source. At the end of the cruel sexual confrontation between Queen Isabella and her rival Gaveston in Jarman’s *Edward II*, the director juggles with Marlowe’s playtext — not the first or last time, but this time to surprising effect. As Gaveston stalks off down the corridor, Tilda Swinton’s Isabella is framed in profile, staring off into space. Then, in voice-over, Swinton speaks Kent’s words from the playtext, “Fair blows the wind for France, blow gentle gale” (*QEII* 46, from *EII* xiv.1). The actress’ voice is charged with unusual emotion, and as the voice over comes to an end, Swinton lifts her beautiful face toward the camera and gazes upward, her mouth opening slightly. The overall effect is one of yearning: one more disconcerting disjunction in the midst of Swinton’s immaculately blank performance. One may interpret this moment as speaking Isabella’s longing to escape from Gaveston’s abuse and Edward’s neglect into Mortimer’s arms. A different interpretation, however, can be inserted. Throughout the film, Swinton stands back from Isabella, making her familiar gestures strange to the spectator, demanding that we reconsider the images this woman represents. At this one moment, however, the spectator catches a glimpse of the actress capable of such heartrending emotion and longing in *War Requiem*. May we imagine that this peek behind the mask suggests Tilda Swinton’s own yearning for a wind that would blow us out of the country of Edward II, her wish for an art of forgetting that could unmake Isabella? After all, she has only been performing these images of feminine identity in an effort to bring them down.

Notes

- (1) In *Queer Edward II* (*QEII* 1991; London: British Film Institute, 1992), the published screenplay of the film, Jarman writes of ‘Tilda recording her speech, mike stand, spotlight, like “Evita” — the musical, not the politician’ (124).
- (2) The lines, somewhat modified, are taken from Marlowe’s *Edward II*, Scene xvii, lines 10– 14:

“And Edward, thou art one among them all, /
Whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoile /
And made the channels overflow with blood. /
Of thine own people patron shouldst thou be, /
Be thou - .” All citation from Marlowe’s *Edward II* (*EII*) in this paper are taken from the edition by Martin Wiggins and Robert Lindsay, London: A & C Black, 1997.

- (3) Jarman’s film, McCabe writes, is “Much more unambiguous in its misogyny than any of his other work. In that gay male dialectic where identification with the position of the woman is set against rejection of the woman’s body, *Edward II* is entirely, and without any textual foundation, on the side of rejection . . . making Edward’s passion for Gaveston a consequence of his inability to be roused by the queen’s body in a truly chilling scene at the beginning of the film.” From his “A Post-National European Cinema: A Consideration of Derek Jarman’s *The Tempest* and *Edward II*” in *Screening Europe: Image and Identity in Contemporary European Cinema*. Petrie Duncan and McCabe eds. London: British Film Institute, 1992, pp.12– 13.
- (4) See Kate Bennett, “Baldock’s ‘Gentrie’: Social Climbing in *Edward II*” in *Notes & Queries* 1997 Dec, 44 (242):4, pp.283– 84.
- (5) See Kate Chedzgo, *Shakespeare’s Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995, p.207.
- (6) Ibid. p212.
- (7) See Alexander Shubanov, “Marlowe and the Internalization of Irony” in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*. Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts eds. Aldershot: Scoler Press, 1996, p.243.
- (8) Although Bruce Smith claims that in *Edward II* “Marlowe introduces us to the possibility of a homosexual subjectivity” (*Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England: A Cultural Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, p.223), in his seminal study of *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, Alan Bray argues that it is

- "anachronistic and ruinously misleading" to speak of "an individual in the period as being or not being 'a homosexual'" (London: Routledge, 1982, pp.16- 17). Numerous critics have dealt with the question of Edward's and Gaveston's relationship by arguing that what makes it 'sodomitical' is its conjunction of sexual and social transgression. Mario DiGangi argues that "'sodomy' names not a form of homoerotic desire but a political transgression often associated with inappropriate forms of intimacy between men" ("Marlowe, Queer Studies, and Renaissance Homoeroticism" in *Marlowe, History and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*. Paul Whitefield White ed. New York: AMS Press, 1998, p.204). Emily Bartels suggests that "what is significant here is that sexuality, whether homoerotic or heteroerotic, implements power" (*Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p.168). In other words, the sexual and the political are tangled with each other in *Edward II*, and transgression in one sphere implies transgression in another. Edward's love for Gaveston overturns not one but a whole series of social hierarchies.
- (9) Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship*. Valerie Wayne ed. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992, p.138. Martin Wiggins advised me to read it.
- (10) See her "The Terms of Gender: 'Gay' and 'Feminist' *Edward II*" in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Valerie Traub and Lindsay Laplan eds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996, p.286.
- (11) See his Introduction p.xvii.
- (12) See his "*Queer Edward II: Post-modern Sexualities and the Early Modern Subject*" in White, pp.220- 21.
- (13) See Michael O'Pray's interview with Derek Jarman in "Damning Desire" in *Sight and Sound* 11 October 1991, p.10.
- (14) See McCabe, p.13.
- (15) See O'Pray, p.10.
- (16) See Shubanov, p.243.
- (17) See her *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, p.157.
- (18) See Kathleen Anderson, "'Stab as Occasion Serves': The Real Isabella in *Edward II*" in *Renaissance Papers* (1992) p.38 and Lawrence Danson, "Continuity and Character in Shakespeare and Marlowe" in *Studies in English Literature 1500 - 1900*. 24:2 (Spring 1984) p.232.
- (19) See his *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992, p.126.
- (20) See Callaghan, p.283.
- (21) See Weil, p.157.
- (22) See his Introduction p.xxvii.
- (23) Ibid. p.xxvii- xxviii.
- (24) See Goldberg p.126.
- (25) Of course, Isabella's "motherhood" is ultimately negated by her own son simultaneously as her strategic allegiance with the prince is undone at the end of the play.
- (26) See his *A Bride-Bush: or, a direction for married persons*. London, 1617.
- (27) 1 Timothy 2:14- 15. Henry Smith glosses the passage: "For first she shall have children, and after she shall have salvation" in *A Preparative to Marriage*. London, 1591, p.8. In this formulation, even a woman's identity as a Christian is dependent on her relationship to her children.
- (28) On Gaveston's "Italian" costume in Marlowe's playtext as a certain symbol of sodomy and lasciviousness, and on the cultural commonplace that "Italians were responsible for exporting to England and France not only a 'fashion' for clothes but also for sodomy," see Viviana Comensoli's "Homophobia and the Regulation of Desire: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Marlowe's *Edward II*" in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 4:2 (1993) p.192. Young Mortimer's speech, in which he complains that Gaveston "wears a lord's revenue on his back, /

- and Midas-like he jets it in the court" (*EII* iv.403 - 420), is split between Mortimer and Isabella in Jarman's film (*QEII* 54). In *Queer Edward II*, Jarman celebrates Swinton's rendering of the final words of the speech: "'Tis this that makes me impatient': I lived the way these words are spoken by Tilda - They are modern, that much abused word"(54).
- (29) See Weil, p.157.
- (30) See O'Pray, p.11.
- (31) "When Tilda Swinton's magnificent Isabella literally tears the like out of him with her teeth; every fantasy of the castrating woman, the *vagina dentata*, rendered into all too palpable image" (McCabe, p.16).
- (32) See his *The Prince*. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.62. On several complicated aspects of the ironic link between Marlowe's works (especially *The Jew of Malta*) and Machiavellism, see Catherine Minshull's "Marlowe's 'Sound Machevill'" in *Renaissance Drama XIII* (1982) pp.35 - 53.
- (33) See Cartelli, p.219.
- (34) Ibid. p.219.
- (35) On the theatricality found in the relationship between King Edward and Gaveston, see Catherine Belsey, "Desire's excess and English Renaissance theatre: *Edward II*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*" in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. Susan Zimmerman ed. New York: Routledge, 1992, p.89.
- (36) See Sontag, "Notes on Camp" in her *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. London: Deutsch, 1978, p.47.
- (37) See Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp From Mae West to Madonna*. Duke University Press, 1996, p.5.
- (38) See Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1988, p.765.
- (39) Ibid. pp.766, 768.
- (40) See Robertson, p.12.
- (41) Also see Judith Butler's argument on masquerade in her *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1990, p.47.
- (42) See O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*. London: BFI, 1996, p.162.
- (43) Ibid. p.148.
- (44) See Doane p.766.
- (45) See Lizbeth Gooman, "Subverting Images of the Female" (Interview with Tilda Swinton). *New Theatre Quarterly* 23:6 (August 1990) pp.216, 219.
- (46) In *Queer Edward II*, Swinton herself sardonically remarks of this scene, "If a Queen's no good for a 1:1 ramp in stilettos with a four grand pocket of crocodile skin clutched to her breast what is she good for?" (38); her ironic tone suggests, I think, just how far her Isabella is from representing a portrait of the "essential" reality of feminine nature.
- (47) See Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Film Theory and Criticism*. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy eds. Fourth Edition. Oxford: OUP, 1992, p.668.
- (48) Ibid. 672.
- (49) See Thorn, p.128.
- (50) See McAdam, p.209.
- (51) See O'Pray (1991), p.11.
- (52) See Doane, p.124.
- (53) See Thorne, p.220.
- (54) See Jennifer Brady, "Fear and Loathing in Marlowe's *Edward II*" in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*. Carole Levin and Karen Robertson eds. Lewiston: Mellen 1991, p.185.
- (55) See Cocke, p.256.
- (56) See *QEII* p.233.
- (57) See O'Pray (1991), p.11.
- (58) See Cartelli, p.220.
- (59) See Bennett, p.115.
- (60) See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State" in *Essays in Ideology*. 1970: London: Verso, 1984, p.56, and Judith Butler, *Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997, chap.4.