



Edward II by Christopher Marlowe as Modern Play with Gay Theory and Psychoanalytic Aspects of Characters

Dr. Ramen Goswami,

English Department, Senior Researcher, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya
E-mail: eros.ramen2012@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

My research focuses on how the homophobic subject in Edward The Second dominates the play's story structure, and how Marlowe defies the church's dominance in the sixteenth century by portraying such a violent theme as homophobia. To accomplish so, I've focused on the characters' interactions with one another and how they form a specific relational network on stage. This contact is mostly mediated by their language, or the manner in which they converse with one another throughout the play. Many historical figures have had terms like gay or bisexual applied to them, including Socrates, Lord Byron, Edward The Second, and Hadrian; some scholars, such as Michel Foucault, have viewed this as risking the anachronistic introduction of a contemporary construction of sexuality foreign to their times, while others have disputed this. As a result, Christopher Marlowe's Edward The Second makes one thing abundantly clear: homophobia is nothing new. Despite this, there is no mention of the phrases Sodomy or homosexuality in Marlowe's Edward The Second.

Keywords: homo, love, kingship, irony, tragic

Theme of homosexuality:

These labels, like "gay" and "homosexuality," are relatively new inventions. In the Middle Ages, they did not exist. Instead, mediaeval writers coined the term 'sodomy' to describe a wide range of what they thought to be 'sins.' The definition of this term was far broader than the one we use now. It could include heterosexual anal intercourse and oral sex, as well as a variety of homosexual behaviours, for example. Attitudes about same-sex relationships have shifted over time and across cultures. Sodomy was established as a transgression against divine law or a crime against nature in cultures influenced by Abrahamic religions. However, the prohibition of anal intercourse between males predates Christian theology. It was frequent in ancient Greece; "unnatural" can be traced back to Plato.

As a result, when combined with themes of status violation, the idea of homosexuality may pose a social threat in Marlowe's England. The famous trial of Mervin Touchet, second Earl of Castlehaven, illustrates a widespread judicial fear of open male homoeroticism combined with a failure to preserve aristocratic norms. In 1631, Castlehaven was hanged for two counts of sodomy and one count of abetting rape. Despite all of this, Marlowe's ability to deal with the subject so openly is astonishing. Edward The Second is far more explicit about the king's gay relationship than, say, Tennessee Williams' portrayal of Sebastian Venable's homosexuality on the American stage in *Suddenly Last Summer*.

Character of Edward II

The character of Edward II has been defined by Marlowe along the lines of regal majesty, boasting of its glory but lacking in authority. The core of such a character is pitiful authority, which asserts itself with intensity yet is impotent in its execution. As described by the great dramatist, the then English monarch stands before us as the polar opposite of Tamburlaine, the most violent, brutal, and ruthless in his assertion of control. When compared to this oriental despot, 'savage opulent, half insane,' Edward II's irony of kingship looks like a slice of state cheese. The King's authority remains moist, rather than exploding like a squib saturated in water.

Edward II is a monomaniac, like all of Marlowe's finest characters. His feelings for Gaveston are out of proportion and unbalanced. The monarch pays no attention to the state's concerns, and even acts in a way that alienates his Queen's affection and the barons' potential allegiance. The opening note in the drama denotes the King's monomania, in which he seeks Gaveston's presence after his father's death. 'My father has passed away.' Come, Gaveston, Bad, and share the throne with thy closest buddy.'

Others in the play display antagonism, conspiracy, and intrigue, but the king's principal humour stems from his artistic ambitions, which he would have pursued if left to his own devices. 'Music and poetry are his delight,' Gaveston observes. His artistic disposition clashes with his desire to blend into his royal duties. The king has the desire to rule, but he lacks the power to do so. The executive branch of government has failed him horribly. His subordinate has a far closer bond with him than the power behind him. The divide between the king's will and his power sets the stage for the tragedy. He begins to assert himself forcibly, and he is frequently overtaken by wrath.

The king's distinguishing characteristic is frivolity. He is only concerned with his privileges as a ruler, not with the diverse aspects of life. We can't claim he has bad taste; all we can say is that he lacks the temperament to be concerned about his job and his way of life. He cannot be penalised, but he

can be chastised for his undivided devotion to his subordinate, which he pays with zeal. If the king had been more serious and less frivolous, he would not have been accountable for the problems that plague his reign.

We can say anything we want, but we can't help but respect the king's courage, which is truly exceptional in its ability to overcome adversity. True, he can't cope with the adversities, but he certainly doesn't stare at them like a scared bunny, but rather like a tiger at bay, unsure what to do. "Something yet buzzeth in mine years, and tells me if I sleep I never wake," the king says while he is on the point of being murdered. He is too weak and sickly to fight, and he begs God to take his soul. Despite this, he does not behave in a cowardly manner.

The kingship of Edward II exemplifies this ironic truth. He is a king, but he is perceived as having little power. He speaks, but he is not heard or obeyed. He yells, yet no one seems to notice his staccato utterance. He is a king without a well-oiled executive apparatus. From the beginning, this is apparent. He is shown by Marlow as a man who is completely devoid of power. Perhaps this lack of power leads the queen resolve to go to Mortimer, in whom she sees, with the eyes of a woman, the amassing store of power. The king's emptiness may cause her to revolt against him.

A king's sense of proportion should be a sterling virtue, because authority is prone to robbing one of the balance required in the virtue of proportion. The king's weakness is shown here. He is conscious of his power, but he does not see how it may be used to carry it out. A sensible king would have recognised this fact right away, but he never does. He suffers as a result of his inability to strike a balance between his position as king and his actions. Prudence isn't something he's concerned about. When he asks Gaveston to maul and molest the bishop, he acts very foolishly. He isn't a diplomat, and his lack of diplomacy originates from a lack of proportion on his part.

Character of Queen Elizabeth:

The character of Queen Isabella has been painted by Marlowe in two different colours. We meet her as a loving woman who is scorned by her husband, Edward II, at first, and then as a rebel later in life, even suggesting that if the king lives, they will have difficulty. We pity her at first, and then we despise her later in life. Because she sided with the rebels and was stained with her own husband's blood, she instils disdain in us. Despite the fact that it is accomplished through Mortimer's machinations, she has her own wish for that evil purpose.

In the beginning, Isabella shows enormous devotion to the monarch and hatred for Gaveston, his servant. Perhaps she, like him, is a Machiavellian. Gradually, she realises that her husband is weak and that the rebels would soon overwhelm him, and this overpowering desire to be with Mortimer leads her to him. The Queen's creator, Marlowe, is not like the other female characters.

"She is, at the very least, more alive than Zenocrate's wraith of Helen's crops."

The Queen's most distinguishing characteristic is her androgynous (both masculine and feminine in one person) approach toward life. Her pain as a wife is expressed in a feminine manner. She is feminine in her confession of love for Mortimer ("As Isabel could dwell with thee eternally"). But not as a co-conspirator; here she reveals the male brutality and vicious touch that would put even the most emotional men to shame. This androgynous feature has not been depicted in the same light as Virginia Woolf. Between the two, Marlowe has drawn a line. Her masculine and feminine characteristics are clearly separated. Isabella's maniac depressive inconsistency enacts both types.

She appears to be a despondent wife at first, but she later transforms into a "scheming adulteress." She is hungry for her husband's affection in the first phase and discreetly thirsts for his blood in the second. It's probable that the king had observed her unattractive trait earlier and developed a dislike for her, which he compensates for with his odd passion for Gaveston and later Young Spenser. The queen's feminine psyche is quite terrifying. When it comes to love and hate, she is a lady of extremes. She has no qualms about turning to Mortimer when she loses the love of the king, her husband.

Her sensuality is accompanied by a penchant for self-aggrandizement. This is something she shares with Mortimer, her lover. Both are essentially of the same thought. Mortimer effusively, and she silently, are both aggressive. Her hatred of Gaveston is a ruse. Her soul is still a tangle of currents. Her inner demon rises up when she finds the right opportunity. On the Queen's commission, the opposition apprehends the monarch. It was pointless for her to witness the king's assassination because she might have cried quits and moved in with Mortimer. She begs Mortimer to remove the stumbling block, claiming that she is afraid for their and the prince's lives.

The king and queen's conjugal ties are broken right from the start. The fundamental cause of the schism between the two is Gaveston. Other forces, though, can be found along the path. The king's suspicions are focused on Isabella, who is accused of infidelity by her husband. Other dark impulses exist in the queen's mind, which will remain hidden until the right opportunity arises. She eventually lies, but for the most part, she is as honest as she can be.

Queen Isabella declares that she would rather live a sad life than witness the civil unrest in the realm. However, this is not the case, as she eventually joins the Mortimer and other barons' group. She would seek refuge not in melancholy, but in worldly success, status, and the satisfaction of her appetite, which one may understand better than stated. This persona isn't only on the surface; it has layers upon layers, like a robust onion. The King has a much better understanding of her. He never says anything kind to her and treats her as if she were an illness.

The queen initially arouses our compassion, but after a while she embarks on a path littered with ulterior purposes. The development of the character is influenced by changing circumstances and events:

- (i) Her heading to the wilderness because she is tired of her husband's antipathy.
- (ii) She actively participates in the parleys aimed at quelling the King's revolt.
- (iii) Her warm feelings for Mortimer, which quickly turn into lust for him.
- (iv) The transformation that occurs in her, causing her to openly and unabashedly proclaim her love for Mortimer.

Character of Gaveston :

Gaveston, King Edward's "French minion," is a particularly well-delineated Marlovian figure. It's significant from the standpoint of the play's conflict, which is the conflict between the king and the realm's barons. All ruptures are centred on him. But it isn't just Gaveston who starts the fire; there is something in Junior Mortimer's personality that stokes the fire and sends it ablaze. Gaveston's character has a few flaws that have been magnified by the opposition. Gaveston's character is simple in structure and not complicated in the sense of complexity. His flaws and foibles are visible on the surface. We wouldn't have been recognised on the street if King Edward had showered him with his crazed adoration.

Gaveston hailed from a blue blood family, according to the historical source. Arnold Gaveston's father was a Gascon Knight in Edward I's realm. Gaveston was expelled from the realm at a young age for wielding unethical power over the Prince (Edward II). When Edward II became King, he

remembered his once-close friend Gaveston. He was showered with titles. He was appointed Earl of Cornwall and married Margaret de Clare, the King's niece. The enraged barons finally assassinated him in June 1312, unable to stop the emergence of a simple upstart.

Gaveston is the most despised character in the drama. Except for the monarch, no one sympathises with him. "Swol'n with poison of ambitious pride," Mortimer Junior sneers at him. Warwick refers to him as a "ignoble vassal." "Base and obscure Gaveston," Lancaster says of him. For stripping Queen Isabella of her husband, he is referred to as a "villain." The Bishop of Coventry wants him "dead." Senior Mortimer refers to him as "traitor Gaveston." It's worth noting that Gaveston harbours a dislike for himself: "The Earl of Lancaster I do abhor."

As a result, we discover that in the play, hatred is a two-way street rather than a one-way street. Hatred feeds hatred, and Edward II reaps the harvest of hatred. Hatred combined with egoism becomes the sole cause of those involved in its demise. Gaveston's egoism and arrogance are his most notable characteristics. Except for the King, he is unconcerned about everyone else. "My knee shall bow to none except the monarch," he declares bluntly. He jeers and boos those of high rank, who, in turn, are offended by his actions. But such an act does not justify drawing the sword to murder him. Is he deserving of death since he is an incorrigible?

To summarise, Gaveston's character has been drawn in such a way that he serves as the catalyst for the events. His character once again revealed light on the king's personality. The events are sparked by Gaveston's addition of fuel. The nobles and the Queen may despise them, but the readers and audience do not. Despite the fact that Gaveston's character cannot be described as ideal due to his hubris, he is not sentenced to death. Why not Gaveston, who has the benefit of the King's love, if the barons might be proud of their power and pelf?

Character of younger Mortimer:

Marlowe drew the persona of Mortimer Junior with a steady touch. He's been described as the most lively creature in the play, with leadership qualities. As though by reflex, his one hand quickly moves to the sword's hilt. He is also a historically significant baron, having ruled England until October 1330. He is seen contradicting the king right from the start. Obviously, the ferments in him are those of the most rebellious character. He's the kind of guy who'd beard the lion in his own den, and he does it rather deftly in the second round of his character, ignoring whatever public opinion that could exist.

These two personalities were created in such a way that they are diametrically opposed. The king has no power and considers it a privilege to be acknowledged in this manner. Mortimer, on the other hand, belongs to a completely other cast. He is the source of true power. In one way, King Edward II and Mortimer are similar in that they both take pride in their position in life. King Edward regards kingship as a 'talisman' that he may employ even in his later years, while Mortimer is proud of his lineage. He has the force and the courage of belief to challenge the king from the start, and the play culminates in the assassination of King Edward II.

Impetuosity, high-spiritedness, lawlessness, brutality, and a lack of scruples are among his distinguishing characteristics. He solely considers the requirement of the situation, whether it is one of his high aspirations or one that is incidental. He is unafraid of life's dangers. He does not become engrossed in Hamlet-like thought, but rather strikes when the iron is still hot from the forge. His facial expressions are rash. His outbursts have a rash quality to them. He's the kind of character who doesn't believe in the rule of law. He is keen to overthrow the monarch and convince the queen to 'cry quittance from him.' He makes no apologies for his bluntness, and he gets right to the point. He is a legislator in his own right.

The cult of violence is most active in this character. As a result, he makes no stops and pushes his way through tumultuous situations. He does not panic after completing the king's assassination, as Macbeth did, and loses his sense of balance. He may regard death as an unavoidable occurrence. In the final hour of his life, King Edward II shudders at the thought of death, despite having a premonition that comes to him. Mortimer, the young man, defies death. His thoughts are more focused on "bad luck" than on the impending physical death. Violence is a part of his spirit and a manifestation of his strength.

His quiet and private relationship with the queen is devoid of any romantic overtones. It's a result of his disobedience to authority. As Kent watches, the queen kisses and conspires with him. Mortimer's young blood is stronger than that of all the other characters in the play. His resistance, violence, and lusty engrossment in the events can all be traced back to his youth. Though it begins in England, he finds Isabel's love in France. The queen is unconcerned whether her husband is assassinated, but she is adamant that his blood not be spilled.

Mortimer's character does not have a straight line, but rather evolves and might be described as spherical. He reminds us of being candid, sincere, daring, and hot-tempered in the first phase, and he reminds us a lot of Hotspur. In the second, he's the queen's lover, a king's traitor, a cunning deceiver, and a ruthless and treacherous murderer. In his actions, he becomes 'increasingly Machiavellian.' His career can be separated into two sections that are both watertight. He is brave and high-spirited at first, but untainted by any ulterior motivations; however, ulterior impulses sneak into his temperament and lead him to his untimely demise. As a result, we see that this character undergoes significant alterations.

Edward II as tragedy:

Marlowe's tragedies are recognised for their grand design, extravagance grandeur, 'rant and bluster,' monomaniac individuals with a single preoccupation with power, zeal for self-promotion to the point where we marvel at them, and a cruelty that transcends human sympathy. His most famous tragedy, Edward II, is about the sad demise of a historical king named Edward II. In his Poetics, Aristotle describes tragedy as "an imitation of a serious and complete event of a particular size... not of narrative via pity and terror effecting the correct purgation of these results... not of narrative through pity and dread affecting the proper purgation of these effects." Certain aspects of Aristotle's idea of tragedy are certainly adhered to in Marlowe's Edward II.

In terms of technical excellence, Marlowe's Edward II does not have the same appeal as Shakespeare's tragedies. Whereas Shakespeare's tragedies are concerned with lofty universal ideals, Edward II by Marlowe is concerned with dissatisfaction and weakness. The adage "Character is destiny" applies perfectly to Edward II's tragedy. Shakespeare's tragic heroes are great men not only because they are kings and generals, but also because, despite suffering hamartia, they have a strong moral character (characteristic flaw). Hamlet is a man of lofty ambitions, Macbeth and Othello are men with exceptional characteristics, and King Lear possesses a noble soul. As a result, they elicit feelings of sympathy and terror. Edward II, as portrayed by Marlowe, is a ruler of a different sort. He is not just an idiot, but also a liar.

The Abdication (Deposition) Scene and the Murder (Death) Scene are two of Edward II's most famous scenes. "The hesitant sorrows of abdicating Royalty gave indications which Shakespeare scarcely enhanced in his Richard II," Charles Lamb wrote about the Abdication Scene. "It inspires

sympathy and fear beyond any scene ancient and modern; with which I am familiar," he said of the Murder Scene. These two sequences do, in fact, wonderfully capture the play's tragedy.

Marlowe's treatment of the plot, rather than the play's excellent structural design to accomplish his cathartic impact, is crucial to Edward II's success as a tragedy. The plot of the play is well-designed. "With history well-preserved and history well-dramatized," it is definitely a wonderful tragedy based on history.

References:

King Edward II- AmberleyEdition, 2009

Edward II- Oxford, publishing, 2000

Edward II- Richa De, Jain Publication,2020