“The shadow of this time”: Punk, Tradition, and History in Derek Jarman’s *Jubilee* (1978)

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Elizabeth I, the nation’s anima, wanders in virgin white; while John Dee, the magus, inventor and universal man reveals to her the shadow of her time. A bitter chill blows through the film [. . .] Vivienne Westwood, instigator of fashion panic at the World’s End, produced one of her brilliant t-shirts to rip [it] to pieces and say how boring it was. [. . .] Afterwards, the film turned prophetic. Dr Dee’s vision came true—the streets burned in Brixton and Toxteth. Adam [Ant] was Top of the Pops and signed up with Margaret Thatcher to sing at the Falklands Ball. They all sign up one way or another.

---Jarman, *Dancing* 172

1. Introduction

Derek Jarman filmed his visionary, ultra-low-budget dystopian satire *Jubilee* in London in the spring to summer of 1977.¹ This period saw both Queen Elizabeth II’s Silver Jubilee celebrations and the furore around the Sex Pistols’ single “God Save the Queen,” which not unlike Jarman’s works fused denunciation (“She ain’t no human being”) with prophesy (“There is no future/ In England’s dreaming”). On its release in spring 1978 (as the opening film at the new Gate cinema club in Notting Hill), *Jubilee* became—by default and by accident—the first British punk feature film.

When considering its place within a commemorative reappraisal of Jarman's film works and thought, *Jubilee* can be approached through (at least) three prisms. First, from the perspective of British punk history, it remains unrivalled as the most inventive, wholly imaginary, and fittingly scrapbook-like cinematic response to the 1970s punk/Silver Jubilee "moment."² But second (and cutting across this), when considered primarily with reference to Jarman's wider oeuvre and approach as a filmmaker, *Jubilee* appears more document than invention: as a personal—or, in Jarman's words, "often autobiographical" (*Dancing* 176)—film that responds, creatively and critically, to the 1970s London punk milieu and its personae *insofar as* these touched Jarman's "reality." From this second perspective, *Jubilee's* (dialectical but narrative) cinematic form, and especially the centrality it gives to performance and dialogue, are more "conventional"—and less comprehensively scrapbook-like—than some of Jarman's later films such as *The Garden* (1990). *Jubilee's* collaged, scrapbook-like qualities, however, reside within its ethic and mode of production as much as its textual aesthetics, and—especially—within its exceptionally rich and suggestive production design more than its filming style or narrative form. Approached in these terms, *Jubilee* is clearly consistent with Jarman's wider practice: in its development and use of a shooting script that was closer to a dense scrapbook of notes and visual references, and the casting via friends and acquaintances, as well as its attentively detailed *mise-en-scène* (to which I return later). These qualities raise some complications and ambiguities around *Jubilee's* designation as a "punk" film, since many of its "punk" features are equally distinctive to Jarman. In *Dancing Ledge*, he described the project in terms that testify to its lived, mercurial, origins and development:

With *Jubilee* the progressive merging of film and my reality was complete. The source of the film was often autobiographical, the locations were the streets and warehouses in which I had lived during the previous ten years. The film was cast from among and made by friends. It was a determined and often reckless analysis of the world which surrounded us, constructed pell-mell through the early months of 1977. The shooting script is a mass of xeroxes and quick notes on scraps of paper, torn photos and messages from my collaborators, and the resulting film has something of the same quality. Just as it seems that it is settling down it's off in another direction, like a yacht in a squall [. . .] in *Jubilee* our world became the film [. . .] [It] is a fantasy documentary fabricated so that documentary and fictional forms are confused and coalesce. (176-77)

Third, and most pertinent to this issue's particular interest in Jarman's work in relation to the early modern, *Jubilee* remains exceptional for its provocative and complex use of English history in a strategy of "disembowelling the present through the memory of the past" ("Review: *Jubilee*"), specifically, by summoning and (re-)deploying both real historical and Shakespearean dramatic figures from the early modern period: Queen Elizabeth I (Jenny Runacre), her astrologer, adviser, and confidant Dr John Dee (Richard O'Brien), and the spirit Ariel (David Haughton) from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The British cinema scholar Paul Dave elucidates the interconnectedness of "punk" and "history" in Jarman's strategy in the following terms, while also (as have other commentators) noting the ironies and ambivalences of Jarman's self-positioning:

He distanced himself from punk whilst using its sarcastic iconoclasm to assault those Old English institutions such as the Church and the modern “royal family” which he loathed. In this respect the film’s title is interesting [. . .]. On the most immediate level “jubilee” makes reference to 1977, the year of Elizabeth II’s “silver” jubilee celebrations [which] the Sex Pistols attacked [. . .]. Jarman’s punk use of “jubilee” is thus set against what [historian] David Cannadine refers to as Old England’s shamelessly “invented,” “ornamentalist” traditions of empire and class. The ritual of the “jubilee” has had a pre-eminent place in such traditions from the late nineteenth century on. However, there remains another meaning to “jubilee” [. . .] [rooted in a William Blakean prophetic tradition [. . .] in which] “jubilee” doubles back on itself, signifying not the celebration of Old England but its prophetic denunciation [. . .]. There is then a “hidden” historical conflict within the word. (156-57)

With these three intersecting perspectives in mind, this essay reconsiders *Jubilee*, and the past-present relations and rhythms of its (nominal) time-travel narrative—“There and back, there and back,” as the film’s spirit Ariel says—from two angles. Writing as a scholar of contemporary British cinema, commingled with interests in British punk and post-punk culture and the intensely politicised culture wars of the Thatcherite 1980s—in which Jarman, through his writings and public statements as well as his films, became a key participant and a crucial oppositional voice—my emphasis will be on the late-twentieth-century contexts of Jarman’s film. From this viewpoint, *Jubilee* is a text in which early modern echoes and influences collide with the postmodern³ but also “double back” on themselves to serve a further dialectical

interplay: between the “reckless[ly] analys[ed]” (*Dancing* 176) dystopic late-1970s “present” of *Jubilee*’s production and the *modern* recent past of the 1950s “New Elizabethan” age. The latter, hailed when the young Elizabeth II became Queen in 1952 and sealed with her 1953 Coronation, was, however, a hollow (and even “shadowy”) echo of the first Elizabethan age at best. It also coincided with Jarman’s adolescence as a queer subject, a point I return to later.

First, I will consider how *Jubilee*’s strategies of invoking the early modern past to “disembowel” the present might (fore)shadow Jarman’s invocation of “tradition” and “history” in the critique of Thatcherite philistinism and the destruction of English culture that he would voice a decade later. *Jubilee* summons the “Virgin Queen” Elizabeth I and the Renaissance mathematician, occultist, and early advocate of Empire, the alchemist Dr John Dee, as ciphers of a lost England to contemplate the putatively near-future but *de facto* late-1970s “shadow of [their] time.” Later, Jarman—both in *The Last of England* (1987) and in public statements made in the following year—would summon a Renaissance lineage in his response to the virulent attacks against oppositional culture, instigated by the Conservative Government and prominent sections of the British media, which became a defining feature of the late 1980s in the UK. In relation to film, this discursive “battle for Britain” peaked in January 1988 following the *Sunday Times*’s commissioning and publication of the conservative historian Norman Stone’s notorious diatribe, “Through a lens darkly”—to which I will return below—in which Jarman’s *The Last of England* was the prime target of attack. Second, *Jubilee*’s Ariel urges us to “consider the world’s diversity.” This imperative is suggestive both in relation to Jarman’s queer politics (and *Jubilee*’s ethic of casual transgressivity, from the tenderly incestuous relationship between brothers Sphinx (Karl Johnson) and Angel (Ian Charleson) to its more controversial systematic inversion

of the gendered norms of sexual violence), and the film's doubling and more promiscuous multiplicity of queen figures across its Elizabethan and present narrative threads.

Jarman notably conjured Elizabeth I to 1970s London (from 1597, a year when the "Virgin Queen" was 64 years old) at a moment in British history when the Silver Jubilee of her "shadow," Elizabeth II, coincided uneasily with a mood of economic, social, and political crisis, the rumbling of Republican critiques of the monarchy, and the punk explosion. The defining abolitionist text, Tom Nairn's *The Enchanted Glass* (not published until 1988), was significantly preceded by the imagery of British punk, in which Elizabeth II's image was famously appropriated and defaced—including within the collaged *mise-en-scène* of *Jubilee* itself—in acts of *lèse majesté*, or (criminal) contempt for the sovereign. The term's meaning in its Latin origin—"injured majesty"—applies literally to the famous punk image of Elizabeth II with her lip pierced by a safety-pin, produced by the Sex Pistols' graphic designer Jamie Reid, and sold by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren as a t-shirt design at their World's End boutique Seditionaries at 430 King's Road.

"The shadow of this time" to which *Jubilee* transports Elizabeth I is, then, "the shadow" of the 1950s "New Elizabethan" era as much as of the first Elizabethan age. In a set of dialectical and ironic plays upon, and reversals of, the alchemy practised by Dee, Jarman juxtaposes Elizabeth I not solely against her late-twentieth-century "double," Bod (both played by Runacre)—the regal but nihilistically violent leader of the film's all-female gang—but against a cross-gender proliferation of "queens," cast via the King's Road punk/fashion scene and Jarman's predominantly queer social circle. The film transforms this cast of "friends" in turn, into superstars in the Warholian sense. Figures such as the American-born transgender punk

performer Wayne (later Jayne) County is transmuted into the vain, doomed pop star Lounge Lizard. 1970s punk icon Jordan—real name Pamela Rooke, and Westwood’s fetish-clad shop assistant at her King’s Road boutique—was cast by Jarman as *Jubilee*’s historian (and, indeed, provocative disemboweller of history) Amyl Nitrate, whom the film further transforms into a debased Britannia.

The film’s “true shadow,” however, may be the abject figure of Queen Elizabeth II, who is glimpsed only distantly, mugged and left for dead on a derelict site, where she is no more than an object of brief curiosity for the “visiting” Elizabeth I. While this treatment is in keeping with Jarman’s detestation of the modern British royal family, it is worth considering more specifically why he might have been moved to desecrate (violently) the Queen of the “New Elizabethan” age. In view of Jarman’s articulations of a critical distance from—and some cynicism about—the 1970s punk moment or movement (indicatively, *Dancing* 164, 172) it is clear that in *Jubilee* he is not simply emulating “God Save the Queen” fashion. One answer may be that 1950s Britain’s celebration of the “New Elizabethan” age was closely entwined with a retrenchment of extreme social conservatism and sexual repression: an official, state-driven “Moral Rearmament” campaign justified in terms of a post-World War II “clean-up” of Britain’s sexual morality and family values “for” the 1953 Coronation. The realities of the decade included homophobic media witch-hunts, the intensified police harassment of gay men, stitched-up arrests for cottaging of prominent public figures such as the actor John Gielgud, and the 1952 prosecution of the computer innovator and World War II codebreaker Alan Turing for homosexual “offences” and his treatment by chemical castration, leading to his 1954 suicide. Britain’s “New Elizabethan” age was a dangerous time for queers. Jarman, born in 1942 and on

the cusp of adolescence at this historical moment, cannot have been unaffected.

2. Jarman, Thatcherism's Culture Wars, and the 1988 "Battle for Britain" (Fuller)

A consistent thread running through Jarman's thought, writings, and films has been not only his immersive interest in history and art history but a conception and invocation of notions of "tradition" and "history" that claims ownership of both as inclusive of, and *belonging to*, his own dissenting, visionary, radical, activist lineage. This figuration is in resistance to conservative discourses which claim "tradition" and "history" as the binary opposites of dissenting, radical values or forces of change. There are striking connections between Jarman's self-positioning and his provocative uses of history in his films, especially the Renaissance, and the complex, both positive and negative, meanings it held for him (see Rowland Wymer's essay in this issue). In particular, Jarman's *Edward II* has been widely discussed for the explicitness with which it "appropriates [history's] features but clothe[d] in modern dress" so that the viewer is "forced to connect the conflicts of the past with the [queer rights] battles of the here and now" (Talvacchia 118). As Jim Ellis explores further in his essay for this issue, Jarman's deployment of overtly anachronistic props and *mise-en-scène* in his films was rooted in a careful engagement with questions of "how to represent the past in painting and in film" (PX): it is never merely a trite anti-realist or postmodernist reflex, but "used instead to foster a more complex and productive relation to the presentation of the past" and spectator reflection on this (PX).

Also of interest here, but less widely considered, is how Jarman's approach to history in his films, and *Jubilee*'s particular past-present strategies (discussed in the next section), anticipate Jarman's distinctive, complex, and non-binary invocations of "tradition" and

“history” during the Thatcher-era culture wars of a decade later. Jarman—along with other key figures in 1980s British cinema such as the screenwriter Hanif Kureishi—was dragged into these “wars” in January 1998 following the *Sunday Times*’s publication of Stone’s high-profile, highly ideological (and cinematically poorly informed) attack on *The Last of England* and five other recent low-budget British films. Railing against the “sick scenes from English life” he perceived in the films, Stone declared all six of them “worthless and insulting” and “dominated by [an anti-Thatcher] left-wing orthodoxy.”⁴

As the critic Graham Fuller notes in his thorough account of the Stone/*Sunday Times* debacle and the ensuing furore in the British media—which gave ample coverage to the inevitable acrimony the *Sunday Times* had provoked—Stone’s attack “reeked of provocation”; it was also only one of a series of “sustained attempts to marginalise the Left” by the 1980s pro-Thatcher British press, in which “far more was clearly at stake than the critical fate of six British movies” (66). The interest of this episode for the present essay is that Jarman’s “right to reply” response to Stone, published in the *Sunday Times* the following Sunday (“Freedom”), differed in kind from the public responses of the article’s other targets, such as Kureishi. The immediate responses included a public debate at the Everyman Cinema in Hampstead. This was intended to bring Jarman and others face to face with Stone on stage, but the latter (citing flu) failed to participate.

Stone’s opponents were quick to note that all six of the films he excoriated for their “sick scenes from English life” were set in a present-day (and divided) Britain. Conversely, although Stone’s polemic had nothing to say about *approaches* to the representation of the past, all three of the “very good films of a traditional kind” which his article cited briefly in

counterpoint were set in it. All three were also, broadly speaking, “period films” of the kind that Jarman loathed: one passage in his response conflates Stone’s choices (not entirely accurately) as the work of “commercial British producers [. . .] far away in Hollywood, presenting a heavily censored view of their country, all Beefeaters and hollyhocks, feeding illusions of stability in an unstable world” (“Freedom”).⁵ The response from the Left ultimately solidified along lines that fell into the trap of inverting Stone’s reductive binarisms rather than dismantling them. This included a reactive straight inversion of Stone’s apparent endorsement (only) of films set in the past, with equally reductive and damaging consequences for the wider British debates around the representation of the past on film (which, by the early 1990s, evolved into the critique of so-called “heritage cinema” dissected in my own work).⁶

Jarman’s reply to Stone presented an important exception to this tendency. Rather than permitting Stone and the Conservative right to appropriate the values of “tradition” and “history” in support of their own political agendas, Jarman’s response was to reclaim these same values for his own films and cultural lineage; he did so in terms that are relevant both to my reconsideration of *Jubilee* and for this issue’s wider focus on the place of the early modern in Jarman’s work. In his reply, Jarman reasserted the place of dissent, controversy, and resistance *as* traditions *within* English history (and also, elsewhere in his reply, within British cinema history), while simultaneously claiming *his* place *within* “tradition” and “history” (as both artist and dissenting, queer subject). He did this by making prominent reference to the early modern sources and connections in his work:

Stone’s [contradictory attack] comes from a supporter of a government that professes

freedom in the economic marketplace yet seems unable to accommodate freedom of ideas. His technique has its own sorry history in the denunciation of artists, from both left and right [. . .]. Where am I in all of this? A salacious corruptor, steeped in paranoia? The truth is less exotic. I have been around now [making films] for two decades, so I am part of history [. . .] hardly an avant garde film-maker at the age of 46. I have made six films. Shakespeare has been the inspiration for two of them; *The Tempest*, and *The Angelic Conversation* based on the Sonnets. I have also directed a film on the Baroque painter *Caravaggio*, *Jubilee*, and *Sebastiane*. My cinema has tradition and history; it is not just a trite reflection of the political divide *The Tempest* [. . .] brought a whole new audience to Shakespeare, as did *The Angelic Conversation* which played last month at a large Tokyo cinema to enthusiastic audiences [. . .] I would suggest that I am the traditionalist and the responsible one and Stone is the yahoo. (“Freedom”)

Many aspects of this response echo the invocation of “untimely” discourses that Jim Ellis in this issue identifies in Jarman’s work, especially with reference to Jarman’s reflexively historicallyinformed planting choices in his garden at Dungeness. In both Jarman’s reply to Stone and his approach to history in *Jubilee*, he deployed “untimely” discourses for comparable purposes. By “insert[ing] different histories in the landscape [. . .] at the same time [he] plants himself in different communities and different histories” (PX); in so doing he identifies different connections and temporalities that “open up the possibility of different histories and different communities and different relations across time” (Ellis PX).

3: Culture, Tradition, and History Revisited: *Jubilee's* Doubled and Proliferating Queens

The vision of England's "shadow" present (and near-future) that Jarman had presented in *Jubilee* can be seen to (fore)shadow the philistinism and repression he critiqued a decade later in *The Last of England*, and in his response to Stone. *Jubilee's* "shadow of" the (first) Elizabethan era is at once philistine, lawless, and totalitarian. As Amyl Nitrate laments, "No one's interested in the ballet any more"; while (prophetically) real power is concentrated not in the hands of the monarchy or nation-state governments, but the monopolistic global entertainment media, embodied by the larger-than-life magnate Borgia Ginz (played by the blind actor Orlando/Jack Birkett, whom Jarman later cast as Caliban in *The Tempest* [1979] and the Pope in *Caravaggio* [1986]). Ginz, the man who "bought them all and rearranged the alphabet," has transformed Buckingham Palace—the seat of Jarman's detested modern monarchy—into "the world's biggest recording studio." In a series of show-stealing aphoristic speeches, he sketches a world in which commodified mediation has not only replaced the real but has swallowed political and religious institutions of East and West, Left and Right alike.

In an inversion of the alchemy practised by Dee, *Jubilee* juxtaposes Elizabeth I—ambivalently idealised cipher of a lost England and implicit signifier of lost values—against her (double-cast) late-twentieth-century "double," Bod.⁷ Jarman's note that "Bod" could denote "Boadicea, Anybody" suggests a further doubling in a film where "the heroines have emblematic names" (*Dancing* 170). Moreover, his "heroines'" spuriously motivated and self-gratifying violence is a satirical inversion, part-inspired by Valerie Solanas's notorious 1968 anti-patriarchal *SCUM* (Society for Cutting Up Men) *Manifesto* (Monk, "Interview"), "more likely to put men off than turn them on" (*Dancing* 170). Bod herself is first glimpsed only distantly, as

she mugs Queen Elizabeth II and leaves her for dead on some waste ground, before making her grand entrance into the gang's warehouse squat (which Jarman has already furnished with a throne) wearing the crown, declaring: "I captured it in Deptford [. . .]. It's high fashion."

Jubilee's doublings, however, extend beyond the Elizabeth/Bod coupling and the "doubling back" of two Elizabethan eras to place Elizabeth I in juxtaposition (and in cross-temporal diegetic encounters) with a wider multiplicity of unstable, and at times troubling, "queen" figures. Thus the real-life punk "queen" Jordan—whose appearance as a self-styled work of art made her a source of fascination not only to Jarman, and provided his initial inspiration for the film—is pitted against Runacre/Bod in an amusing rivalry between two queens. Amyl's striking vertical peroxide hair and constructivist make-up are Jordan's own but, for *Jubilee's* purposes, she is transformed (from the neck down, at least) into the gang's twinset-and-pearls-wearing revisionist historian-cum-headteacher-cum-resident intellectual. In one single emblematic shot, Jarman juxtaposes the pair in terms that, semiotically, suggest both a binary opposition between the values of "tradition" and "history" and a holistic fusion of the two. While Bod occupies the throne and wears the crown (tradition), Amyl perches on its arm reading a text on Lenin (history).

As Wymer has observed, however, *Jubilee* presents its viewers with an "onslaught of deliberately discordant signs, including large amounts of written text," producing a sense of "semiotic overload" (*Derek* 56). These "discordant" semiotic cues extend to the use of costume. Amyl's modern(ist) make-up and Marxist reading are combined with a penchant for pastel-pink cashmere and Carnation by Floris perfume ("Not all the good things have disappeared!"). These are details that invoke both high-traditional English style (Floris was founded in 1730 in Jermyn

Street, St James, London) and the persona of Margaret Thatcher (who had become Conservative Party leader in 1974 and would take office as Britain's first woman prime minister in 1979). Below the "captured" crown, Bod wears a slim-fit man's tuxedo suit which we are told she "liberated from a Russian diplomat she fucked at the Dorchester [hotel]," but with nothing underneath, at times casually exposing her breasts.

One of the most striking achievements of *Jubilee's* "overloaded" *mise-en-scène* is the success with which Jarman and his novice production designers, John Maybury and Kenny Morris, translate the "scrapbook" visual aesthetics of punk (and of Jarman's own notebooks and scripts)—collage, text, graffiti, defacement—to film. Maybury, then a young film student, would later become one of the group of British experimental directors associated with 1980s New Romanticism. Morris was the drummer of the punk band Siouxsie and the Banshees (who were contracted to perform in *Jubilee* but later disapprovingly withdrew their participation). Graffitied tracts, real contemporary newspaper-headline posters ("Healey's Budget Strategy in Ruins"; "Sex Pistol no. 2 knifed"), and defaced Xeroxed images decorate the walls of the Butler's Wharf warehouse set/squat, including a bare-breasted, smiling Elizabeth II in parallel to her bare-breasted nemesis Bod. The densest overload of signs, however, is concentrated around Amyl Nitrate. The History of England she is writing is itself a collage, while her customised globe obliterates the former colonies and superpowers of both East and West to "Negative World Status."

Significantly, in relation to Jarman's self-alignment with the values of "tradition and history," however, Amyl's desk is crowded with—and crowded in by—signifiers of the learning (books), high culture ("the ballet"), and "old" English values (an apron advertising "England's

Glory” matches, Amyl’s prized Winston Churchill mug) that *Jubilee*’s dystopic “shadow” England has jettisoned as “obsolete.” But the version of “England,” “history,” and “tradition” presented by these objects is ambivalent at best in relation to Jarman’s own values: aesthetically, they are the tourist tat of “Old England’s shamelessly ‘invented,’ ‘ornamentalist’ traditions of empire and class” (Cannadine qtd. in Dave 157). Just as the dialogue refers to Bod directly (if sarcastically) as “Royalty,” so Amyl herself is first introduced to us as “England’s Glory.” However, the alternative history lesson she delivers is more chilling than reassuring: “What separates Hitler from Napoleon? Was Churchill a hero? Did he change history for the better?” As both Amyl’s own speech and *Jubilee*’s violent later events uneasily highlight, her professed motto—the Situationist slogan “*Faites vos desirs réalité*: make your desires reality”—could be a recipe for fascism or sadistic murder as easily as liberation.

A further doubling—this time, of the figure of Jordan (or Amyl Nitrate) the ballerina against Jordan the debased Britannia—echoes Jarman’s later invocations of English “culture,” “tradition,” and “history” differently to suggest a reverse-alchemical debasement of “culture”: from ballet to vulgar base metal. The set-piece transformation of Amyl Nitrate into Britannia needs to be understood not only in relation to the Bod-Amyl rivalry (which we can read as counterposing Elizabeth I against Britannia), but also for its contrasts with an earlier inserted sequence. In the latter—comprising re-edited and speeded-up footage from Jarman’s 1977 short film *Jordan’s Dance*, out of which *Jubilee* grew—Jordan performs classical ballet in an urban wasteland of burning books, observed by the ghosts of high culture and classical civilisation.

For all their apparent regality, Bod and Amyl alike—along with their gang members, the

pyromaniac Mad/Medusa (Toyah Willcox) and the throwback heterosexual nymphomaniac Crabs (Nell Campbell)—prove to be eager acolytes of Borgia Ginz’s media empire. As Ginz himself predicts, “they all sign up in the end.” Amyl-as-Britannia, accordingly, is signed up by Ginz as “Britain’s entry to the Eurovision Song Contest.” However, Jordan merely mimes to “Rule Britannia,” thrusting suggestively against the trident while wearing little more than a worn plastic Union Jack apron, patent Westwood sandals, lime-green stockings and armpit hair. Britannia and patriotism are reduced to absurdity, drowned out by an onslaught of dry ice and the sounds of a Luftwaffe air-raid and Hitler’s speeches.

Despite the visiting Elizabeth I’s significance in *Jubilee* as the more serene and dignified cipher of a “lost,” mystical, spiritual England, Wymer suggests that the Virgin Queen, too, is diminished in the film. Confronted with sights such as Bod’s murder of another of the film’s competing “queen” figures, the rich, narcissistic but ultimately melancholy (and dead) transgender rock star Lounge Lizard (Wayne County), she appears reduced to an uncomprehending spectator, “pleading pathetically [. . .] ‘Spirit Ariel, we would have knowledge of God. Where is God? Is God . . . dead?’” (Wymer, *Derek* 57).

Jubilee closes in a troubled, elegiac mood with Elizabeth I and John Dee at Tilly Whim on the Dorset coast (though this remains, likely, preferable to the abject fate of Elizabeth II). Here, however, I wish to end on a less wholly negative reading. In *Jubilee*’s symbolic system, Amyl (though not her debased “double” Britannia) carries positive values of “culture” and “history”—albeit understood in complex and ironized terms—while the further, queered “meeting of two queens” presented in Elizabeth I’s encounter with the dead Lounge Lizard dignifies and redeems him/her in death, if not in life. The editing and framing of these scenes (crops and

close-ups that emphasise pearls, lace, fabric, and the whiteness and composure of both faces) establish a clear equivalence: one queen gazes down on her troubling near-double to ask: “What signifies this corpse?” *Jubilee*’s consistent use of visual devices (colour palette and make-up design, as well as framing and editing), which set up a series of dialectical doublings between Elizabeth I and virtually *all* of these characters is striking: not only Bod and her rival “queen” Amyl, but also Lounge Lizard (the artifice of whose hair and make-up recall the older Elizabeth), and even the chubby, orange-haired Mad.

4. Conclusion: *Jubilee* as a Document of Queer, Punk, Fashionable London

The film’s working title was at one point High Fashion (with a hammer-and-sickle G and swastika S); while, on its release, some critics dismissed it as “Chelsea on Ice” (*Dancing* 168, 180). Despite Jarman’s modest characterisation of the film as one “cast from among and made by friends” (*Dancing* 176), the nature of his social circle by the late 1970s was such that these friends formed a ready-made “glitterati” of artists, designers, and art-school pop figures from an older pre-punk generation. This social set—archly dismissed by the style commentator Peter York as “Them” (qtd. by O’Pray 54–55)—ranged from the artists Duggie Field and Andrew Logan—who, in 1973, had also founded London’s gay/drag-queen Alternative Miss World—to rock royalty such as Roxy Music’s Bryan Ferry.

As Jarman’s 1970s diary entries also highlight, however, *Jubilee* is significant as a document of the handover from one (generationally distinct) fashionable London scene to another: from Peter York’s “Them” to the King’s Road upstarts of punk. As early as August 1976, Jarman wrote from Butler’s Wharf:

The Andrew Logan all-stars have dominated the social life of London since the beginning of the decade, since David Hockney went into tax exile with the other working-class heroes of the sixties. They missed the sixties, but inherited the daydream which they tried to make a reality for a second generation. But they were the flash of the Super Novae before darkness. Now the seventies have caught up, and been pulled from under their feet by a gang of King's Road fashion anarchists who call themselves punks [. . .]. But in reality the instigators of punk are the same old petit bourgeois art students, who a few months ago were David Bowie and Bryan Ferry look-alikes. (*Dancing* 164)

In *Jubilee* itself, Jenny Runacre, Nell Campbell—both Alternative Miss World associates—and Richard O'Brien were some of "Them". Jordan, Adam Ant, and Toyah Willcox (alongside Maybury) represented the nascent punk new guard and (by the 1980s) the post-punk New Romantic pop chart future. But, across the overlapping temporalities and generations that converge in *Jubilee*, both of Jarman's "They"s are ultimately (ethically) "the same": "They all sign up one way or the other" (*Dancing* 172).

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NOTES

¹ In Jarman’s account: “As usual, there was no money; but [Jarman’s producer] James Whaley, with true bravado, gambled everything on an air ticket to Tehran and arrived back with a cheque for £50,000, one week before we started shooting” (*Dancing* 168) and less than a year before the beginnings of Iran’s Islamic Revolution. *Jubilee*’s choices of cast, punk bands, and extras were similarly expedient. Jordan (whom Jarman had originally wanted to make a documentary about) helped Jarman with the casting, including introductions to feminist punk band The Slits—*Jubilee*’s street gang—and an early-career Adam Ant (ex-Hornsey Art College, and at that date a punk performer specialising in transgressive sexual content and imagery rather than a chart pop star), whom Jarman cast as the naïf aspirant pop-star The Kid (*Dancing* 168). The London punk bands Chelsea and Siouxsie and the Banshees also featured obliquely (*Jubilee*, notably, presents the music of its real-world punk performers only in mediated, interrupted, and truncated forms). Jarman had reportedly wanted to cast Manchester’s

Buzzcocks, but could not afford their train fares to London.

² For a discussion of *Jubilee* that situates it within the broader body of 1970s British punk films and with reference to theoretical conceptualisations of “punk cinema,” see Monk “‘Now.’”

³ The “POST-MODERN” is self-consciously invoked in *Jubilee*’s set design: both literally—the word is graffitied on a wall in the bombed-out 1970s South London wasteland beyond Jarman’s studio at Butler’s Wharf, where an abandoned pram burns and The Slits dispassionately bind Jarman’s artist friend and collaborator Luciana Martinez in barbed wire—and via what Rowland Wymer describes as the film’s “calculated semiotic assault” (*Derek* 56).

⁴ The full list of films attacked by Stone comprises: Jarman’s *The Last of England*; Kureishi’s multicultural hit comedy-drama *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and its less successful sequel *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), both directed by Stephen Frears; the crude farce *Eat the Rich* (1987), directed by Peter Richardson; *Empire State* (1987), directed by Ron Peck, a violent East End thriller with themes of deregulated big-money property development in the rapidly transforming London Docklands; and *Business as Usual* (1988), directed by Lezli-Ann Barrett, an issue-based drama about workplace sexual harassment.

⁵ Stone’s three counterpoint films, cited as positive examples “that show what can be done,” were John Boorman’s autobiographical drama of his World War II childhood, *Hope and Glory* (1987), David Lean’s epic adaptation of E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1984), and Merchant Ivory Productions’ more intimately scaled—but internationally successful—adaptation of Forster’s *A Room With A View*, directed by James Ivory (1985). Aesthetically, all three films conform with Stone’s (rather than Jarman’s) taste in the “traditional,” though *A Room* was more closely attuned to the sensibility of the gay liberal humanist Forster than Lean’s robustly

heterosexual/ised film.

⁶ For an account of these debates, see Monk, *Heritage*, Chapter 1. On “heritage” versus “post-heritage” approaches to representing the past, and the (counterintuitive) progressive treatment of sexuality within some “heritage films,” see Monk, *Sexuality*.

⁷ Further ironies are suggested by Jarman’s casting of O’Brien—the creator and star of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and its stage precursor—as Dee, though his performance is appropriately austere.