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| Title | Delphinium's portrait of queer history: rethinking Derek Jarman's legacy |
| Authors | Stamm, Laura |
| Publication date | 2018-11-01 |
| Original Citation | Stamm, L. (2019) 'Delphinium's portrait of queer history: rethinking Derek Jarman's legacy', Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media, 16, pp. 38-52. https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.16.03 |
| Type of publication | Article (peer-reviewed) |
| Link to publisher's version | 10.33178/alpha.16.03 |
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| Download date | 2026-11-04 20:09:38 |
| Item downloaded from | https://hdl.handle.net/10468/7396 |



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alphaville
JOURNAL OF FILM AND SCREEN MEDIA

# *Delphinium*'s Portrait of Queer History: Rethinking Derek Jarman's Legacy

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***Abstract:*** Delphinium: A Childhood Portrait of Derek Jarman *(2009) portrays filmmaker Matthew Mishory's interpretation of the childhood of Derek Jarman described in interviews and autobiographical writing such as* At Your Own Risk. *The portrait of Jarman honours his memory with a Super 8 inscription that repeats the queer sensibility of Jarman's cinematic and painterly work. Mishory's film positions Jarman as his filmmaking predecessor; even more so, it positions Jarman as a sort of queer ancestor.* Delphinium*'s sense of ancestry demands a reappraisal of Jarman's work that foregrounds its creation of queer lineage. This article does just that, looking at Jarman's* Caravaggio *(1986) and* Edward II *(1991) as both searches for queer origins and formations of queer futures. Through their explorations of queer continuity, Jarman's films inscribe the process by which one learns to become queer and navigate a world that is so often hostile to queer existence. Their preservation of individual figures of the past provides a queer family history and a tool for education, a means for queers to understand their origins, as well as how to make sense of their own place in the world.*

In *Delphinium: A Childhood Portrait of Derek Jarman* (2009), filmmaker Matthew Mishory searches for the origins of Derek Jarman's legacy. Mishory's twelve-minute short film reconstructs an encounter with Jarman that Mishory could have only ever imagined. Shot on Super 8, the medium that marked Jarman's movement away from painting and toward filmmaking, the film lyrically presents young Jarman's artistic and sexual awakening. Mishory imagines the moment when Jarman apprehended his own queer sensibility, inscribing the film with the type of personal access to Jarman that the film (and Mishory himself) longs for but can never achieve. Jarman's death preceded Mishory's discovery of his work, so Mishory's identification with the artist is always an identification with an unmet figure of the past. Although Mishory created the film in 2009, it did not receive widespread recognition until 2014 when the British Film Institute used it as part of "Remembering Derek Jarman", a series of events commemorating Jarman twenty years after his death. The BFI now holds *Delphinium* in its permanent collection and Mishory's film plays an important role in framing the abundance of Jarman material in the collection. On the BFI's website and in their Mediatheque at the BFI Southbank location, the Institute uses the film as an introduction to Derek Jarman; after viewing the film in the Mediatheque, links to interviews with Jarman and a comprehensive collection of his films begin to pop up and guide the viewer through Jarman's lifework.

Twenty years after Jarman's death, therefore, the BFI memorialises his life with a portrait of his childhood, a portrait of his artistic and sexual origin story. The BFI's use of Mishory's film points to the way the film inscribes the filmmaker's personal history, not only by visualising the childhood Jarman has discussed in interviews and his autobiographical writing, but also by sweeping the spectator up into the sensual world of Jarman's artistic vision. In this way, the film provides an alternative means of encountering both history and a figure of the past while preserving Jarman's life and work for the possibility of future and extended/repeated encounters. In other

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words, the BFI's remembrance of Jarman simultaneously functions as an insistence on his continued presence; the curated world allows viewers both familiar and unfamiliar with his work to become absorbed in an encounter with a figure from the past whose work still powerfully affects our present. In this way, *Delphinium* demands a reappraisal of Jarman's films, which have been canonised by films scholars like Michael O'Pray (*Jarman*; "Remarks"; "Art"), Colin MacCabe, and Peter Wollen. Mishory's film asks the audience to appreciate how Jarman's films create an archive for queer reference and how his films preserve queer history for future generations' discovery. I take *Delphinium* as my point of theorisation for reading Derek Jarman's work, which has been the subject of critics' and scholars' analysis for decades. Here, I reorient Jarman's work to position him as the epicentre of a queer genealogy, exploring how Mishory's focus on childhood and queer sensibility helps construct such a genealogy.

Jarman considered himself a part of a lineage of queer filmmakers. Brian Hoyle writes: "Jarman saw himself as a queer artist following in the footsteps of Jean Cocteau and Pier Paolo Pasolini, and like his forebears, was an inveterate polymath—a notable painter, set-designer, writer, gardener and political activist—who nevertheless remains best remembered for his films" ("Radical").[1] Jarman embodies this queer inheritance with his starring role in Julian Cole's *Ostia* (1987), a reconstruction of the events leading up to Pier Paolo Pasolini's murder. Recreating the legendary filmmaker through the lens of his own artistic vision, Jarman recites lines of Pasolini's poetry alongside lines of his own. Jarman appeared on screen a number of times throughout his life, but his re-enactment of Pasolini acts out Jarman's guiding look back to the past for emulatory queer figures. The film, made contemporaneously with *Caravaggio* (1986) and *The Last of England* (1987), articulates Jarman's interest in understanding his own life and self-construction through his embodied and cinematic re-presentation of the lives of queers past.

In looking at Jarman's work through the lens of queer legacy, I am working to counter canonised modernist readings of Jarman as the visionary artist whose film paintings stood out against the backdrop of early 1990s New Queer Cinema. Readings of Jarman as a singular thinker ultimately separate him from the lineage of filmmakers that shaped his creative vision, while also denying the foundational role of his collaborative work with Ken Russell.[2] Scholars, understandably, tend to engage with Jarman's work at the level of close textual analysis, emphasising his films' status as art objects, confirmed by his training as a painter, and explicating their relationship to Renaissance art and literature (Wymer; Ellis, "Queer"). These readings speak to the visual richness of Jarman's films, but they cannot account for the inherited queer sensibility that pervades Jarman's work and informs Mishory's inscription of his queer predecessor in *Delphinium.* Jarman's films, I argue, cannot be thought outside of the queer mentorship that made their production possible or apart from the queer education they provide. This form of mentorship is tied to the temporality of cinema itself, in that cinema can make possible encounters with figures that are impossible to (physically) encounter in the present moment. The original BFI version of *Delphinium* includes an interview at the end of the film with an American writer who recounts hearing about Jarman's films during a difficult time in high school and driving hours to the nearest video store that housed them.[3] For this young gay man, these films provided a mentorship he could not find in his small Midwestern hometown. This mentorship, a look to queer figures of the past through the cinematic medium, both informs Mishory's work and is simultaneously made possible by films like *Delphinium.* More specifically, Mishory's cinematic identification with Derek Jarman's films informs his desire to inscribe the lives of queer mentors onscreen.

**Searching for Legacy: *Delphinium*'s Life of Young Derek Jarman**

Mishory's *Delphinium* invents, and in some ways reproduces, an origin story for learning to be in the world as a queer subject, for understanding how to comprehend being queer.[4] The film offers biographical origins for Derek Jarman's future film work and traces the filmmaker's painterly aesthetics back to his childhood. But in doing so, it tenderly exposes young Jarman's traumas and theorises from these painful narratives. Mishory's portrait is less concerned with factually memorialising the Derek Jarman the world would come to know and more concerned with preserving Jarman's retrospective queerness and tracing the emergence of a queer sensibility that resurfaces in Mishory's own work. As Mishory attempts to recover Jarman's lost queer childhood, he simultaneously inscribes Jarman's influence on his own filmmaking and his desire to understand the origins of a sensibility he has inherited.

The desire for historic encounter cannot be thought separately from scopophilia and the desire to see images like one's self. Queer audiences' desire to see images of those like them was and remains, arguably, a driving force behind queer cinema, and queer cinema's turns back to gay and lesbian figures of the past not only provided more of those images, but also came with access to the lives of those past. However, as scholars like Elizabeth Freeman and Heather Love have noted, looks back to the past are never simple, never without the baggage afforded by identification, loss, and mourning. Ann Cvetkovich has written about an archive of trauma. Again and again, queerness is positioned as a longing, clinging nostalgia for a melancholic pain. Zachary Small seeks to explain the root of this longing:

> Queer artists are orphans of a different stripe. They have no conventional genealogy or lineage, no family history or record. Instead, queer people write their own history through dreams, desires, and longings; theirs is a history of things, an archaeology that affirms the existence of queerness in the artifacts of centuries past.

Small describes the alienation and abandonment specific to the experience of living a queer life. Queer artists do not typically see their lives mirrored in the faces of their family lineages or the pages of history; they have had to search for their origins and attach to the past in ways that other artists, whose identities and histories are documented and represented, have not. Many queers whose sexuality and identity alienates them from their born-into family look for family history and a genealogy elsewhere. Their lack of available emulatory familial figures creates a need to look somewhere else for the relationality, role modelling, and unconditional love (said to be) offered by one's family. Scholars David L. Eng and Karen Jacobs have both written about how queerness reorients kinship structures and demands a new process of family-building, but I push this thinking further to argue that queerness also reorients understandings of genealogy and family history. Put another way, queer approaches to history demand an expansion beyond queer kinship structures in the present moment. Cinema, as a temporal medium and a medium with the ability to envision new temporalities, makes possible queer filmmakers' alternative understanding of genealogy, an understanding that differs from heteronormative conceptions of genealogy.

Mishory's film begins with this desire to be with the past. His encounter with Young Derek Jarman opens with footage of a man at the window at Jarman's Prospect Cottage; the man is played by Jarman's muse and long-time partner, Keith Collins.[5] Using Collins in this opening provides the film with an embodiment of Jarman's personal history, placing Jarman's lover in the home where he and Jarman spent the latter's final days. *Delphinium* begins with Mishory's search for

Jarman at the physical repository of Jarman's adult- and end-of-life memories; from there, the film brings to life the Jarman that Mishory imagines. Yet, the opening voiceover lets the spectator know that film is always "time embalmed in 8mm gauge". This embalming, in other words, is not a stilling or freezing, but one made of filmic movement. The cinematic embalming that *Delphinium* performs does not require a static division between life and death, between present and past. The cinema preserves moments of embodiment, allowing those moments to move.




**Figures 1 and 2: Opening sequence. *Delphinium: A Childhood Portrait of Derek Jarman* (Matthew Mishory, 2009). Screenshots.**

Mishory visualises the artist's sexuality in a way that repeats Jarman's own artistic sensibilities, taking iconic imagery from Jarman's films and adapting Jarman's lyrical form; Mishory paints a portrait of the filmmaker that honours Jarman's own approach to representing life and personhood. By resurrecting Jarman's childhood and preserving its legacy, Mishory's film appears to exemplify Heather Love's claim how, "insofar as the losses of the past motivate us and give meaning to our current experience, we are bound to memorialize them" (1). *Delphinium*'s introduction of the boarding school, the space where most of the film takes place, comes through a painting titled *School for Boys, Dorset, England, 1957*.[6] The film's first move inside the school, however, enacts a scene Jarman recounted in interviews as one of his most formative, that of being discovered in bed with a schoolmate and brutally punished for it. *Delphinium* stages this punishment with a repeated "this is what you get for queering" voiceover, referencing the trauma of the encounter Jarman claims led him to repress all notions of sexual desire. But as soon as the film starts to inscribe that repression, it cuts to a scene with Young Derek (Samuel Garfield) and a roomful of his schoolmates in bed in a masturbatory competition. An older boy at the front of the room commands the boys, repeatedly shouting "first one to come wins". In the face of the previous scene's punishment, this one literalises the homosociality of an all-boys environment.[7] The film's gesture to sexualise the school space serves something like a reparative function, or at least it works as a counter to the childhood that Jarman describes in interview footage included in both Isaac Julien's *Derek* (2008) and Jarman's autobiography, *At Your Own Risk*; the space of the school becomes a space of desire and inspiration.[8] Mishory's film, then, not only gives Jarman back a joyfully queer childhood, but also positions his sexual awakening as the beginning of his career as a painter and filmmaker.

In the scene that serves as the short film's climax and comes to figure one of the central reasons why the film returns to Jarman's childhood, Young Derek paints the school's groundskeeper (Jeremiah Dupre). The groundskeeper scene meditates on Jarman queerly representing personhood through embellishment: his portraiture imagines the groundskeeper as

something in excess of and better than reality. In what first might be read as a straightforward sexual advance, the young artist demands that the keeper take off his clothes, but this requirement comes to take on a much greater significance. Young Jarman tells the keeper that, in those clothes, he looks like a groundskeeper, but explains that in his painting, free from the restrictions of his common clothes, he can become whomever Jarman wishes him to become: "This is my painting, and you can be anything I want you to be, anything at all." In this case, what Young Derek wishes him to become foreshadows Jarman's first feature film, *Sebastiane* (1976); the groundskeeper appears in the warm lighting of the film's homoerotic world and with the punctured wounds of its titular character. The biographical depiction of Jarman here rereads an autobiographical function back into the artist's film work and locates his (avowedly repressed at the time) desires in his art. Mishory's film asserts that Jarman's biographical films about figures such as Saint Sebastian and Ludwig Wittgenstein are not only about queerly retelling the lives of those individuals, but also about retelling the life of Jarman himself.



**Figure 3: Two male lovers in the woods. *Delphinium: A Childhood Portrait of Derek Jarman*. Screenshot.**

*Delphinium* ends with a montage of city spaces, queer couples, and a whirlwind of other images that reflects how Jarman's work theorises a sort of ambient queerness—queer affects that capture the experiences of those past and present. Amongst all of these images, one sequence continually reappears, and closes the film: black-and-white footage of two male lovers in the woods. While this lyrical sequence does fit into the diegetic world Mishory constructs, it is more strikingly a visual citation of *The Clearing* (1993), a seven-minute short film directed by Alexis Bistikas in which Jarman stars. *The Clearing*, filmed only a year before Jarman's death, is a search through the woods shot from the cruising point of view of an anonymous onlooker. Through Steadicam movement, the audience surveys the woods' occupants along with the onlooker, taking in a single man looking to pick up a stranger, a group of young queers gathered around a leather-clad older man, and a leather-hooded man who slips off his hood to reveal his face. As the onlooker

stumbles through the trees, he encounters a young boy dressed in his school uniform and next, a woman and young child spread out across a picnic blanket. The woman tells him that she has been worried about him, and asks him to come and sit, but he disobeys this command to stop and continues his search. It is only when he reaches the clearing and spots a saxophone player he desires that the film, through shot/reverse shot, reveals that Jarman plays the man whose gaze the audience has been following.

The film restructures the voyeurism and scopophilic desire inherent to cinematic spectatorship in the form of cruising's wandering gaze. Gary Needham, writing on *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), argues that the shot/reverse shot pattern can use "cinematic cruising as a mode of gay spectatorship" (110). A film's exchanges of glances and gazes need not conform to traditional modes of spectatorship that construct a heterosexual subjectivity.[9] Instead, these shots can construct a queer mode of looking. *The Clearing* insists on such a gaze. Jarman's character keeps moving despite the woman's demand that he stop wandering; he ignores the command to pause and instead continues moving in the direction of his desire. *Delphinium*'s final citation of *The Clearing*, alongside his archaeological dig into Jarman's life, exemplifies Mishory's own search for understanding a (pre-AIDS) sexual subculture he was too young to experience. *Delphinium* cruises the queer past for an erotic encounter one was temporally too late to experience. Through recourse to a cinematic capture of Jarman's body, and a cinematic look through Jarman's eyes, Mishory reasserts film as a medium through which one can feel the queer past.

*Delphinium*'s ending gestures toward what happened when Jarman's artistic vision transferred to cinema. In interviews about his work, Jarman consistently foregrounds his training as a painter. Kate Higginson remarks: "Celebrated as a prominent avant-garde director, Derek Jarman quipped that he preferred to be known as 'a painter who dabbled in another art form, namely cinema'" (77). Despite these glib remarks about his career, he certainly did more than dabble in cinema and his films would become the centrepiece of his queer legacy. And yet, what Jarman's remark points to is the way in which painting always remained at the forefront of his mind, the way in which his films were always also paintings, always also portraits. Jarman painted his subjects on screen, sensually portraying each individual in a manner true to Jarman's own sensibility and the subject's sensed queerness. In place of fact-based historical biography, Jarman's portraits represent an erotic encounter with the past, an eros produced by loss and longing. Mishory's film, I argue, asks us to reread Jarman's work in terms of (auto)biography, portraiture, and queer longings for legacy. Cinematic portraiture produces a formal cinematic inheritance, a form of discovering queer genealogy Mishory inherits from Jarman.

## "Man's Character Is His Fate": *Caravaggio*'s Suspended History

Mishory's *Delphinium* ascribes something of an autobiographical function to Jarman's work, or at least positions his artwork as a way to work through his personal history; in doing so, it performs the meta function of creating a portrait of an artist creating portraits, an artist who would then go on to make cinematic portraits of figures like Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Edward II.[10] In *Caravaggio*, Jarman reanimates the queer desire inscribed in Caravaggio's work and tells the life story imagined through these paintings' production. Caravaggio's portraits become the source material for the film's biographical retelling, as Jarman's understanding of what it means to be queer in a hostile world becomes the medium of

transmission. Jarman performs an on-screen metamorphosis of Caravaggio's actual paintings, but even more so, Jarman reconstructs the artist's life through the production of art, and queerness emerges as a residue, a biographical remainder of his paintings. *Caravaggio* creates a revisionist history of the artist's life by understanding the homoerotic imagery in his painting as autobiographical; Jarman tells Caravaggio's life through the production of his paintings, his selection of models, his mixing of paints and staging of props. The production of paintings like *Boy with Basket of Fruit* (c. 1594) and *Amor Victorious* (c. 1602) is the axis on which the film turns and the sole determinant of the spectator's access to Caravaggio. Through *Caravaggio*'s depiction and recreation of the Baroque artist's paintings, the *tableau vivant*, or living picture, "serves as the medium for a history based on images: it becomes an interface between art and history, film and painting, the present and the past" (380). When queers' history is not recorded in the pages of books, it emerges in the image. Caravaggio's paintings are the medium through which Jarman interfaces with the artist, and it is through Jarman's reimagining of the artist's work that the spectator gains access to Caravaggio.

*Caravaggio* closes with the end of the artist's life, but this marker of life ending comes with another image of the artist's work. As Caravaggio (Nigel Terry) lies on his deathbed at the film's close, he sees flashbacks of himself as a child, dressed as an altar boy with wings; the child comes back to bear witness and reunite Caravaggio with his first love and mentor, Pasqualone (Sean Bean).[11] This return to Caravaggio's boyhood, the beginning of his process of learning to be queer, becomes transposed over a live-action reenactment of *The Entombment of Christ* (c. 1603). In the painting comprised of posed actors, Caravaggio serves as the Christ figure, and this iconic image marks his death that hangs over the film since its opening. The scene's first shot frames the actors in such a way that they appear to be within the frame of a painting. Following the opening wide shot, however, the scene cuts closer into the posed actors' bodies providing a cinematic inventory of the painting's details, revealing close-ups of Caravaggio/Christ's nailed hands and feet, the faces of his mourners, and the hands of a man holding his body. As the camera lingers over hands, faces, and feet, it is clear that though the actors' bodies are temporarily suspended, they are not static; their fingers squirm, arms quiver, and fabric sways with the breeze. Caravaggio's painting becomes embodied in the film's final moments; his death is embalmed in this image of his lifeless body amid the quivering hands of his mourners.

This suspension of the cinematic image evokes Philip Rosen's understanding of film as change mummified. Rosen adopts André Bazin's concept of "change mummified" or, more accurately, the translator's interpretation, to explore what it says about modern historicity. He writes: "For [change mummified] rests on a notion of temporality as a threatening dynamic force, a threat registered especially in the high valuation placed on stabilizing relations between the present and past" (Rosen xi). Historical thinking, Rosen argues, privileges or even ontologically assumes temporal continuity. Cinema thus provides a privileged temporal medium to unthink continuity and disrupt historicity.

In her *Film Quarterly* piece on *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015), Patricia White describes the film as "a love story suspended in time but located in history" (11). This characterisation of queer looks *back* as suspended in time strikes me as productive because the word "suspended" can be defined in so many different ways: temporarily stopped, deferred to a later time, prevented from falling or sinking, kept fixed, etc. But all of these definitions imply a quality of unfinishedness. History is unfinished, unclosed, uncontained; history in both Jarman's and Mishory's work is mobile, moving through and with the present. Jarman's films are, in fact, suspended in time but

Jarman, across his oeuvre, does not specify his characters' temporality in the manner that Haynes's *Carol* locates its protagonist within 1950s American domesticity. The look back in Jarman's films is a look back to a history that convenes with the present, an anachronistically queer return to the past filtered through the perspective of Jarman's personal history.[12] On a formal level, unlike *Carol*'s impeccable 1950s period costuming, *Caravaggio* intentionally obscures the film's historicity with anachronistic intrusions like the art critic's typewriter. His portrayal of Caravaggio demonstrates that both melancholia and a portrait of history involve the image of a lost love object suspended in the moment of incorporation. Queer projects of recovery form their own love story; queer cinematic portraiture, in these terms, acts as an expression of love for an individual the filmmaker and spectator were never able to know and never able to love. This seemingly ungrievable loss, nevertheless, becomes available for continued relation, as it exists within the portrait's frame, within the film's screen in a suspended state. And, as the *Caravaggio*'s reenactments affirm, this state is suspended but never static, the product of history's losses. As Mishory's *Delphinium* suggests, queer history becomes time embalmed in film gauge. Jarman's and Mishory's cinematic production of their individual queer inheritances also produces a cinematic inheritance for generations to come, exemplifying Jarman's preoccupation with queer continuity and genealogy.

## Derek Jarman's Children: Queer Mentorship, Queer Inheritance

*Caravaggio* begins with the artist's death, but one could easily miss that it also begins with a meditation on his lifelong friendship and mentorship with Jerusaleme (Spencer Leigh). Despite the proliferation of homoerotic entanglements that Jarman's film brings from Caravaggio's canvas to his screen portrayal, this intimate relationship stands as the most significant for Caravaggio as he lies on his deathbed. This relationship punctuates the artist's life story, as told by Jarman, and the film's opening emphasises this point; as the film shows Caravaggio on his deathbed, it cuts to a flashback revealing the artist purchasing the small child Jerusaleme. Shortly after Caravaggio brings the child home, the camera frames the two seated, in an embrace that evokes Madonna and Child iconography.[13] The light streaming in through the window creates a halo of light around their faces, emphasising the religious iconography and highlighting the sensuality of their relationship. Put another way, the mother–child imagery of this scene evokes the mother–child dyad in which mother and baby communicate outside of language, through a corporeal, sensual language.[14] The intimate mentoring of Jerusaleme by Caravaggio (which parallels Caravaggio's relationship with Pasqualone) serves as a sort a literalisation of what queer films like *Caravaggio* can do for children like Mishory who need a model for how to live a life with queerness at its centre. The children of Jarman's films follow an uneasy trajectory. Jerusaleme is by all accounts an orphan, and even after his adoption his inability to hear continues to isolate him from the world. The Madonna and Child image that introduces Caravaggio and Jerusaleme's relationship at the beginning of the film appears again in its final moments, as Jerusaleme stands over Caravaggio's dead body, offering his eulogy and weeping. Yet, despite this scene of loss, Jarman's films provide something of a guidebook for the queer child, for the child who feels isolated from the world around them.[15] Jersusaleme and Caravaggio's relationship suggests that queer families can be made; one is not bound to the family and family history into which they were born.

O'Pray, speaking of Jarman's last fully realised film, *Wittgenstein* (1993), remarks: "It would seem that there was some need on Jarman's part for the child to peruse and accompany his future life as a man, right to its final moments, as if to make it all of a piece" ("Remarks" 39).[16] It

is the joyous Young Ludwig (Clancy Chassay) who accompanies the viewer up until Wittgenstein's eventual death. The film provides a reconciliation of sorts for the tormented philosopher who feels like an outsider in his own life, in much the same way that Mishory's *Delphinium* seeks to provide a reparative function for the adult Jarman who felt alienated from his repressed childhood. Mishory's film confers a continuity on Jarman's life but also demands an investigation into Jarman's onscreen children. O'Pray locates Jarman's growing interest in children and connections between childhood and adulthood after his HIV-positive diagnosis, but a look into Jarman's other work shows a longstanding interest in queer childhood, an abiding preoccupation with queer continuity and the ways children learn to be in the world ("Remarks").[17]

Jarman's *Edward II* (1991) replicates Jerusaleme and Caravaggio's dyad through the pairing of Edward II and his son, the future Edward III. The film takes an anachronistic, punk-inflected approach to Christopher Marlowe's famous drama. Jarman's approach to the 1594 play by the same name makes Edward II (Steven Waddington) and Gaveston's (Andrew Tiernan) homoerotic relationship explicit.[18] Jarman's film recentres the original play's narrative to highlight Edward II's queerness, and even more strikingly, the film integrates the AIDS crisis and 1991 queer activism into the film's diegetic world. The smear campaign launched against Edward II in the name of his relationship with Gaveston mirrors the mainstream media's and moralistic society's condemnation of gays and lesbians during the AIDS crisis. In one scene, a 1991 date appears on a royal proclamation and the King's army is not so much a military army but a band of queer activist protestors. Preparations for *Edward II*'s production overlapped with Jarman's discovery of his HIV-positive status, and the film not only radicalises queer identity and biography, but it also suggests the circularity of queer experience.[19] In Love's *Feeling Backward*, she explores queers' obsession with the past, more specifically, with specific queer figures of the past. Queer identity, in these terms, is always formed by identification with an unmet past; queer identity and experience in the present moment is always informed by a simultaneous gaze backward. In Jarman's film, it is unclear whether the film brings the present moment into Edward II's temporal location or Edward II into Jarman's present, but truthfully, neither of these frameworks seems adequate to describe the film's anachronism. Instead of a simple injection of the present into the past (or vice versa), the film suggests an overlapping and continuation of queerness that becomes visualised and embodied at the film's close.

At the film's end, as Edward II awaits his final fate, a kiss from his would-be assassin cuts to a future Edward seated atop the thrown in his jewel-encrusted crown. The child is the future Edward III, the child of Edward II and his rejected-turned-vengeful wife Isabella (Tilda Swinton). Edward II's desire for Gaveston serves as the catalyst for both his kingdom's destruction, and Isabella's desire for revenge and ultimate power; yet, the film ends with the revelation that the kingdom's future is queer.[20] The image of the boy's projected future as king quickly cuts to a shot of the child adorned in his mother's earrings, lipstick, and glittered high heels. He is first simply shown in medium close-up dancing to the music coming through his headphones, but the camera pans down to reveal that the small child is, in fact, dancing on top of the cage imprisoning his mother and her lover/co-conspirator Mortimer (Nigel Terry). The queerly aligned child thus overthrows vengeful heterosexuality, and his delight is evidence of his ascension to power. A joyously clapping Edward III fades to the film's last shot; with Edward II's voiceover narrating his uncertainty about whether he will live or die, the camera pans over a frozen army of protestors with T-shirts and signs emblazoned with slogans like "Queer as Fuck" and "Gay Desire Is Not a Crime". This final shot takes a contemporary audience back to 1991, or at least to an Edward-II-inflected 1991, and reminds them of the film's AIDS crisis context. During the epidemic, a time

when the imminent death of the director was likely, Jarman's *Edward II* ends with the optimism of a queer renewal figured through the jubilant Edward III. These final scenes demonstrate the juxtaposition of temporalities hanging over the film: the past (Mortimer and Edward II), present (AIDS crisis), and future (Edward III). Yet, the film resists any neat categorisations of past, present, and future. Instead, these temporalities and their in-betweens exist simultaneously within the film's diegetic world.

## Queer Futures

The trick to understanding Jarman's films, according to writer and critic Dennis Cooper, "was to accept the films' strange imbalances and pretensions, lags and lurches, as what naturally happens when an artist has had to wrest his material from countless years of heterosexual ownership". Queerness lurks and smoulders underneath an image owned by heteronormative dominant culture, threatening to render that image unrecognisable. Jarman's films use this residual queerness as their starting point to represent lives that "make just enough sense."

And for whom should Jarman's films make sense? Cooper talks about the trick of wresting queer biography and history from heterosexual ownership, but he stops short of what appears to me the real question, which is the shift in intended audience that comes with reclamation. Jarman's films no longer need to make sense for mainstream (heterosexual) audiences. He creates a film language that reflects both queer life experience and queers' melancholic identification with figures of the past. Cinema has a long-recognised history of producing life stories that add up according to (heteronormative) hegemonic ways of living and being. But what Jarman's films demonstrate is the cinematic medium's potential to depict queer lives in a world where certain lives make more sense than others. Moreover, the cinema provides a medium through which temporal continuity can be disrupted, a privileged medium for the portrayal of queer lives that do not with heterosexual temporality—what Elizabeth Freeman refers to as chromonormativity.

In a world where queer life is rendered senseless, Mishory's and Jarman's films depicting individual figures of the past act as crucial markers of queer genealogy. Their preservation provides a queer family history and a tool of education, a means for queers to find belonging, as well as how to make sense of their own place in the world. Portraits of figures like Jarman, Caravaggio, and Edward II create a living, breathing cinema for "orphaned" queer children like Mishory. Jarman's Edward III marks a certain form of futurity, but this futurity is far from dominant culture's hopes and dreams sang in the name of the hypothetical child. In other words, the queer child ensures the passing of knowledge and sensibility. The child forms a link in between queer generations, and represents a necessary phase that each child must go through, a phase in which they must be mentored. In his own film career's adolescence, Mishory captures Derek Jarman's self-discovery: the birth of an artist who would go on to change the world. What Mishory's film demonstrates, like the ending of *Edward II*, is that one may be "born this way", but one becomes queer. And furthermore, the process of queer history-making performs a process of becoming for not only the artist, but also for generations to come.

**Notes**

[1] Tony Peake discusses Jarman's conception of himself as the predecessor of filmmakers like Pasolini more thoroughly in his biography of the filmmaker.

[2] Jarman got his start in the film industry with his work with on the set design for Ken Russell's on *The Devils* (1971) and *Savage Messiah* (1972).

[3] The brief interview appeared after the closing of the film, but Mishory later removed this footage because without indicating the speaker, many viewers incorrectly assumed it was Mishory telling his story. Regardless of the fact that the interview is not included in the film's most current cut, I find the story a compelling narrative to cite, and I find it telling that Mishory's first impulse was to include it in *Delphinium*.

[4] Mishory once again constructs a speculative queer biography in *Joshua Tree, 1951: A Portrait of James Dean* (2012). The film draws on gossip about James Dean's sexuality to imagine the life of the actor as based on that rumored history. The film's narrative breaks—primarily in the form of dreamlike sequences with Dean wandering and smoking in the desert—thwart the biography's chronology and put into question how a film represents time, and more precisely, lived, embodied time.

[5] Keith Collins was Jarman's partner from 1987–1994, appearing in *The Garden* (1990), *Edward II* (1991), and *Wittgenstein* (1993) and living with Jarman through his final days before his death from AIDS-related complications.

[6] The film does not cite the origins of the painting. It remains unclear who created the painting, or even if the painting is actually a representation of the school Young Jarman attended.

[7] Eve Sedgwick's work in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* looks closely at male same-sex social bonds.

[8] The other major film produced on Jarman is *Derek Jarman: Life as Art* (Andy Kimpton-Nye, 2004), which primarily focuses on the recollections of those close to Jarman, including Tilda Swinton and Nigel Terry.

[9] Needham provides an inventory of work done on the topic, beginning with Laura Mulvey.

[10] In the special features added to the *Wittgenstein* DVD, an interview with Tilda Swinton reveals many of the intimate details of Jarman's production process. She asserts that Jarman's life was always the source material for films like *Caravaggio* and *Wittgenstein*, that those characters are versions of Derek.

[11] O'Pray, in *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*, explains that Pasqualone was likely inspired by Jarman's "stay on the shores of Lake Maggiore" and memory of his own "idyllic first love" (38).

[12] By using the term "anachronistically queer", I mean that the term "queer" is anachronistically applied to individuals who lived before the term's conception. I borrow this thinking from Jarman's description of his approach to queer biography.

[13] Caravaggio's fraught relationship with the Church structures the film, and as such, this iconography takes on greater meaning in the context of his assigned promotion of Catholicism. Moreover, Jarman plays with the ways in which Caravaggio's work injects Christian iconography with homoerotic desire.

[14] I am referencing Julia Kristeva's theorisation of the mother–child dyad in her opposition of the semiotic and symbolic order.

[15] My thinking about the queer child is deeply informed by both Ellis Hanson's and Kathryn Bond Stockton's work on the subject.

[16] While Jarman would go on to produce *Blue* (1993) shortly after *Wittgenstein*, many count the latter as his last film, as it was the last one produced with a full cast and film set.

[17] O'Pray's "Remarks on the Scripts for Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein*" mentions that Jarman's growing interest in autobiography begins to become more explicit in his work after his diagnosis, or after *The Last of England*.

[18] The Shakespeare Theatre Company's 2007 version of the original play made the sexual relationship with Edward II and Gaveston explicit and much more at the play's centre.

[19] Edelman's *No Future* associates queerness with the death drive, and in doing so, he identifies the compulsion to repeat that is inherent to human nature and queer sexuality.

[20] Unlike Edelman's critique of futurity in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* other queer scholars like José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* have used the concept of the future for imagining queer possibility.

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**Suggested Citation**

Stamm, Laura. "*Delphinium*'s Portrait of Queer History: Rethinking Derek Jarman's Legacy." *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 16, Winter 2018, pp. 38–52. www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue16/ArticleStamm.pdf.

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