上演プログラムを通じてみるクリストファー・マーロウの
『エドワード二世』受容

松山響子*

Acceptance of Marlowe's Edward II through the Program
—Program Analysis—

Kyoko MATSUYAMA*

要約
英文学史上で、クリストファー・マーロウは常にシェイクスピアの同時代人として登場をする。そして常に「生きていればシェイクスピア以上の作品を残したであろう」という一説がつきまとう。だが彼の作品の上演頻度は少なく、シェイクスピアほど知名度がないことがプログラム構成に影響を与えてている。シェイクスピア品の場合、それぞれの記事の中でシェイクスピアの生涯や他の戯曲に関する言及というもののは最低限である。また、言及があったとしてもそれはごく僅かであり、ほとんどは上演作品に関連する内容が多い。このため、プログラムの記事を読むことでより深く作品解釈の世界へと観客を誘う。しかしマーロウの場合は彼の生涯とその主要な戯曲の説明に費やされる記事がある。これによって、観客に伝わる上演の際のメッセージ性はどのように変化するか、また他の記事に対する印象もどのように変わっていくのか、それぞれの記事の分析を通して論じたい。

Unlike his other contemporary, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe's plays are rarely performed in contemporary Britain or in any other place1. Within his most popular works, The Jew of Marta, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, Edward II, The Massacre at Paris, Dido, of which Doctor Faustus is probably the most frequently performed. However it is impossible to have some of his plays such as The Jew of Marta to be performed in modern society. His milestone work Tamburlaine, although its importance is considered highly it is also rarely performed. Therefore to have a play other than Doctor Faustus Marlowe's historical play shall be a logical conclusion for the modern day theatre.

Edward II is one of early historical plays written in the Renaissance or Early Modern period in England. Like Shakespeare's histories the period of Edward II still fascinates modern day audience. However compared to the deaths of kings, sometimes omitted on stage or not written, in Shakespeare's

* 人文科学部 国際文化学科

1 It has been performed 4 times in Britain between 2000 and 2013. The most recent performance was in London, UK at the National Theatre.
histories the brutal circumstance surrounding the death or murder of King Edward II is more graphic and explicit, and its consequent political condition is more unstable. As Zoe Svendsen indicates in the program in 2013’s National Theatre’s performance:

Marlowe depicts a feudal world of land-owning barons with private armies. As arbitrator in disputes among the nobility, the King’s role is critical in maintaining equilibrium. The whole system is anchored by the King’s will. If the King refuses to play his role, it is only a few steps into anarchy. Edward II fascinates precisely because Marlowe’s characters take those few steps.²

It is possible to argue that Shakespeare’s Richard II may have a similar characteristic however compared to Edward II the danger of “anarchy” or the unstableness of the ruling system is much clearly mentioned in the articles written for the program.

Writers in the late sixteenth century often speak of England as a paradise, shored up by strong monarchy; guaranteeing peace at home and success in foreign wars. Edward’s spectacular failure on both fronts therefore turns England to a hell on earth.³

It [Christopher Marlowe’s play] depicts a world in which the fundamentals of decency and safety vanish with the frighteningly easy collapse of a social system, leaving savagery in its wake. Yet it also manifests a deep attraction to the explosion of those boundaries.⁴

The limitation of King’s power by the barons are clearly spoken by Edward within the play “Am I a king, and must be overruled! (act 1, scene 1, 134)” or “Was ever king thus overruled as I? (act 1, scene 4, 38)”. Edwards line do show the despair of a king who cannot act as a king, yet considering the lines spoken previously the barons act in limiting the king’s power appears logical to the audience:

I have my wish, in that I joy thy sight;
And sooner shall the sea o’erwhelm my land
That bear the ship that shall transport thee hence.
I here create thee Lord High-chamberlain,
Chief Secretary to the state and me,
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man.⁵

⁵ Marlowe, Christopher Edward II, Act1, scenel, 150-55
The position assigned to Gaveston, “Lord High-chamberlain”, “Chief Secretary to the state”, “Earl of Cornwall” and “King and Lord of Man” are given to him due to the fact that he is the King’s favourite, or more commonly interpreted by Joe Hill-Gibbins, the director of the 2013 production at the National Theatre, “his sexual partner”. This is clearly stated by the word spoken by Edward “I have my wish”. To the barons’ being king’s favourite do have its benefits however the positions given to Gaveston is clearly too much and without any logical cause, other than being the king’s “sexual partner”. This action may seem to the barons rather threatening. Because to them minor positions given due to being a favourite is acceptable however positions that brings wealth and power and importance within the court such as “Lord High-chamberlain”, “Chief Secretary to the state”, “Earl of Cornwall” should be given to anyone as compensations for battles won or amount of the land they own. King’s action is threatening as stated by Svendsen:

It depicts a world in which the fundamentals of decency and safety banish with the frightening easy collapse of a social system, leaving savagery in its wake.6

To Svendsen this was the main purpose of the play Edward II by Marlowe.

Marlowe’s sixteenth-century iconoclasm lies in the exposure of systems of governance, whether the church or the monarchy, as merely human constructs – and constructs that are only as robust as the collective will of the people obeying them What also speaks very much more to our times, is the civilisation and savagery are not opposite. Rather they arise from the same human drives for control, power and ultimately, survival.7

However having such modern quality or theme within its play Christopher Marlowe is still a minor playwright to the general audience compared to the Byrd, William Shakespeare. This is quite clear with the fact that there is a very detailed biography of Marlowe in the Program. The minor quality of Marlowe is quite present in the opening of the article.

The so-called 27 Club glamorizes modern musicians and other celebrities, including Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Amy Winehouse, who died aged 27. Although Christopher Marlowe just outlived these famous examples – he was 29 when he died8

If he were as famous as Shakespeare such opening lines were unnecessary. In this article we find detailed information of Marlowe’s life and the summary and main theme of his major works. If it were

8 Smith, Emma, “Christopher Marlowe”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
Shakespeare such process was unnecessary. And as is always Marlowe always appears hand in hand with comparison to Shakespeare.

Marlowe and his most famous contemporary, Shakespeare, were both born in 1564, but had Shakespeare died in that fight instead of Marlowe, we would hardly now remember him. By contrast, in his brief career Marlowe produced a canon of big, transgressive, theatre-changing plays, many of which seem vehicles for his own heterodox beliefs. Again, the comparison with Shakespeare is instructive: however hard biographers have tried, it has been difficult to locate Shakespeare in his works; however hard we try with Marlowe, it is impossible not to.9

Such clear mention of Shakespeare in other words shows the influence of Shakespeare in the modern perception or acceptance of Marlowe. As it is mentioned above in contrast to Shakespeare Marlowe's play strongly reflect his personal beliefs however such facts are less known to most of the audiences. In the program of Edward II the brief explanation of the play is written in the same article.

In Edward II Marlowe focuses on the relationship between the King and his favourite Piers Gaveston to discuss question of masculine, feudal authority and the role of individual personality in historical process. The erotic and the political realms are troublingly intertwines, as homosexuality seems to serve as a metaphor for political influence and vice versa.10

Such brief explanation is quite common when the major work of a playwright is mentioned in his brief biography. In this brief it explanation clearly states the characteristic of Marlowe. His interest in human nature, which is similar in Shakespeare, but he is more explicit in choosing the presentation of the theme. In Shakespeare homosexual nature or the more modern term “bromance” nature is only briefly written between the lines and until the end of the 20th century presentation of such material was not common and even now presentation of such subject may time to time be omitted in accordance with the director's interpretation. For the non-explicit nature of the homosexuality in Shakespeare's text allow the director to interpret or not to interpret the homosexuality in its presentation. However it cannot be done so in Marlowe's Edward II. Such nature of the text is well explained in the program which allows the audience to be prepared or look forward to the presentation of the relationship between the King and Gaveston. And the statement by Smith goes on to say

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9 Smith, Emma, "Christopher Marlowe", Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
10 Smith, Emma, "Christopher Marlowe", Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
Repeatedly, Marlowe’s play display his centrifugal imagination, spinning away from the central preoccupations of early modern culture towards its outsiders … the demise of the homosexual King Edward II. Marlowe’s is the dramaturgy of the marginal brought centre stage. This diverse, urgent body of dramatic work is still a challenge to modern theatregoers brought up on the naturalistic comforts of contemporary Shakespeare production. Marlowe’s characters are external and emblematic rather than inward and private, and his language is rhetorically distancing rather than colloquial and confiding. Marlowe’s protagonists neither court nor require our empathy as they strut a stage-world always conscious of its distance from everyday life.11

This is somewhat comforting to the “modern theatregoers” who have seen the performance. However it is also disturbing for Smith states “Marlowe’s characters are external and emblematic rather than inward and private, and his language is rhetorically distancing rather than colloquial and confiding. Marlowe’s protagonists neither court nor require our empathy” for we are brought up and are often in many ways have empathy toward the characters on stage. It is true that in Shakespeare’s plays some characters are hard to empathise or sympathise but we find it is not difficult to do so in most of the characters. When it is clearly stated that we are not expected to have some kind of emotional connection then we, the audience, have the feeling of becoming a bystander watching whatever that is going on in front but do not give any reaction or even expected not have reactions. Those who had the chance to see Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus may think that Faustus was an exception in Marlowe’s play for the audience were able to empathise with the character. Or is it possible to state that by watching Doctor Faustus it becomes confusing to analyse or understand Marlowe’s play. Another point that should be taken into consideration is the statement where it says “his[Marlowe’s] language is rhetorically distancing rather than colloquial and confiding”. This could be taken as rather challenging to the audience. For this statement could be taken in a way that only those who are familiar with the language and knowledge of Marlowe can understand Marlowe. This may reduce or scare off the possible admirer of Marlowe for a potential audience may consider the distancing rhetoric as a barrier too hard to penetrate compared to that of the rhetoric of Shakespeare.

Having such analysis given in the brief biography of Marlowe it is possible to assume that the biography is also provoking or challenging the audience to see for themselves whether the play does not require empathy to characters or they can understand the rhetoric of Marlowe. Or it shows how underestimated Marlowe is: he is always praised as the great contemporary of the great Shakespeare and the genius who did not outlive him. For the biography ends with:

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11 Smith, Emma, ‘Christopher Marlowe’, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
A proper retrospective of his brief, innovative and provocative career is long overdue.  

It somehow expects the audience to give proper praise to Marlowe who failed to become Shakespeare due to his untimely death. However this concept is again turned by the next article in the program. Samuel James’s article argues the concept of fates and fortune in Edward II. The article states the different concept of the fate in the time of Marlowe and now, when it is performed the modern audience may feel some discomfort.

At the end of Edward II, the audience – and the realm of England – finds itself back almost exactly where it started. A new King Edward is on the throne, and the kingdom is in apparent moral order. The action of the preceding few hours appears (in spite of its considerable body count) to have been little more than a detour, in which a series of characters – Edward, Gaveston, spencer, Mortimer and Isabella – are raised up by fortune’s wheel only to be thrown down again almost as soon as they have gained their ascendancy. The drama thus represents history as less a world of linear progress than one of recurrence and repetition.

the part “finds itself back almost exactly where it started” straightforwardly states the un-comfortableness felt by the modern audience. This is as James stated comes from the different concept in the perception of history. The modern audience’s, due to the social and economic changes in the last 200 years, consider history as a sequence of changes. Thus takes history as a “linear progress”. However the Renaissance concept of history was:

the secular world was a world in which nothing truly new could happen – and thus in a sense a world in which nothing could happen at all.

If people had considered life as “one of recurrence and repetition” where “nothing could happen at all” then their view of life definitely changes from that of modern day perspective in life. However this view of life as a repetition has another side to it:

it [history] also reflected a philosophy that identified the real with the timeless and universal, and which could thus find the contingent struggles of particular human beings little more meaningful

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12 Smith, Emma, “Christopher Marlowe”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
13 James, Samuel, “Time and Misrule: Edward II and the Historical Imagination”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
14 James, Samuel, “Time and Misrule: Edward II and the Historical Imagination”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
This concept must have kept people of Renaissance from becoming too pessimistic or take life as just a sequence of events. For they were able to consider their life as part of a history that could not be understood by themselves but could “be recognised as exhibiting recurrent patterns”. This explanation from the article helps the audience to see how the characters made their choices and that their difference in concept of life changed the way they saw a monarch or in how they would rebel again the monarch.

In Edward II, Mortimer the elder engages in just such an examination of precedents when reassuring himself that Edward’s relationship with Gaveston is but the latest in a long line of such royal liaisons.

For if life is a repetition which they cannot control than they would expect an outside influence as a controller. In this case in the Christian world the only controller other than human in human life is God. Then to human God is a power that cannot be controlled therefore they may think that whatever choice they have made may be already decided by God and the choice is not made by oneself but it was already chosen. But in Edward II we may draw a different conclusion. If one’s life is “timeless and universal” then its mistakes and decisions could be timeless and universal, too.

Then what has brought the change in perception of life? According to James it was the Renaissance.

Great achievement of the Italian Renaissance was to reconcile the sovereignty of change with the possibility of freedom: even if chance was the arbiter of half our actions, it remained up to us to shape the other half so as to make our live as much our own as we could.

and keeping this in mind we look at the play again. Although the character might appear to be living in the concept of life being timeless and universal we also see that their choice was never made for them but it was they who actually chose that decision. Then what has brought their failing or misfortune? It is the same universal choice made by human: not foreseeing the consequence of the choice well enough and another universal mistake.

Today we live in a society which insists – often on the basis of a crudely simplified version of Enlightenment thought – that the best way to serve each other’s interest is energetically to seek to serve our own. But the Renaissance perspective (as well as

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17 James, Samuel, “Time and Misrule: Edward II and the Historical Imagination”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
18 James, Samuel, “Time and Misrule: Edward II and the Historical Imagination”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
recent experience) suggests that this may be naive: as Edward II so clearly shows, the ultimate agents of our misfortune are often simply other people whose actions and interests we have casually ignored.\(^{20}\)

This ignorance of other’s interest has in consequence brings the play to full circle where “A new King Edward is on the throne, and the kingdom is in apparent moral order\(^{21}\).” Where audience could feel the source of its un-comfortableness being that of what appears to be the different concept in life but however they appear to be different in the consequence their choices and mistakes are eerily the same and familiar.

The three articles that has been analysed so far is the content of the program from the 2013 production at the National Theatre in London. From the three articles we can start to see the play of Edward II which appears to be difficult and confusing nature to be more familiar and understandable. However there is an article that is common in Shakespeare production program but lacking in this Edward II’s program. That is the record or the review of other the recent productions of Edward II.

In Shakespeare productions there is always a mention of recent production with the information of actors who played their major characters and reviews to the production with sometime a photo of the production. However in this program there was no mention of the recent production so it is difficult to judge whether whatever that was mentioned in the article considering the interpretation of the play is a commonly concept and interpretation or it was something radically different from previous productions. How trivial or small the information could be it still help us to evaluate and understand the play and its interpretations. For like the perception of life has changed over the years people’s perception of the plays also changes.

Change in people’s perception can be found in the plays interpretations and such changes influence the way they accept the play. In some cases a radically different interpretation may affect the way people accept the play in a very radical way. Or if such radical production becomes common than that interpretation or productions are no longer radical but they would simply be common reading or sometimes a popular interpretation. But lacking such information we fail to judge the position in which this production is based upon and the concept of the production. We may start to assume whether simply producing this play is a radical act or not, which should not be so, or is there another hidden meaning in not performing a similar play by Shakespeare. Lacking the information about recent performance in a way takes away our measure to judge the production.

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\(^{21}\) James, Samuel, “Time and Misrule: Edward II and the Historical Imagination”, Edward II program, National Theatre, 2013
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Program
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Text