Somme toute, la lecture de ce livre est un peu frustrante. Il s'agissait à l'origine d'un beau sujet, mais qui s'est avéré difficile à traiter en raison du peu de sources disponibles pour l'aborder. On ne peut que souligner le courage et les intuitions de Marie-Claude Tucker dans sa quête, et lever son chapeau devant ses efforts pour arriver à traiter de la question. Mais c'est un livre, et non une thèse de doctorat, qui se retrouve dans nos mains. Il aurait été préférable que l'auteure remanie profondément son texte original pour offrir aux lecteurs un tout plus cohérent. Ainsi, la structure de la thèse a été conservée intégralement, ce qui provoque de nombreux déséquilibres : à titre d'exemple, si le chapitre 2 de la quatrième partie fait 20 pages, le chapitre 2 de la deuxième partie en fait... une ! Une écriture plus serrée aurait permis de faire de cet outil prosopographique un livre en bonne et due forme.

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Constance Brown Kuriyama. *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002. Pp. xxi, 255.

This new biography by a well-known Marlovian insists on balance, caution, and careful scholarship throughout. Any biography must balance the data of objective documentation with realistic interpretation and scrupulous reporting of that data, and this one does so with a certain staunchness, ever on guard against fanciful plots, tabloid-like conspiracies, and undue speculation. In the case of Christopher Marlowe, such caution is probably a salutary thing. Kuriyama signals her factual documentary basis from the outset, beginning with a detailed seven-page "Chronology" and concluding with a seventy-page "Appendix" containing freshly transcribed and translated documents related to the life of Christopher Marlowe. These thirty-six items — some published for the first time — include registry entries, letters, reports, charges, countercharges, warrants, depositions, and wills, arranged roughly in chronological order and introduced separately with headings that state the location and context of each document. To read through the Appendix itself is to experience a vividly fragmentary and remorselessly informative documentary account of a life reported.

On guard against sensationalism, error, premature inference, and whimsical supposition, Kuriyama extends and relates nothing but the facts within her biographical account of Marlowe as a Renaissance man with clearly remarkable talents and — as eldest male child — above-average life chances. She builds upon the documentary investigations of progenitors such as John Bakeless, in his two-volume *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe* (1942), F. S. Boas, *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study* (1940), and William Urry, *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury* (1988). But she also carefully makes use of Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (1992), with all of its interesting twists and turns and "whodunit" legerdemain. In

handling these informative critical sources — along with many others — Kuriyama produces a volume of enviable economy and incisiveness.

Kuriyama describes her strategy at the outset as a rigorous critical search for clues in the documents leading to information in other documents or printed sources. Her search bears fruit especially in relation to the Benchkin family of Canterbury and to John Benchkin in particular, a contemporary and friend of Marlowe who also attended Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. By her own admission making liberal use of words and phrases such as “could have,” “might have,” “possibly,” “perhaps,” and “seems,” Kuriyama attempts to de-sensationalize biographical study of Marlowe. As she puts it: “rather than devising yet another conspiracy theory, I have tried to convey a sense of Marlowe’s life as he normally experienced it, basing the portrayal on previously known documents, new documents, a number of secondary sources, and long walks through locations Marlowe frequented in Canterbury, Cambridge, and London” (p. 7). Accordingly, she subdivides Marlowe’s life into successive stages of his personal development, followed by considerations of how others perceived him. This approach makes for sensible and surprisingly sensitive discoveries in a life that seems at times too well reported in terms of recklessness, criminality, and violence.

Kuriyama resists assumptions about Marlowe’s involvement in espionage to take a more balanced and pragmatic view of his time at Cambridge and elsewhere. In regard to Marlowe’s many absences, Kuriyama points out the absences of other students at the same time — absences due to plague, vacations, and relaxed residence requirements. Moreover, that lengthy absence in the summer of 1585 included time spent back at home in Canterbury, where Marlowe was involved in the last will and testament of Katherine Benchkin. The record shows that he read the will aloud to those present and signed the document as a witness. In so doing, he helped John Benchkin — his fellow student at Cambridge — secure his inheritance. As ranking scholar “on site,” Marlowe may even have added the notation, “This is Katherine Benchkyns mark,” on the actual document. Kuriyama claims that the writing characteristics within that sentence match those of Marlowe’s signature. About that notorious Privy Council document of 29 June 1587, which intervened officially to expedite Marlowe’s M.A. degree, Kuriyama seems especially cautious and skeptical, stressing the “rumored” nature of Marlowe’s “possible” trip to Rheims. In her estimation, even if Marlowe *did* go there for queen and country, he was most likely a low-level messenger. Making reference to the interrogation and torture in Rheims of known operative Richard Baines, Kuriyama shrewdly observes, “Rheims was a perilous place for an amateur to play spy” (p. 70). To Kuriyama, Marlowe’s relative youth and worldly inexperience suggest routine service involvement.

Placing Marlowe within the Northumberland milieu of political inquirers and freethinking academics, Kuriyama effectively handles her subject’s proclivity for the urbane and avant-garde. She presents rich discussion of irreligion, “atheism,” and the scholarly heterodox without making appeals to what used to be identified as the “School of Night.” She also handles the extortionist milieu of Ingram Frizer

and Nicholas Skeres with great common sense and accuracy, linking them both to Thomas Walsingham, and hence to Marlowe, for that final “Trim Reckoning” reported in Chapter 7 of the book. Here, in uncharacteristic overstatement, Kuriyama likens fascination with and desire for resolution about Marlowe’s sudden death to “thumb sucking — all forepleasure, with no end pleasure in sight” (p. 120). She focuses instead on objective facts in relation to the subject of her biography, rather than on postulated externals of spying and crime. In the spring of 1593 in London, times were tough, given massive unemployment, anti-alien discontent, and the plague. These conditions, combined with the closing of the theatres and attendant loss of revenue, put pressure on a figure such as Marlowe, who had, even in Kuriyama’s cautious opinion, clearly developed an explosive temper. She describes Marlowe’s killer, Ingram Frizer, as shrewd and unscrupulous but not in any case a gangland assassin. Any investigating officer would have digested the murder scene at Mrs. Bull’s as the usual concoction of aggressiveness, distress, and confusion, combined with drunken acrimony and a weapon close at hand. Within this scene of bloody violence resides the likeliest — as opposed to the most ingenious, titillating, complex, or sensational — explanation of Marlowe’s death. Then, as now, it presents an all-too-common sordid scene. In reproducing the contemporary Coroner’s Inquest on Marlowe, Kuriyama describes coroner William Danby as a “shrewd, experienced professional” (p. 222), whose findings went unchallenged until twentieth-century investigators, assuming the incompetence of Danby and the significance of Marlowe, turned their suspicious, prejudiced, and deviously manipulative attentions to the case.

In fact, Marlowe seemed all-but-forgotten until his rebirth in the nineteenth century, thanks to scholars such as Lamb, Oxberry, and Collier, who excavated his high contemporary reputation. Their textual interest and biographical enthusiasm combined academic research with Romantic sensibility. Kuriyama summarizes the effect as follows: “the darker strains of Romanticism — its emphasis on unbridled individualism, rebellion, violent passion, melancholy, and death — made readers in this period far more receptive to Marlowe’s plays than were readers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries” (p. 169). Readers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries see Marlowe in their own image, too, and Kuriyama lists the attributes as “cynicism, distrust of authority and institutions, alienation, anomie, and acute interest in politics, class conflict, sexuality, and gender” (p. 170). In short, there’s something fascinating about Marlowe’s life, death, and art that continues to attract serious cultural, historical, and literary investigation.

In *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life*, Constance Brown Kuriyama insists that the biographical evidence be more dispassionately weighed and less enthusiastically skewed. She focuses credibly on Marlowe’s short eventful life in its entirety, not avoiding but certainly de-emphasizing its reported violence, controversy, and sensationalism. Hers is a welcome exercise in redress that sometimes overstresses caution. With Marlowe, things biographical remain delicate, and the crazier conspiracy theorists will always insinuate themselves among us; but bold inferences are not always whimsy, and intricate speculation is not

always complete fantasy. Serious scholarship should be careful and evidence-based. Kuriyama's work is exemplary in this regard. Her compilation of the documents related to Marlowe within a single Appendix represents a valuable resource in itself. Students interested in biography should be directed to it first thing. In fact all students of Marlowe should be directed to Kuriyama's well-balanced and informative biography.

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Michael Keevak. *Sexual Shakespeare: Forgery, Authorship, Portraiture*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002. Pp. 175.

This book is located at the conjunction of queer studies and historical reconstruction. Michael Keevak aims to elucidate how efforts to discover the "real" Shakespeare, beginning in the late eighteenth century, have been consistently shaped by the sexual attitudes of those who did the discovering, so that the results of such efforts tell us less about Shakespeare's sexuality than about that of the investigators, especially when they ignore and sometimes actively resist same-sex attraction. Keevak's subtitle alludes to various efforts at reconstruction, including the forgeries of William Henry Ireland, the authorship controversy, and views about Shakespearean portraiture. In every case, Keevak steps into the midst of well-established critical conversations, often accompanied by daunting bibliographies, and in every case he unhesitatingly tackles the reading and details required to maintain his central argument, judiciously summarizing and evaluating the views of those in various biographical controversies, from Malone to Schoenbaum and from Delia Bacon to Joseph Sobran. The book is a *tour de force* of thorough and careful analysis in support of a central point.

If the book has problems, then, they arise not from its methodology but from the point itself, as in every argument that begins with the assumption that all we can know about the past is what others have made of it. "The question," Keevak insists, "is not to determine what [Shakespeare's] sexuality 'really was,' as if to uncover such a fact would in itself be a useful or meaningful piece of information (although, I suppose, in one sense it certainly might be)" (p. 18). The point, rather, is to examine "the contradictory forces of Shakespearean (de)sexualization itself" (p. 19) or, in other words, to lay out how subsequent writers have constructed a Shakespeare in the image of their own sexual mores. But if Shakespeare's own sexuality is undiscoverable, then how can we know that others have "(de)sexualized" him? Keevak agrees, on the one hand, with queer readings of the sonnets, the narrative poems, the plays, and the Elizabethan theater's use of boys for women's parts; and he shows convincingly, as Peter Stallybrass and others have done, that subsequent interpreters have avoided such readings. On the other hand, however, he insists, as we have just seen, that Shakespeare's own sexuality is not