

gossip finally overwhelms the analysis. The ideas behind both of these pieces are unique, and they point the way towards an as-yet-undeveloped field: materialist analyses of objects in Shakespearean production. Still, both need a stronger argumentative stance. Similarly, the structure of Bruce Smith's essay innovatively mirrors the non-linear, anti-analytical nature of memory; yet here again one feels that he has assembled a collection of anecdotes and musings rather than advanced an argument.

In stronger and weaker essays alike, the volume poetically conveys the anxiety attendant upon studies of memory. It begins with a question, posed by Stanley Wells in his foreword, that expresses this anxiety directly: 'How, if at all, can we memorialize performance?' (xvii). It concludes with Dennis Kennedy's evocation of the 'ineffable sadness ... at the heart of spectatorship' (337). It acknowledges the attempt to remember performance as full of loss, forgetting, omissions, changes, and melancholy. Yet in the very act of trying to capture the ephemeral these essays create their own kind of memorial to the many performances they discuss: deeply ambivalent, but shot through with recollection and desire.

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Park Honan. *Christopher Marlowe: Poet & Spy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp xv, 421.

In informal surveys on the best study of Shakespeare's life to appear in the past few decades, Park Honan's biography often springs from scholars' lips. Regrettably, his recent follow-up on Christopher Marlowe is not likely to earn the same accolades. The book is often lively and daring as befits its subject, and Honan paints some vibrant miniatures of family members, schoolmasters, and aristocrats who crossed the playwright's path. But compared with David Riggs' superb *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber, 2004), which combines an evocative reconstruction of the curriculum at Cambridge and riveting discussions of early modern atheism and sexuality with consistently sensitive readings of the plays, Honan's work comes across as somewhat impressionistic and prone to lurid speculation.

The sub-title — *Poet and Spy* (not *Playwright and Spy*) — betrays some of Honan's obsessions and blind spots. The biography offers only a few token attempts at the social history of sixteenth-century London, little explanation as to why Elizabethan audiences found Marlowe's plays so captivating (for instance, there is no mention of the affinity between his drama and public execution), and only a sketchy background on the Elizabethan theatre world. Honan duly observes that Pembroke's Men rather than the Admiral's Men performed *Edward II*, but does not tell us much about either company's personnel apart from Alleyn, nor does he explain why Marlowe suddenly decamped with the play.

This event invites a digression on a subject at which Honan does excel: the complex, ricocheting vectors of influence between Marlowe and the man from Stratford-upon-Avon. *Tamburlaine* spurred the heroic rhetoric of *Henry VI*, *Henry VI* prompted Marlowe to tackle English history in *Edward II*, and that play in turn provided a blue-print for *Richard II*. Rather than seeing Shakespeare and Marlowe as competitors locked in an ongoing game of one-up-man-ship Honan characterizes the playwrights' exchange as one of mutual respect and creative synergy. Their relationship has often been depicted before, but rarely with such lucidity and acumen.

One of the most compelling sections in the book seizes on recent research about Francis Walsingham's interest in theatre as a tool of 'mass communications' (128) and his support of the Queen's Men (many of whom later performed Marlowe's works) to construct a feasible narrative of the playwright's embroilment in espionage. Readers familiar with Charles Nicholl's path-breaking study *The Reckoning* will find much overlap in this book's vision of Marlowe moon-lighting as a spy. Some of this material — that concerning the extent of Marlowe's contacts with Seething Lane, for example — could be approached with more circumspection. John Bossy's hatchet-job in the *London Review of Books* (14 December 2006), however, errs in the opposite direction, dismissing Honan's arguments far too hastily. On a few occasions Honan actually diverges from Nicholl, questioning his theories that Essex was waging a smear campaign against Raleigh or that authorities would have bothered planting heretical papers on Kyd in order to force him to incriminate Marlowe.

Instead of fingering Essex, Honan attempts to unmask Thomas Walsingham as the sinister puppet-master who ordered Marlowe's death out of concern that the playwright's growing reputation for atheism would damage his political credentials. Honan's only real evidence is the fact that Frizier con-

tinued in the service of Walsingham's wife. Surely it would have been infinitely easier for Walsingham simply to stop patronizing Marlowe and kick him out from under his roof rather than resort to the elaborate and dangerous ruse of provoking a drunken knife-fight. Nor does Honan convincingly demonstrate that Thomas Walsingham shared his second cousin's connections with Poley. His omission of first names at times seems to conflate Thomas and Francis into one person. Overstating the bond between them seems rash given that (with the exception of Frizier) the avid classicist Thomas was far more interested in patronizing poets than spies. If Thomas Walsingham had wanted to distance himself from Marlowe would he have allowed the publisher Edward Blount to dedicate *Hero and Leander* to him and to speak of his 'liberal affection' for the author? Rather than commit himself fully to a conspiracy theory for which so little proof exists, Honan instead brandishes forensic evidence that Marlowe may have remained conscious for several minutes after the stab-wound was inflicted. Perhaps it is satisfying to imagine that Marlowe, like Barabas, died cursing, but this doesn't really strengthen the case that Walsingham or some other Elizabethan power-broker saw the playwright as threatening enough to merit assassination. Whatever happened in Eleanor Bull's house remains, and will probably always remain, a mystery.

The more serious flaw with *Poet & Spy* is one that bedevils many biographies of pre-modern subjects: the temptation to flesh out the scanty documentary record with colourful but only remotely plausible scenarios. With the proper amount of discretion and vigorous prose, some biographers can get away with such conjectures; Honan falls a bit short on both counts. Desperate for material to enliven his chapter on Marlowe's childhood, he tosses out the tenuous conjecture that the poet's mother, rather than the astronomy texts he encountered at Cambridge, sparked his fascination with the night sky. Are we to believe that Katherine stood over her son's cradle lecturing him on Ptolemy and the double motion of the planets? Likewise, based on a passage in a translation from Ovid's *Amores* Honan wonders aloud if Marlowe was impotent. One might just as easily make the same diagnosis of Shakespeare based on the bawdy jests of the drunken porter in *Macbeth*. Later Honan pens a fanciful reenactment of Marlowe's clumsy attempt to seduce his roommate Thomas Kyd. Such a scene belongs in Anthony Burgess's *Dead Man in Deptford* rather than a sober scholarly biography.

In his assessment of the plays Honan is most insightful on *The Jew of Malta*, reading it not simply as a savage farce but a pointed social satire with genuine tragic pathos. While he comments shrewdly on its satiric caricature

of early modern anti-Semitism, he argues that in fact *The Massacre at Paris* offers a more searching dissection of mass psychology and the ways in which it can be manipulated to sanction the kind of religious genocide that spawned the Holocaust (274). Less persuasive is his assertion that Dr. Faustus's anguish over selling his soul bespeaks Marlowe's regret over enlisting as a spy for Francis Walsingham. Espionage may be sexier than Reformation theology, but this seems a reductive reading of the play. After several chapters documenting how the playwright mines his material from the 'quarry of the self', Honan recognizes the shortcomings of this approach and reverses himself by proclaiming that Marlowe's 'art is essentially not autobiographical at all' (302). Consequently, *Edward II* is better understood less as a 'homosexual play' than as an incisive study of political power and a bleak denial of the possibility of 'redemptive change in human nature' (306). Honan is at his best in his eloquent celebrations of Marlowe's skepticism and moral ambiguity, positing that his greatness as a playwright stems from 'his trust in our ability to think for ourselves' (359). Given Honan's somewhat credulous acceptance of earlier scholarship and unsubstantiated speculations about Marlowe's personal and professional life, readers of this book would be well advised to exercise their own talents for skepticism.

TODD ANDREW BORLIK

Tony Howard. *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp xi, 329.

Women as Hamlet is a history of actresses who have played Hamlet; of feminized Hamlets in visual culture; and of female Hamlet figures in novels, plays and films. It offers a study of cultural practice across art forms and audiences. From the book's opening pages, it is clear that the author will cover a huge range of the ways in which culture makes sense of *Hamlet*. Howard shifts deftly from Angela Winkler's personal testimony about playing Hamlet in Peter Zadek's *Hamlet 2000*, to that production's scenographic context in post-Berlin Wall Germany, to the moment of live performance as Gertrude tells a lit audience of Ophelia's death. Although his critical anchor is the production