Clarion Review

Marlowe's Ghost: The Blacklisting of the Man Who Was Shakespeare
Daryl Pinksen
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Four Stars (out of Five)

"When Christopher Marlowe awoke on the morning of May 30 1593 he was the greatest playwright England had ever known. That evening he was reported dead killed in a tavern brawl over the bill. No one knows where he is buried." That is the bare bones of Daryl Pinksen's story over which he drapes a wealth of evidence in support of his speculation that Marlowe was in fact the author of Shakespeare's plays.

This speculation relies on a complicated plot involving high intelligence officials the "disappearance" of the purported victim his rendition (as it were) to another country to escape charges of heresy and treason and a decades-long cover-up maintained by the plotters and their friends which extends to the present day. In other words Marlowe's friends staged his death smuggled him to Scotland (perhaps) and maintained their silence and Marlowe's ever after and though Marlowe continued to write magnificent plays he allowed Shakespeare to take the credit.

Marlowe's Ghost is not the first to make these claims but it makes a strong case. Pinksen takes his evidence from historical records close analysis of textual and thematic elements in Marlowe's writings that mirror those of Shakespeare and circumstantial facts. He adds to these his own conclusions which he carefully distinguishes with such disclaimers as "perhaps" "might" and "could have" with a historian's modesty.

Arguments against Shakespeare's authorship are not new: he was a bit actor on the make to become a gentleman unschooled beyond the age of fourteen intent only on making money by clever schemes who retired to his large Stratford mansion after his name had been suddenly splashed across the London literary scene. His will names no legal claims to any sort of literature from his own pen and at his death no other contemporary writer of large or small reputation paid him any praise. Will Shake-speare himself is a mystery as many scholars admit.

Pinksen battles well against the engrained myth of the "genius" Shakespeare and makes a thoughtful case for Marlowe's authorship of the plays that now bear Shakespeare's name. Marlowe's life story is itself full of drama and excitement: a learned author with a master's

degree masterful writer well-travelled spy bold atheist in a rigid Christian society his life contrasts widely with the pedestrian life of Shakespeare.

Pinksen a fellow at Newfoundland's Memorial University has written a good book on a difficult topic one that is usually ignored by traditional English departments. Recommended for anyone with an interest in the Elizabethan period and its literature this book is also well-printed attractively designed and will make readers think.