Shakespeare Unlimited: *Shakespeare and Marlowe*

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Interviewed by Barbara Bogaev

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Introduction

MICHAEL WITMORE: There's a question making the rounds in the Shakespeare world these days. A big one, and one that's been around for a while.

[CLIP from a Monty Python sketch]

JOHN CLEESE as a NEWSREADER: And first this evening, we have with us Mr. Norman Voles of Gravesend, who claims he wrote all Shakespeare's works. Mr. Voles, I understand you claim that you wrote all those plays normally attributed to Shakespeare?

MICHAEL PALIN as MR. NORMAN VOLES: That is correct. I wrote all his plays, and my wife and I wrote his sonnets.

WITMORE: From the Folger Shakespeare Library, this is *Shakespeare Unlimited*. I'm Michael Witmore, the Folger's director. Okay, none of us really thinks that Shakespeare's plays were written by Mr. Norman Voles of Gravesend, but these days we do wonder: "Did Shakespeare write alone without any help from other people?"

As we're recording this podcast the issue has gained new salience after Oxford University Press announced that in the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, the plays *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3* would no longer be listed as having been written by Shakespeare alone. Instead the title pages will say: "By William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe."

As you'll hear, advances in computer science have enabled scholars to find, with much greater certainty, the fingerprints that we think tell us definitively who wrote which plays and even who wrote which acts within the plays, throwing open the idea that Shakespeare was a solo genius in charge of it all.

For our conversation on this subject we've brought together voices that will be familiar to regular listeners of *Shakespeare Unlimited*. One is Eric Rasmussen, chair of the English department at
the University of Nevada, Reno. Eric was a guest here in 2014, talking about how he unearths lost copies of the First Folio, the first collected edition of Shakespeare’s plays. Eric’s here now because in 1987 he edited all three of the Henry VI plays, which were published as part of the Arden Shakespeare series.

The other voice will be completely familiar… because it’s mine. Those advances in computer science that I mentioned—the algorithms that have enlivened Shakespeare authorship studies—are an area I’ve specialized in for the past 10 years. We call this podcast “As if a Man Were Author of Himself.” Eric and I were interviewed by Barbara Bogaev.

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BOGAEV: Before we get to the reason the editors of the New Oxford Shakespeare decided to list Marlowe as the co-author of Henry VI Parts 1, 2, and 3 let me ask you this: Given all of the scholarship and the speculation since the 18th century about Marlowe having had a hand, or other people having hands in Shakespeare plays, and specifically Marlowe in the Henry VI plays, why is this big news? Or rather, why does it matter? And I know you both have thoughts on this. Eric, why don’t you start us off? Why do you think it’s important?

RASMUSSEN: Well, it's interesting because it used to be that people were assigning shares of Henry VI to playwrights other than Shakespeare because they thought they were bad. And so, what's fascinating now is that we are assigning these plays that we think are good and giving a share to Marlowe, so it's a completely different ballgame—although I will say that Edmond Malone in the 1780s had argued that in fact Shakespeare didn't write any of Henry VI, Part 3, say that was done by Peele and Nash and Marlowe and that Shakespeare could have come in and revised that later on and this is the same thing that the Oxford editors are now arguing.

BOGAEV: Is there an issue though, also, of an idea… of a sort of power team that hasn’t been introduced before, of Marlowe and Shakespeare?

RASMUSSEN: Well, I think that there's a myth in the popular conscious, and we see it in films like Shakespeare in Love, that Marlowe was just this stratospheric genius while Shakespeare was sort of still trying to find his way. And I think that there's something about this idea, about them working together, and I think you could certainly make arguments that, you know, Marlowe writes Tamburlaine and Shakespeare says, “Wow. Iambic pentameter is just such a close fit to the human voice. I'm going to use that.” And then he writes Henry VI then, and Marlowe says, “Wow, brilliant to write about a weak and ineffectual monarch. I'm going to do that with Edward II.” And then Shakespeare does it with Richard II. So there's this copasetic relationship of the two of them. So I think you're exactly right—this idea of a power duo. And we know that in the early parts of his career Shakespeare collaborated with the… on the play Arden of Faversham, he seems to have written a few scenes for the play Edward III. We also know that Marlowe collaborated. The printer of Marlowe’s Tamburlaine said he left out some fun and frivolous scenes which appear to be the work of another playwright not, you know, as gifted as Marlowe.
And then we know that Marlowe collaborated with Thomas Nash on *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. So this is the nice... this is a nice way to think of things.

**WITMORE:** I think the second thing that I find so interesting about the conversation is that multiple methods have now converged so that we can say things about authorship right down to the level of act within plays. And that's where the big data side of the story comes in. There have been editors who've looked at the plays and said, “You know, I suspect someone else was writing here or here or here.” But at this point multiple methods using scannable texts where we compare patterns within the words of each writer have yielded the same conclusions. And so that may be an interesting thing for us because it's a moment when computers and human beings are working basically in parallel to make conclusions about who wrote these plays.

**BOGAEV:** And that is a technological difference. Before we get deeper into that, if we could look at the marketing aspect of this. Is this story also... [LAUGHS]

**RASMUSSEN:** [LAUGHS] Let's talk about marketing.

**BOGAEV:** Is it also important because this was a major publication taking a stance on this subject?

**WITMORE:** I think there's no doubt that when the editors of the *Oxford Shakespeare* say that they're going to put the two names on the same title page, that's significant. And there will be other editors who've thought that Marlowe was involved, but I think putting it in print and online to that effect is an important moment.

**BOGAEV:** And Oxford taking this different direction on the authorship issue—there's a pretty long history there, isn't there?

**WITMORE:** Well I think the Oxford editors were bold in saying even that different editions—a quarto edition or a folio edition of Shakespeare’s plays—were distinct works. And that particular view really broke apart the consensus that... in editing, which said, “Well let's just take all the sources and try and make the best guess and fold them into one.” And in the case of Lear, you know, one published edition is entitled *The Tragedy of King Lear* and the other uses the word “History.” There are significant differences between these two, and the Oxford editors were quite bold in saying, “We can't choose. We're just going to treat them as themselves—stand alone distinct works.” And so the Oxford editors have been kind of stirring the soup on the question of how to edit Shakespeare for a while, but they're stirring it again when they start to say, “Hey, let's think about other writers too.”

**BOGAEV:** And just to follow up on this idea of the business of Shakespeare. This whole topic made me wonder who has hats in the ring, in this fight over whether Shakespeare wrote alone or collaborated. And this gets us into this issue of something or someone called disintegrators, correct, Eric?
RASMUSSEN: Sure. In the 19th century anyone who had the temerity to suggest that someone else may have written Shakespeare was called a *disintegrator* and they were... the scholarly community cast dispersion upon them because they were trying to piece up Shakespeare among too many authorial agents. And that has then evolved, largely due to influences like the *Oxford Shakespeare*, who said in their first edition that “Hey, Shakespeare probably collaborated with Thomas Middleton on *Timon of Athens* and...” and we know that he did. I’ve always like that idea that beginning in his career, especially, he’s collaborating as sort of apprentice playwright. And then at the end of his career he’s collaborating with John Fletcher on plays like *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the lost *Cardenio*, probably *Henry VIII*—almost as if he’s passing the baton to the new chief playwright for the King’s Men who’s going to take over after he retires.

BOGAEV: And Mike, do you agree with this... with Eric, on the players and their investment in answering this authorship question one way or another?

WITMORE: I do. It’s also probably the case that there’s more prestige to lose than to gain in debating some of the finer points of authorship. There’s never going to be full agreement among Shakespeareans because of the nature of this writer and the prestige that goes along with him or the people who know about him and can say things about his career. So in a way, I think those of us who study Shakespeare and talk about him enter an environment where everyone has something to gain and there are institutions and publishing houses that make the bottom line by selling their editions. But it does matter when someone can show why they think what they think. And I think Eric’s right to say that one of the interesting things about the Oxford attribution is that we’ve got a different way of saying that it’s true now and not only they have made this case, but now others have done it as well.

BOGAEV: And then there’s this historical dimension. And for those of us who aren’t Shakespeare scholars it’s really hard for us to conceive of a time when the idea of a solo genius just didn’t wash. It didn’t compute. Speak to that.

WITMORE: Well, Jonathan Bate has written wonderfully about how Shakespeare... German critics in particular thought of him as a romantic genius. And the genius in that period is someone who is unique and in a way, kind of in a solitary chamber where the great ideas, the inventive ideas, come from almost nowhere. And that isolation chamber of the genius is so different from the idea that Shakespeare would be collaborating with other people, at the beginning of his career and at the end of his career. So I think some people might see that as a demotion, but I think actually it’s fascinating to see that like all of us Shakespeare had to build his ideas and even his language from what he was learning from others and that’s, I think, exciting.

BOGAEV: Well, it’s interesting, we’ve talked before on this podcast many times about the way scholars have approached this authorship question by looking at the First Folio. And so when
this Marlowe algorithm news broke, we reached out to one of our former guests, Emma Smith, and her latest work is *The First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book*. And anyway, we asked whether Heminges and Condell, the actors who put together the First Folio, gave any indication that they only picked plays that they knew were by Shakespeare alone, and here’s what Emma said. She said that “the First Folio compilers had an apparently unconvinced attitude to works they knew to be collaborative. No *Pericles* with Wilkins. No *Two Noble Kinsmen*, Fletcher,” and you were speaking of this earlier, Eric, “No *Cardenio*, Fletcher” (it’s now lost). “And certainly they suppress any suggestion of collaboration in presenting the singular author, rather as Ben Jonson had done when he gathered his works in a folio publication of 1616.” So where all of this is leading: Mike, what do you think of that analysis? And it seems as if… if there was anyone who’d know which plays were written by Shakespeare alone and which weren’t, it would have been the actors that put together the First Folio.

**WITMORE:** Well, I think she’s right to say that it’s interesting that those plays are not in the First Folio. I guess what I would say is it’s possible that she’s right. Given the work that she’s done I trust her opinion. I think it would be hard to prove that she’s wrong, because the number of plays that we have to work with here, either in or out, is relatively small.

**BOGAEV:** Okay. And just to follow up on that, do you agree that those actors, they were probably good witnesses and authorities when it comes to “Oh, is this a solo job versus this wasn’t?” Eric, I know you have... I can hear you having thoughts there.

**RASMUSSEN:** Well I think it’s... it is fascinating that, you know, when Ben Jonson brought out his folio, as you were mentioning, he only included his single-authored plays. And, you know, we know for instance that Ben Jonson wrote a play called *Eastward Ho* which caused a great scandal—they made fun of King James’s Scottish accent—and that he wrote with George Chapman and John Marston and he left that out. And he left other plays out and interestingly a lot of the collaborative plays. *Page of Plymouth* was a Ben Jonson play that we know of from records, but we don’t have a text of it. So there was something afoot in the early 17th century, that folios were supposed to be plays that were single authors’ works.

Having said that, many people will now say that some plays that are in the Folio—*Henry VIII* perhaps most prominently—is clearly a collaboration between Shakespeare and Fletcher, and yet that’s there. And if you wanted to make an argument with, “Well, maybe Heminges and Condell couldn’t remember back to who Shakespeare collaborated with, or if *Henry VI* plays were collaborations…” *Henry VIII* was one of the last plays that he wrote, so that had to be in, you know, at least recent memory, so I wonder if our arguments of them deliberately leaving out the collaborative plays holds, if we can then point to a lot of plays in the Folio that we think are collaborations. Or that Middleton wrote some parts for *Macbeth* that were added later on. And I just... it’s fascinating that after the publication of the First Folio, when the Second Folio came out in 1632, the publishers, the Cotes brothers, also published, at the same time, the first quarto edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and a reprint of *Pericles*. And I’ll bet anything that they were bundling these collaborative plays along with the Folio. So you get the... you sort of get the
single-authored work, more or less, in the folio volume and then you can also have these works that Shakespeare had collaborated on.

**BOGAEV:** Mike, does it also come down to this... idea of a collaboration that was different then? And Heminges and Condell might have had a different conception of what a collaboration is?

**WITMORE:** They didn’t think about collaboration or authorship in the way that we do. And it’s very hard for us to roll back the tape on history and say, “Well, would it have been noteworthy for them to even comment on it?” We're certainly interested in it but that doesn’t mean that they were.

**RASMUSSEN:** I think the best analogy would be television. We all... when we think of television writers we imagine a group of people around a table. We seldom think of TV shows being written by an isolated genius. And this seems to have been standard in the early modern period. If you look at Henslowe’s diaries, his payments for play scripts are often to four or five, even six, different playwrights. You know, and that’s just a different paradigm than we have, as Mike was saying. But we do think of it in the creation of popular entertainment like TV shows.

**WITMORE:** What about the writer’s room? I mean you could imagine them going in, you know, the fur is flying, people are throwing out ideas, they're changing them... and so, you know, for those of us who really care about these writers, it's very interesting to think about how they might have gotten together and said, “You know, you're very good at this type of scene, why don’t you do this? I’ll do the other one.” But the whole idea that they might be egging each other on, learning from each other, I think is exciting as we try to think about this little culture of playwriting around the turn of the 17th century.

**RASMUSSEN:** Oh, what I found fascinating is that if you look at the small parts of plays that Shakespeare was writing early in his career, he was writing scenes between Alice, in the *Arden of Faversham* play, Alice and her lover Mosby. She's a very powerful woman. He was writing the countess scenes in *Edward III*, also a very powerful woman, and then in *Henry VI* he was writing the scenes with Margaret, another strong female role. And I love the idea that there's this new kid in town and he can really write strong female characters so we need to bring him in on these projects, and sort of looking forward to Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth and Portia yet to come.

**BOGAEV:** Well this is really fun, mind-blowing speculation, and it raises all sorts of questions and unknowns, but let's finally get to the algorithm section of this conversation and the method—why Oxford feels they can be so definitive in declaring that the *Henry VI* plays were co-written by Shakespeare and Marlowe. And Mike, I know this is up your alley so for all of us can you please explain what an algorithm is and how these algorithms help scholars tell whose voice we're reading. How do they work?
WITMORE: Well, an algorithm is a very boring kind of robot that goes in and counts things and comes back and says, “I saw so much of this word and so much of this word, and here’s where I saw them.” And it allows you to take an entire play or a scene or all the works by a given author and say, “Here, in quantitative terms, are the kinds of features that I see in this writer’s writing.” And those features could be anything from a unique word that no one else uses or a phrase that is more likely to occur in someone’s writing than someone else’s. It could also be a mundane common word like “of,” “the,” “for,” or “to”—words that happen over and over again. We just can’t do without them. And those words pattern out according to a number of things, both authorship—they also track genre pretty reliably—but what I think the algorithm does is a kind of work that a human being just can’t do on the level of multiple, multiple comparisons. And they are only as good as the sample they are given.

And I think that’s important for people to understand. Unless there had been scholars who had gone though the works of Marlowe and Shakespeare and others and said, “This is a play by Shakespeare,” you wouldn’t be able to create the sample, which is what the Oxford team did, that you use to train this little algorithm or robot and say, “Look at this, look at this, are you noticing any patterns?” But the algorithm will always honor the sample and so you have to have a human being in there somewhere saying, “Okay, here’s your sample of Shakespeare, here’s your sample of Marlowe, learn everything you can. Now I’m going to show you something that we don’t have a decision on. You tell me what it’s closer to.”

BOGAEV: And let me see if I understand this correctly, because you’re saying the algorithm keeps track in a quantitative way in which humans can’t really... like our ear is not attuned to the “tos,” and the “ofs,” and the “fors,” and the “thes,” these very boring words that amount to—when you look at it mathematically—they amount to Shakespeare.

WITMORE: I think that’s a great explanation. There’s only so much you can consciously attend to, so having an algorithm...

BOGAEV: Like frames in a movie. Frames in a film.

WITMORE: It’s a little bit like a horse galloping along, you know, you can look at it or I could look at it and say, “Well look at how the head moves in a kind of circular pattern.” But do the horse’s feet ever lift off the ground all at once? Well, for that you need to take a very special kind of picture, which is what Muybridge did, long ago. He set up cameras and took so many pictures, so much faster than any of us could look at a horse and said, “I can prove that the horse lifts all his feet off the ground.” And that is what the computers are doing. They’re creating a profile of how someone is using our language, you know, in effect from the waist down. And everything that a writer does from the waist up is dependent upon those things that happen kind of at the level of the footwork. So they’re connected.

BOGAEV: Well, it reminds me of an incredibly scientific handwriting analysis, but I’m thinking, and this is for you Eric, a playwright and especially a good one, a great one, is going to be
writing in all of these voices and multiple voices. It's not like writing an essay or speech. You're writing about women, as a man, and you're a rich man who's writing about poor people. So how much of voice survives when you're talking about playwriting?

**RASMUSSEN:** It's a great question and one a lot of people ask, and I think the thing is, when you look at the data that it really... these patterns are really there, that in Shakespeare's acknowledged work, even though he's writing about kings and paupers and tavern-folk and royalty, he's consistent in the way he uses some of these—they can be called “function words” or other sorts of things, and that's really remarkable. One of the analogies I like is whether or not when you're typing you put two spaces or one space after a period. This is something that you do, but you don't even think about it. And anyone can look at a typed page and say, “Ah that's a two-spaced one, therefore I can tell who the agent behind that was.”

**BOGAEV:** Therefore that person is old, is what my son would say. [LAUGHS]

**RASMUSSEN:** [LAUGHS]

**RASMUSSEN:** [LAUGHS] Well... and my favorite story about authorship studies is that a couple of decades ago, Don Foster had put together a very preliminary computer program to identify authors, and he thought he had found stylistic fingerprints of Shakespeare and that he had found them in this particular poem and so he sent this manuscript to Harvard University Press and Harvard University Press sent it out to an anonymous reader who said, “Oh, this is garbage. You can't possible tell authorship just based on these little internal stylistic things.” And so he rejected the book and they... Don Foster then just took this anonymous rejection letter and he put it through his authorship program, determined who the anonymous reader was, wrote to him and said, “I think it can.”

**BOGAEV:** [LAUGHS]

**RASMUSSEN:** [LAUGHS]

**BOGAEV:** So Mike, the algorithms can read voice.

**WITMORE:** I think they can read all the forms of variety that are in the sample. And I say that because if your sample has differences in authors it will pick up on different authors. If your sample has a range of dates, early 17th century versus late, it will pick up that. It's very hard to hide from our language the sources and audiences that our language is being used to address. And that inability to kind of withhold information every time we open our mouths, is the reason why big data now can predict what kind of books you want to read, where you're going to drive your car... Those things will get more and more precise, but I think for those of us who love language, and Eric has already referred to this, it's fascinating that something as intimate as a writer’s voice nevertheless is predictable.
BOGAEV: Well, it's really fascinating to think that possibly you could be missing the person that everyone modeled his work after, right? I mean, mimesis and imitation, this is such a big part of the tradition of Elizabethan playwriting. And the algorithm only knows the playwrights that it sees. And I'm also thinking that Shakespeare likely collaborated with actors, and actors were so steeped in Marlowe at this time that the actors Shakespeare could have been collaborating with read like Marlowe.

WITMORE: That's the area where we really have to think hard. The vectors of transmission, the ways in which influence gets moved around, whether it's an actor or you're reading or you're seeing certain kinds of plays. Those are probably all active to some degree, but I think that's where the trail gets lost.

BOGAEV: Okay, so this is a vulnerability of this form of analysis you're saying?

WITMORE: I think this form of analysis can tell you in a well-formed experiment whether something you don't have a label for should have a label that you can apply based on previous samples. I know that's kind of an abstract way to say it. But if you've got a great sample for two writers, and you've got an unknown one for a sample piece of text, that's the ideal situation which you can say, “Given what you know already tell me who you think wrote this?”

But what we were just talking about, you know, the actors, how are they affecting the writer? We don't really have a good sample for actors. And we also can't rewind the tape and say, “Let's find an example of Shakespeare’s playwriting that doesn't use these actors and uses a completely different set,” in a kind of a controlled way. So the ability to make these contrasts at the level of, say, performers, you know, we could do a certain amount of work there, but the experiments just get harder to do when you reach the limit of the sample you have.

You know, if you were to ask me what Shakespeare’s authorial signature is, in comparison to other Renaissance writers, it looks a lot like the signature for history plays in general. And that’s partly because Shakespeare wrote more history plays. So we can't find a sample of Shakespeare’s career where he didn’t write many history plays but he wrote many, many, many more tragedies. And it’s a fine point, but it’s important, that there are some things we can know with these techniques, but they always depend first on a human being saying, “Here’s what I think the original samples mean.” And they also depend on our ability to take only the surviving texts. So I think the headline here is: These are powerful techniques, but there is a point in which they won’t work.

BOGAEV: And stepping out of the technical for a moment, in terms of what’s relevant to this authorship issue and my question about imitation and its role in Elizabethan culture, Eric... there was a completely different attitude back then towards this idea of plagiarism, right? Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery in Elizabethan times.
RASMUSSEN: Sure, in Elizabethan schools the way you would learn rhetoric is to just to learn to imitate Cicero. And it... you know, we commonly say that every one of Shakespeare’s plays had a source—some of which he follows very carefully, to the extent that we would call it plagiarism—except for a couple of plays, and we think that’s just because we haven’t found the sources yet. So the idea was that you would take something pre-extant and rework it and retool it, which we still do and we see in 21st-century cinema. You get remakings of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and so forth.

But one of the limitations of the current attribution programs is that it can’t distinguish between whether Marlowe and Shakespeare, as Mike was saying, would sit down in the writers’ room and really toss around ideas, or maybe Marlowe wrote the play on his own and then maybe Shakespeare came in some years later and revised it and left some Marlowe scenes untouched, so they’re coming through as Marlowe, and added some of his own or revised some so they’re coming through as Shakespeare, or possible Shakespeare. And I think this is a real—not a limitation necessarily—but something that we’ve got to think about. This idea of collaboration is different in our view if they’re working in the same room together at the same time or Shakespeare writes Macbeth and then some years after, perhaps after Shakespeare’s death, Thomas Middleton comes in and adds some new scenes. Well, is that a collaboration? That’s different, right? Is that an adaptation? And so the Oxford editors have hedged their bets in saying that the original of the Henry VI plays was probably written by Shakespeare and Marlowe and maybe Thomas Nash and maybe others. And that Shakespeare then revised these base texts at a later point.

WITMORE: On the issue of imitation, I’m reminded of a story from the Folger. One of the digital encoders of the Folger Editions when we put them online, a man named Mike Poston, is also a playwright, and he wrote an early modern revenge tragedy in early modern spelling, and then he hand-printed it himself, which is just an extraordinary thing for anyone, but it was great that he was assigned to help encode these plays online. But when we took that play and tried to profile it stylistically against all the other early modern writers it stood a mile off and I think that shows that even though you want to imitate something—and it’s true that imitation was really just a kind of reflex in the Renaissance—it is hard to imitate the things that you can’t pay attention to.

BOGAEV: That’s really fascinating. And it does make you wonder how, at that time in history when it was fine to emulate and imitate, how an author comes to sound like him or herself, you know? It’s such a mysterious process at any time in history but particularly when you have full license to borrow so freely. And Mike, I know you’ve thought a lot about this.

WITMORE: Well I think that’s kind of the limit case here. If you start to think about Shakespeare as having a choice at some point to say, “I’ve written a lot in this style, this is a moment in this play when I want to use all of the things that I’ve refined over the course of my career. And so I’m just going to put all those on display.” But there might be other moments where he’s trying something new. But I think it raises the basic question of, given the fact that every writer has a range of sounds and tools, what would it mean for a writer to be gradually learning to sound like
him or herself? What's that feedback loop for the writer who’s on the ground both producing a kind of storytelling and text but then also learning from what they’ve already written? They never completely abandon what they’ve done before. And I think that’s what’s so important for those of us who do research on this writer and other early modern dramatists, is that it really matters that you know something about the whole career of a writer, and who that writer’s peers are and how they wrote, and even as Eric was getting at, the social connections, and how did they work together. All of those things are really important in understanding how a particular writer’s voice emerges.

BOGAEV: Well, Eric, I want to pick up on something that you said right at the beginning of this conversation. That Henry VI Parts 1, 2, and 3—they're not the best. And you edited them, so you have some cred here. I imagine they're close to your heart but they're not Othello or Hamlet, and it seems like a very important question to ask that if two of the greatest playwrights of the era are going to collaborate, wouldn't you think the plays would be better?

RASMUSSEN: Well, there’s some moments in these plays that are pretty good—the Jack Cade rebellion scenes—but it is interesting that they have been... the histories generally get rusticated. The theater companies don’t like doing them because audiences will not turn out in droves and I just... I can't help wondering now that the next time a company puts this on if audiences are going to turn out. In almost a counterintuitive way that, by arguing that Shakespeare didn’t write part of this, audiences who will come out to Shakespeare plays may in fact start paying attention to these texts in ways that we weren’t doing before.

BOGAEV: Mike, do you anticipate that?

WITMORE: Yeah, I think Eric’s exactly right. You know, maybe a theater producer would say, “Oh, it's bad for the brand. We now have to put Marlowe on there.” But I think actually it will make people more curious.

BOGAEV: Well, on that note, on the curiosity note... I was very curious about what you both would say and this was really fascinating. Thank you so much.

WITMORE: Thank you.

RASMUSSEN: Thank you.

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WITMORE: Eric Rasmussen is the chair of the English department at the University of Nevada, Reno. His 1987 editions of Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3 were published as part of the Arden Shakespeare series. That other voice you heard was me. This is a topic I care deeply about and one I've studied for many years. Eric and I were interviewed by Barbara Bogaev.
“As If a Man Were Author of Himself” was produced by Richard Paul. Garland Scott is the associate producer. It was edited by Gail Kern Paster and Esther Ferington. We had help from Michele Ravera at radio station KUNR in Reno, Brian Allison and Jeff Peters at the Marketplace Studios in Los Angeles, and Melissa Marquis at NPR Headquarters in Washington.

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