

manuscripts available to scholars today - themselves attesting to an "imperfectly captured" collaboration - and the nebulous realm of the imagination where all the best writing lies.

We track two contrasting temperaments brought into one another's orbits amidst a larger climate of political, social and even sexual cunning. "I'd been reading about Shakespeare all my life," Adams said late one sultry summer afternoon, newly arrived in the UK for the start of rehearsals in Stratford-upon-Avon. That's where this production's director, the RSC's Co-Artistic Director Daniel Evans, has his artistic base and will oversee a staging that is being fashioned entirely afresh from its American predecessor.

Adams continued: "At a certain point, the more I read about Shakespeare and Marlowe, the more I knew I wanted to be in a room with these two. I wanted to be" - and here she quoted the history-themed *Hamilton* - "in the room where it happened."

Adams, for her part, insists upon a point of origin for her play that extends well beyond the question of authorship. A one-time actress herself trained at NYU and Yale, she speaks of being drawn to the men's "radically different approaches and philosophies to life and to what they wanted". Did she feel at any point overawed by the task at hand? "There were times when I thought, how can I do this? I'm not worthy of it. But at a certain point, you can't resist - when they started talking, it was like getting on the back of a galloping horse."

More generally, she mentions during her time as a performer wanting to act with the RSC and here she is instead writing a play for them to perform. "How did this happen?" she says with a startled laugh. "As an American, it's as if the mothership has called me home."

**Matt Wolf is an American theatre critic and journalist who has lived in London for over 40 years.**



To find out more from Liz Duffy Adams, please scan the QR code for the latest DMT podcast

## Marlowe Matters

Words Gabriel Egan

Many important works of English literature were published anonymously or with false claims of authorship on their title pages. Without 'external' evidence of authorship, we have only the works' word choices to go on. Surprisingly, the best evidence comes not from authors' use of distinctive words but from their use of common ones. The five most-used words in English are 'the', 'be', 'to', 'of' and 'and' (in that order), and together with the next 20 most-used words these account for about a third of everything we each say and write every day. We all use the same 25 most-common words, but we differ in which we prefer and which we avoid. This pattern of preferences forms a profile that is distinctive of every writer, and at best it enables us to attribute authorship correctly in about 80-90% of cases.

Ten years ago, researchers at the New Oxford Shakespeare went a step further to record how often each of the 100 most-common words appears close to or far from each of the others in the writings of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. We asked how often each writer puts 'the' within five words of 'be', how often within five words of 'to', and so on, for every possible pair of words. These habits turn out to be even better guides to authorship, taking us to about 90-95% accuracy of attribution. We were able to confirm preceding scholars' suspicions that Marlowe had a hand in all three of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays.

So, the New Oxford Shakespeare put Marlowe's name alongside Shakespeare's on the *Henry VI* plays' title pages. *The Guardian* newspaper's front page of 24 October 2016 spread this news and other outlets picked it up. When it reached author Liz Duffy Adams it inspired the creative spark for *Born With Teeth*.

**Professor Gabriel Egan is a General Editor of the *New Oxford Shakespeare* and teaches and researches at De Montfort University on the use of computers to better understand the canon of English Literature.**