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MARKETPLACE

Shakespeare to share credit for Henry VI

By DANICA KIRKA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — The Bard was not a solo act.

Oxford University Press' new edition of William Shakespeare's works will credit Christopher Marlowe as co-author of the three Henry VI plays, underscoring that the playwright collaborated with others on some of his most famous works.

Marlowe, a playwright, poet and spy, will share billing in the latest version of the New Oxford Shakespeare being published this week. While scholars have long suspected that Shakespeare's plays included the work of others, new analytical methods helped researchers conclude that sections bore the hallmarks of Marlowe's hand.

"Shakespeare, like other geniuses, recognized the value of other people," Gary Taylor, a professor at Florida State University and the principal investigator of the new work, said Monday.

"What is Shakespeare famous for? Writing dialogue — interactions between two people. You would expect in his life there would be dialogue with other people."

A team of 23 international scholars looked afresh at the man many consider the greatest writer in the English language. The challenge, put simply: If one is going to compile the complete works of Shakespeare one first has to determine what they are.

Five of the world's most senior Shakespeare scholars — Taylor, Hugh Craig at the University of Newcastle in Australia, MacDonald P. Jackson at the University of Auckland in New Zealand; Gabriel Egan at De Montfort University, Leicester and John Jowett of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham — had to be convinced of



AP PHOTO/STEVEN SENNE

Book conservator Lauren Schott polishes a case containing 17th century editions of plays attributed to William Shakespeare in an exhibit called "Shakespeare Unauthorized" at the Boston Public Library, in Boston, Mass.

the issues of authorship in the works.

The editors concluded that 17 of 44 works associated with Shakespeare had input from others. The scholars used computerized data sets to reveal patterns, trends and associations — analyzing not only Shakespeare's words, but also those of his contemporaries.

In Shakespeare's time, there was an insatiable demand for new material to feed the appetite of the first mass entertainment industry. A relatively small group of people — a cabal of sorts who knew one another — worked feverishly to meet this demand. Taylor compared them to screenwriters in the early days of Hollywood.

To study them, the team of scholars used what Taylor described as the analytic equivalent of combining

voice recognition, fingerprints and DNA testing — looking for patterns to see how various authors and playwrights wrote and worked.

"Shakespeare has now entered the world of big data," Taylor said, adding that while the bard's work has been studied intensively, that's not always the case in the same measure for other writers of his generation.

Still, he was adamant that this wasn't just a case of "computers telling us things." One needs to ask the right question.

"What you need is a method that treats all the writers as the same and try to identify in an empirical way what distinguishes him as a writer — what makes him different than the others," he said.

Marlowe, born in 1564,

the same year as Shakespeare, was a graduate of Cambridge University who wrote poetry and plays such as the two part "Tamburlaine" and "Dido, Queen of Carthage." A part-time spy for the government of Queen Elizabeth I, Marlowe is believed to have died in 1593 when he was stabbed under mysterious circumstances.

Oxford University Press says that "identifying Marlowe's hand in the Henry VI plays is just one of the fresh features of this project."

The authorship of Shakespeare's works has long been disputed, with one now-discredited theory being that philosopher Sir Francis Bacon is the true author of the works. But Bacon is only mentioned in the forward of this volume. His authorship, Taylor said, is "just a wonderful story."

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