



**What Should I Read Next? Episode 208:
The underappreciated art of literary forgery**
Hosted by Anne Bogel, with guest Charlie Lovett

[CHEERFUL INTRO MUSIC]

[00:00:04]

ANNE: Hey readers. I'm Anne Bogel, and this is What Should I Read Next? Episode 208.

Welcome to the show that's dedicated to answering the question that plagues every reader: What should I read next?

We don't get bossy on this show: What we WILL do here is give you the information you need to choose your next read. Every week we'll talk all things books and reading, and do a little literary matchmaking with one guest.

Readers, the holidays are fast approaching and around here, we're of the opinion that books make the perfect gift, whether you're shopping for friends, family, coworkers, teachers, or maybe yourself. But choosing WHICH book can be tough, so it's become a tradition here on What Should I Read Next? to help you match your loved ones with the perfect bookish gift. That episode is coming soon, but first we need to know who you're gifting to this year!

To participate, leave me a voicemail at (502) 209-7607 sharing who you want a gift recommendation for and a little about their literary taste—a couple of books they love and something you know isn't for them would do the job nicely—plus any little details you think are useful. Make sure to keep your message under 1 minute! That's (502) 209-7607.

If you'd rather not call in, email our producer Brenna at [brenna](mailto:brenna@modernmrsdarcy.com) (that's B-R-E-N-N-A) Brenna@modernmrsdarcy.com with the same information – who you're gifting to, a little about their taste, and other relevant details.

We'll squeeze as many submissions as we can into the upcoming holiday episode, and hook you up with the perfect bookish gifts!

Today's guest is Charlie Lovett, who I got to chat with in-person with 150 other readers at the ever-charming bookstore Bookmarks NC in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I'm making something of a tradition of a fall trip to North Carolina and I have to say I like it. This event came about thanks to Charlie, to Bookmark's director Jamie Southern, and the Modern Mrs Darcy Book Club. This Book Club is the place where we are learning to read better together, and one of the many things we do is read a core selection together every month, and then meet on video, usually, to discuss it at the end of the month, often with the author. Our October selection was Charlie's novel *The Bookman's Tale*, and not only did Charlie join us, but for the first time ever, we got to have our author chat in person. We had such a wonderful time at Bookmarks, and it was a thrill to be in the same room with all these avid readers. And if you're thinking I wish I could have been there —well, we have good news. Today we're bringing you that live conversation from Bookmarks NC.

Charlie and I discuss the enduring power of not only stories but the books themselves, how books connect people of all ages, and of all times, how to preserve literature for future generations, the joy of a book as a physical object, the art of literary forgery, marginalia, symbolism, and much, much more. This conversation was a TON of fun and I assure you it's also totally spoiler-free. I can't wait for you to listen, so let's get to it.

[00:03:08]

BETH: Hello, hello, everyone. How are you this evening? [AUDIENCE ANSWERS] Good? We are so happy you are here at Bookmarks tonight with us. I'm Beth. I'm the bookstore manager. One of our favorite friends here at Bookmarks is Charlie Lovett. [AUDIENCE CLAPS] We have - Yeah. We have the distinct honor of being Charlie's hometown bookstore. He was so instrumental in getting our space started and supporting all of us. He's a huge friend of Bookmarks. A huge friend to Winston-Salem. We are thrilled to have him tonight with us, but also very happy to welcome Anne Bogel [AUDIENCE CLAPS].

I have to tell you, I think y'all are going to agree with me, does everybody feel like Anne is your friend? [AUDIENCE AGREES, LAUGHS] So Anne's in the car with us. She's in ... I'm putting on my makeup, listening to Anne in the morning. So every week, I spend this time with her, and I really had to tell myself, Beth, Anne does not talk to you every week. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Do not be super crazy, but I am super crazy because we're a fan. Anne was here last year at festival. Love her books. Love her new book. We'll talk about that later tonight, but it is our pleasure to welcome her back, so please give her a very warm welcome. [AUDIENCE CLAPS, CHEERS] And I'm going to let y'all get started.

CHARLIE: Thanks.

ANNE: Well it's mutual. We are readers, so we are all kindred spirits. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] We can ... I mean, you're down with Green Gables, right?

CHARLIE: Absolutely.

[00:04:39]

ANNE: Yeah. She's a book lover. [CHARLIE LAUGHS] Book lovers, we're all friends. I would like to know when I can claim Bookmarks regular status, where did Beth go? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

CHARLIE: Uhh.

ANNE: 'Cause like we hang out. I've seen y'all over the place this fall. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] In two different states, and this is my second annual appearance to Bookmarks.

CHARLIE: That's right.

ANNE: So maybe ... I mean, I've given y'all a lot of money over the course of that ... [CHARLIE LAUGHS] My trunk is stocked up. Well, okay, I only have two, but I have two YA books for a difficult-to-get-books-for daughter. You all are asking me, I have a kid. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] They don't know what to read next. What should they read next? And I'm like, I don't know. I ask them at Bookmarks. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] So there's my pro-tip for the evening.

CHARLIE: We'll tell ya.

ANNE: Yeah, how do you figure out what to read next?

CHARLIE: I come to Bookmarks, yeah. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

ANNE: Okay. See? See?

CHARLIE: I come and I see ... I see an author who sounds interesting and I buy the book or much more-

ANNE: He's got a lot of books at his house.

CHARLIE: Yeah. I always go through the stack of books to read, oh, this person was at the festival; this person came for an event this summer; this person was on the podcast; so, you know. In a lovely, lovely way, it's never ending.

ANNE: Mm-hmm. Never ending. So let me tell you all a little bit about how this event happened. 'Cause it's probably not how you think. Since May of 2016, we've had the Modern Mrs Darcy book club where we have community, classes, conversation. Who here is actually a part of that online?

CHARLIE: All right.

ANNE: Thank you.

[00:06:02]

CHARLIE: Excellent.

ANNE: It's a pleasure to be reading with you in person. Oh, and we're recording online, so hi, online crew. See, what happens in book club, like only some of it stays in book club [CHARLIE, AUDIENCE LAUGHS] because when you become a better reader, you become a better leader, so we want you take your books out into the world. But something that we do is we read a book every month. I know this is shocking, but it's one of the things we do in book club. And we're always looking for an interesting variety of books, genres, perspectives, points of view, authors who are living and dead. And when the author's alive, we really like to be able to talk to them in person. I've been wanting to read a book by Charlie Lovett because he writes books for book lovers by clearly, even if I didn't know you in person, from the page, I would know you were a book lover.

CHARLIE: Yeah. It's interesting how suddenly that seemed to work. If you write books for people who like books, they read your books. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

ANNE: Right, right.

CHARLIE: I like that.

ANNE: Right. And then they want to read more books!

CHARLIE: Yeah, yeah.

ANNE: We're all apart of a virtuous circle here. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] So I knew since we started the book club that Charlie's books would be so fun to read in a bookish community where you feel understood on the page, but you get to say to your friends, like, didn't you love this? And they can say, oh my gosh, page 89, and you go, I know! [CHARLIE LAUGHS] And it's just, it's great to be able to do that in community, so I reached out to Charlie and said, we would love to read your books in book club. I couldn't decide which one at first.

CHARLIE: Yeah, I can't remember how we decided ... what we decided was *The Bookman's Tale*.

ANNE: I might've said, can we read *The Bookman's Tale*?

CHARLIE: It might have been when you emailed me, I was sitting in what some people think of as Peter Byerly's cottage in Kingham. [ANNE LAUGHS]

ANNE: Oh, we're going to put a pin in that.

[00:07:46]

CHARLIE: And so that book was a little bit on my head at the time. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Well, so then he wondered down to Bookmarks and they started talking and he emailed me back and he said, do you want to do it live? And I said, you're in North Carolina. And then I said, oh, wait, I'm coming to North Carolina actually. And here we all are.

CHARLIE: Here we are.

ANNE: So, Charlie, I'm not going to be like looking through your book like a scholar all night, but there is one passage that I wanted to read out loud to you because I'm sure that's not weird. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

CHARLIE: No, it's not weird at all.

ANNE: Let me tell you. So my pal, Ariel Lawhon.

CHARLIE: Who's been on my podcast also, so. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

ANNE: Oh, Charlie has a podcast and a fancy board - what's the technological name for this?

CHARLIE: Uh, sign. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Yeah.

ANNE: But how do you say that in Latin?

CHARLIE: It stands for standing, insignia ... No, it's -

ANNE: [LAUGHS] No, he has a fancy sign and you should take a photo of it or something so you remember Inside the Writer's Studio is his podcast. I was on an episode last fall.

CHARLIE: That's right.

ANNE: My friend and I listened to his episode with Louise Penny - do we need to explain - she would tell them who she is?

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

CHARLIE: Uh, there seems to be a little murmur of recognition. Like almost-

ANNE: Okay.

CHARLIE: Maybe they've heard of one of her books or something.

[00:08:56]

ANNE: All right. We don't have time for segways into, [CHARLIE LAUGHS] you know, into that stuff. But we listened to that episode on the way up and Ariel's been on too, but she ... I was going to say jokes. I don't think she's joking. She talks about her past books as ex-boyfriends. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] You love them once, you might not even remember why they're just not part of your life anymore. So I've asked Charlie to - how do you think of your old books? I'm guessing not as ex-boyfriends.

CHARLIE: You told me this afternoon and I've been thinking about that. I think to me they're more like old friends who've moved away from town, you may not think of them all the time and they're not your current passion, but they still have a very special place in your heart.

ANNE: All right. That's less punchy. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

CHARLIE: Yeah, well, I just don't have as many ex-boyfriends as Ariel has, I guess. [EVERYBODY LAUGHS]

ANNE: You can talk about that when you have her back on the show.

CHARLIE: Right, right. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Okay, so I'm going to read this to you from your old friend.

CHARLIE: Okay.

ANNE: This is a book about a bookseller and book collector who believes in the power of literature above I think all else in the beginning.

CHARLIE: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

ANNE: And then books open a door to him finding a richer way of life, so this is Peter Byerley of the cottage we will discuss. He's explaining to a friend: "I know it might seem silly to some people, but it's the way I want to change the world. To bring books together with people who will love them and preserve them for the next generation." Now something there is about this book is it came out in 2014, which means you wrote it, what?

CHARLIE: Which means I wrote it in like 2008 to '09, something like that.

ANNE: Oh, really?

CHARLIE: Yeah, yeah. It was a long journey to get that book published. It was my first book with a major publisher. I'd written lots of books with minor publishers, but it was the first, you know, sorta big novel that I wrote and it was many years of revising and sending it off to a few agents and getting some rejections and those days, you literally printed it out and sent it in a physical package to an agent and then they sent you a postcard that said no thank you. [ANNE LAUGHS] But eventually it was loved and published and found by the world.

[00:11:04]

ANNE: And we're so glad it was. I - I swear this relates, I put out a summer reading guide every year since 2012. Readers email me all the time and say, I've got the 2016 guide in my hand. Which of these books have aged well? [CHARLIE LAUGHS] Y'all, we're talking about three years and I know Charlie, it would be premature to call this a modern classic; however, this is a book-

CHARLIE: Go ahead.

ANNE: That's ageing well [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] and that people are still - this is going to stand the test of time because it plugs in to that love we have for books and I just love to hear you ... We're going to get into the answer query and we're going to get into your history because I don't know and I want to. [CHARLIE LAUGHS] But tell me a little bit about how that's important for you and how you wanted to, of all the things you could have written the story about.

CHARLIE: Well I think really one of the reasons that *The Bookman's Tale* really works is because I had, you know, tried to write novels and I went into MFA program where you do nothing but write short stories and then I tried to write novels again. As a MFA graduate where you think you have to write the great literary novel, you know, and finally I just thought, okay, maybe I should just tell a story about something I'm passionate about. And I'm passionate about books and about the way books connect people ... I mean, just look around the room. That's what's happening right here right now.

But I'm also especially fascinated by the way that books, both as texts and as physical objects, connect people across generations and across time and across place. And so I started to write about that, and I had been performing some Shakespeare around that time, so I thought, maybe I'll throw a little Shakespeare in there. And my wife and I love spending time in the English countryside, so I threw a little English countryside ... And it turns out when you write about the things you really care about, that you're really passionate about, that comes across on the page and it communicates to the reader and you get an opportunity to not only share that passion, but to write a story that is underpinned by something that really means something to you.

ANNE: And you can feel that. I mean, we've all read books that felt empty, have we not? I think it's so interesting that you said books connect people across time and across generations because something that I've noticed in my reading life and in this community here is that we are often segmented by demographic these days in a way that doesn't feel right to me.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

[00:13:33]

ANNE: And yet books bring people together. Like I don't have many communities in my life where you have 20-year-olds and 70-year-olds in the same room talking about the same thing, but books will do that. I'd love to hear about your experience with across time and across generation.

CHARLIE: Well, so, I'm - I'm a book collector.

ANNE: Yes.

CHARLIE: As you know, and so one of the things that fascinates me and this comes out in *The Bookman's Tale* is the idea of provenance which is the history of ownership of an object. And in my case, ownership of a particular book. So for instance, some of you may know, a few days ago the English clerk John Henry Newman was made into a saint by the Pope, and I was able to go to my shelf and pull down a copy of Newman's autobiography that belonged to Lewis Carroll. Lewis Carroll's personal copy because I collect Lewis Carroll, and so to me that book has more interest and more meaning because it belonged to someone that I'm interested in and that I care about.

But in *The Bookman's Tale*, I wanted to follow that provenance through almost 400 years of history to show how one book, one physical object, not just one text but one specific copy of one book could tie together all these different people as it moved through history. Because I've seen that happen and it's just, it's something really special to pull a book off a shelf and see the very first reader's name written on the end paper from 1865 or from 1780 or from 1920, and to realize that you're never going to come face to face with that person, but you're going to share an experience with that person that - that you'll never meet, you may know nothing about, but you know that you can share an experience with them by just opening the pages of that book.

ANNE: Now the first time I read *The Bookman's Tale*, which I am a re-reader, but I don't re-read everything, but I've really enjoyed revisiting this one, so thank you for that. I did not know anything about the world of antiquary and book collecting. Especially because I hadn't yet read *First Impressions*.

CHARLIE: Right.

ANNE: Which is a literary mystery about the works of Jane Austen, which I know - yes, I heard that.

CHARLIE: She's another writer, I don't know if you've [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] heard of her. I have not had her on the podcast yet. [ANNE LAUGHS] Her publicist is just very difficult to work with.

ANNE: Unresponsive?

[00:15:57]

CHARLIE: Yup. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I do believe that's the medical term, yes. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS]

ANNE: I didn't know anything about antiquary and book collecting and I didn't know that I cared, although it did make for a very interesting plot. But then ... I don't want to make you all jealous, but Bookmarks does do an amazing literary festival in Winston-Salem, and people come from near and very far. That's worth it [AUDIENCE CLAPS] to attend this and you should write a book and get yourself an invitation because then you might get to go to Charlie's house for dinner.

CHARLIE: That's right.

ANNE: And he will show you his Lewis Carrolls, and it really wasn't until ... I mean, I've encountered people who've loved books over the years and who might have a few collectables and they're interesting, but holy smokes. [CHARLIE LAUGHS] I mean, I wish-I wish this was like a Marvel movie where we could, like, pop up our screen and we could, like, zoom in the photos and can you tell what I spent my summer doing with my kids? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] How did you get into antiquary and book collecting?

CHARLIE: So, my - my father was a book collector and an English professor, so I grew up in a house where books were appreciated in two different ways. They were appreciated as texts and they were also appreciated as physical objects. And so, that sorta became my DNA, both of those things. And when I was fishing around, I decided I wanted to be a book collector, when I was fishing around for something to collect, I had listened to these old records of Cyril Ritchard, remember Cyril Ritchard, he plays Captain Hook in the Mary Martin *Peter Pan*? So he made these records. I see some of you are out there are old enough to know what records are. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] ... Of *Alice in Wonderland*, reading *Alice in Wonderland* and I used to listen to them. And so I thought, oh, I'll collect *Alice in Wonderland*. I knew nothing about Lewis Carroll. I knew nothing about ... That he'd written other books, that he was a mathematician, a photographer, a logician, an inventor of games and all these other things. And it - it, you know, lead me to this very rich place.

And there's a quote in *The Bookman's Tale* that I think about every time people come to the house to visit and to look at books, whether they're authors or readers or anyone. And that is when Peter first is in the rare book room at Ridgefield University over here in eastern North Carolina. It's not as well known as some of the other universities because they're a basketball

team is just not great. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS] But he's looking at a copy of a book called *The Bad Quarto of Hamlet*, the very first thing of Hamlet, and the librarian comes in and Peter goes, oh, I'm sorry that I was touching that. And he says, the librarian says, there's no point in having these things if we don't have the pleasure of looking at them. And to me, that has been the greatest joy of being a book collector. Not just surrounding myself with books, but being able to share those with other people, maybe ignite a passion in another person for an old book, for an illustrator, for a story, for - for collecting, you know, whatever it might be. Which is why the Bookmarks' dinners are always so much fun. I mean, to see a Caldecott award winning author holding your copy of the first edition of *Alice in Wonderland* like ... It just doesn't get any better than that as a book collector.

So many of us think we don't have time to learn a new topic or pick up another hobby. But we actually do with The Great Courses Plus. This educational streaming service makes learning so easy and accessible. There are thousands of lectures on practically any topic you can think of, with objective, in-depth information from some of the best teachers in the world. And you don't have to "make time" to learn. The Great Courses Plus fits into your schedule...anytime, anywhere. Watch on your lunch break or at the gym. Listen along while driving or washing dishes.

Because I am a budding botanist, I've been watching "how to grow anything" a six lesson course on gardening and landscaping that I hope leads me down the path of year-round color in my garden.

Make learning part of your daily routine with The Great Courses Plus! What Should I Read Next? listeners have access to this fantastic offer: a full month for FREE! Check out everything from Shakespeare's Tragedies to Ancient Astronomy and all that's in between...Sign up now through my special URL to start your Free Month!

Go to TheGreatCoursesPlus.com/READNEXT Remember, that's: thegreatcoursesplus.com/READNEXT.

Readers, if you're a regular listener, then you know PrepDish has been my secret weapon for healthy, stress-free meals for years.

Something I hear a lot is how can I know Prep Dish will work for me? It couldn't be easier to try it for yourself and find out: and Today I'm offering you an even easier way to try out these meal plans... all you need to do is text the word "mealplan" to 33777 to get a free week!

Allison has created a beginner's menu that walks you step-by-step through the most efficient way to prep your meals, saving you SO much time! If you are tight on time, this meal plan is for you!

The "Prep Day" is where you'll spend about an hour doing your gathering, chopping, mixing of marinades... really you are setting yourself up for success the rest of the week. After doing the initial prep work, each meal is so quick and easy, you don't even need to think at mealtime, just follow the instructions and use the ingredients you've already prepped for a meal your whole family will love!

My family especially loves the chimichurri salmon—oh, and the flank steak fajitas, too—but give Prep Dish a try for yourself and see what new meal your household adores. Just text "mealplan" to 33777. For a free week of Prep Dish, text "mealplan" to 33777.

ANNE: Well, and I'm glad you said holding because I am a book lover and the idea of putting books in sleeves behind glass so that you didn't touch them just seemed to go against my experience with books.

[00:21:52]

CHARLIE: Yeah.

ANNE: Who's read Anne Fadiman? Y'all, I'm a carnal book lover. Like my usual bookmark looks like ... Sorry, Charlie, here I'll do it to my own. [CHARLIE LAUGHS] Just like, boom. Or I got a pack of tissues right here, I could use that too. That'll work just fine. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And I write in them and I mess them up and if my .. I almost said my kids, if I spill my drink all over them 'cause that's how it goes in my house, they're much neater than me, it's, you know, it's replaceable.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

ANNE: It's a book, which is amazing, but it's just a book. So I didn't like the idea of shrouding them, but that's not how you are with your books at all.

CHARLIE: No.

ANNE: You're like here, touch the page.

CHARLIE: Yeah. I really agree. What's the point of having them if you can't - if you can't pick them up and touch them and feel that connection that we were talking about? To think about, I think if you've never held or read the first edition of your favorite book, whatever that is, go to a rare book library or go to an antiquarian bookseller, wherever you need to go. If your favorite

book is *The Bookman's Tale*, you can just come to my house. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS] But to see that text. I mean, when I was working on *First Impressions*, I went to the rare book library at Wake Forest and took down the first edition of *Pride & Prejudice*. And I read, first of all, that opening sentence. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." And to see words that feel like they've been there forever, on the page as they appeared to the very first people who ever read those words, it - it can be a revelation, and so yeah, I absolutely believe that books are there, that books are to read.

You know, Maurice Sendak wrote a book called *A Hole Is To Dig*. A book is to read and the lovely thing about collecting books is that if you collect wine or stamps, you know, and then you use them for their originally intended purpose, you're left with an empty bottle or a letter that you sent to a friend. For the younger members of the audience, afterwards, we'll tell you what a letter is. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] But if you collect books, you can read that book without detract - not only do you not detract from its value, in some ways you add to its value because you now are a part of the history of that book.

[00:23:58]

ANNE: Mm-hmm. Let's talk about Shakespeare.

CHARLIE: Sure.

ANNE: Or *The Bookman's Tale*.

CHARLIE: Another writer.

ANNE: So, *The Bookman's Tale* ... Okay, so who listens to What Should I Read Next? [AUDIENCE CHEERS] Charlie, you talk with authors every day on well, it feels like it's every day if you're catching up, Inside the Writer Studio. Something that has really surprised me about this gig we have is how difficult it is for people who professionally put words together to put words together to describe these books we love.

CHARLIE: Yeah, yeah.

ANNE: So with that being said, so in *The Bookman's Tale*, you have a poor lonely guy grieving his wife who has a literary mystery dropped in his lap and he has to go chase this thread because as book lover, he feels it his duty and he just can't help himself.

CHARLIE: Can't help himself, yeah, yeah.

ANNE: It's like he needs to find out what happens next, does anybody know what that's like? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Which, which ...

CHARLIE: I mean, it's also the thread that he sees might pull him back into the mainstream of life from this margin of grief that he's sorta been wallowing in since his wife's death.

ANNE: Yes, and I love that you put it like that because one criticism of people who do not understand our pursuits is why would you want to leave the real world to go visit a fictional one in pages? But I love the way that you just said that it was the book pulling him back into his real life.

[00:25:19]

CHARLIE: Yeah, yeah. The original title of this book was *Marginalia*, which is the word in the rare book business we give to ... What you write in the margins of a book, right? And I thought this was a great title because it not only got at the central artifact in the book, the *Pandosto* that has this marginalia written in it, but also got at the fact that Peter at the beginning of the book is really living at the margins of life.

ANNE: Oh! Oh, that's good.

CHARLIE: This - this book is a story about a man who's living in the margins and how he gradually moves back into the text of his life. And it doesn't mean that he's healed. It doesn't mean that everything is fine. But it means at least he's living again. Well, my publisher said you know, marginalia, yeah, that's a great title if you want to sell the book to like eight rare book librarians. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS] But they felt like maybe that you guys would want to read it, too, so we gave it a different title, but yeah, I do feel it's very much ... At its core, that's what it's about Peter, you know, starting out as sorta a broken man who's living in the edge of life, finding a way back in, and it's books that give him that pathway.

ANNE: So tell me about Shakespeare.

CHARLIE: So he was a writer also. [EVERYBODY LAUGHS]

ANNE: Tell me about Shakespeare anew.

CHARLIE: Right. So, so ... When I started working on *Bookman's Tale*, I had been performing occasionally in some Shakespeare plays. I had played the role of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, which is the lead part in that play. I was told afterwards that he has a third of the text. I was horrified that I had memorized a third of a Shakespeare play. But nonetheless, you know, the Bard was always on my mind and we had spent time ... When we lived in England in the 1990s, my wife and daughter and I went to see a lot of Shakespeare. She was, our daughter was nine. We were essentially homeschooling her for a semester and homeschooling consisted of hopping in the car and driving up to Stratford and seeing the Royal Shakespeare festival.

So that ... When I wanted to write a book about rare books, for people who maybe don't know a lot about rare books, I thought well what sorta book could almost anybody relate to? And I

thought well everybody knows Shakespeare. And everybody knows there's this sorta mystique about Shakespeare, so why not just tap into that? And not everybody, but many people know that there is this, I don't even know if we want to call it a controversy, but there is ... There are people who believe that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon were actually written by somebody other than the son of a glove maker who lived in the middle of England in the 16th century. And so I thought, well that is something that gives the opportunity for some conflict and some interest and some mystery. What if you could prove that Shakespeare wasn't really Shakespeare? Or what if you could prove that Shakespeare was really Shakespeare? Either way, you know, would make an interesting book.

And so that's one of the reasons why the first book that Peter encounters is what we call *The Bad Quarto of Hamlet*. So I thought if you know nothing about rare books, I need you to go, oh my gosh, that's the coolest thing I've ever heard of when Peter encounters this first book. So I figured nobody's going to read a book called *The Bookman's Tale* that has a cover that looks like that who's never heard of William Shakespeare, right? Or who's never at least read or seen or knows about a play called *Hamlet*. So I thought if I put in his hands a book, a copy of *Hamlet* that was printed when Shakespeare was still alive and well and walking the streets of London, like anybody who would pick up this book would go, oh, that's pretty cool. That's a cool book. That's a book I'd like to have in my hands. So I think it began with that, with wanting to find a way to engage a reader who maybe isn't a Lewis Carroll collector and does not, isn't going to have the slightest bit of interest in some rare pamphlet about logic, but who would think that holding the very first printing of *Hamlet* would be kinda a cool thing. And so I think that's how Shakespeare came into the book, and then also the authorship question gave it another level of mystery that Peter could sorta be drawn into.

[00:29:41]

ANNE: Now I imagine that you began writing this book or researching this book, pretty clear on where you stood as to the conspiracy theories here.

CHARLIE: So, yes, I will - I will ..

ANNE: Let me ... This is a two-parter. I'd love to hear what you found out along the way that surprised you.

CHARLIE: I will confess to being what they call a Stratfordian, I'm one of those people who boringly thinks that William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays commonly attributed to him. But the more I researched it, the reasons for my feeling that way evolved. Because I started to learn about, for instance, the role in the master of the queens' reveals. The member of the royal household who's kinda in charge of theatre, you know, wouldn't it be nice to have that now? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And all the other, all the people behind the scenes in the theatre, the people who roll the cannonballs across the ceiling to make it sound like thunder and all this sorta, and I started to think about how many people from the royal household all the way down

to the illiterate working man would have to have kept this secret that the plays weren't really written by William Shakespeare.

And it just seemed unconceivable to me that all of those people could shut up for the amount of time they would have had to keep quiet for. And so that's where I came down on. But I certainly admit that it's a question that leads to very interesting conversations. Because there are certainly some reasons to wonder how this guy with basically a grammar school education from ... Now he's frequently portrayed as being from this little bitty town, but Stratford was actually one of the larger towns in England at the time. But nonetheless, somebody who didn't go to Cambridge, somebody who didn't go to Oxford. How does he end up writing these plays? It's a very interesting question to ask. And it's a question I try to answer a little bit of in a fictional way in the novel, but it is a novel.

It is not an academic study of Shakespeare. I'm not trying to say that this right or this is wrong. I'm just trying to say, isn't this a cool story? Imagine if this happened. But I have had people, an English teacher from my former high school, say to me, ahhh, I'd really wish that would happen. [ANNE LAUGHS] I really love the way that book played out. [LAUGHS]

[00:32:12]

ANNE: Something that really drives the story forward that I really enjoyed wrestling with and am curious to hear your further thoughts on is the idea of forgery. Now when I hear forgery, I hear bad. Crime. Obscenity. But in your book, it's - it's more nuanced.

CHARLIE: Yeah, yeah. So ... Not too long, while i was in the antiquarian book business, there was this big scandal in Utah and a friend of mine who's a bookseller was involved in this with one of the great forgers of all time and he might have never gotten caught if he didn't try to pull off a big book deal where he was selling a collection that didn't exist, and then it started to go south and then he started to send pipe bombs to the people who were involved in it and now he's in federal prison. And has he written me about *The Bookman's Tale*? No, not one word. [ANNE LAUGHS]

So but I had been in the book business when this was going on, and you know, people were going back to their Emily Dickinson letters and realizing they were forgeries and you know, he rewrote the whole early history of the Mormon church by selling forged documents to the Mormon Church. So I was fascinated by it. And then I knew about another forger in the 19th century called Thomas Wise, who forged pamphlets that he had attributed to people like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and John Ruskin and they would be like, you know, here's a couple of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* but published three years before the book came out. Oh, it's an incredibly rare pamphlet. And he wasn't found out for decades.

ANNE: I'm laughing because there's such a great turn of dialogue in the ... I feel like y'all can't see me. Can you see me? I'm not like turning my back on you? [CHARLIE LAUGHS] There's a

great dialogue exchange in your book where one of Peter's mentors says to him, ooh, that's a Wise one.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

ANNE: And I mean, don't you want to be a wise one?

[00:34:11]

CHARLIE: Thomas Wise, what a great name for a forger.

ANNE: No, no, you do not in *The Bookman's Tale*. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

CHARLIE: So I started researching how these forgers actually did what they did. And I started realizing that although their intent may have been criminal, their actions were artistic and scientific and in some ways, brilliant. And the things they were able to accomplish could not have been accomplished by just anybody. And so I thought, well what if one of my characters is like that? And that's the Victorian character Phillip Gardner whose dream in life is to be a painter, who was recognized as a great painter, but who was condemned to really be a brilliant copyist. He can copy anything, but he has no originality. Or so we think. [LAUGHS] But I don't want to give away the end of the book. [ANNE LAUGHS]

You know, it's funny, people say to me what kind of book is *The Bookman's Tale* and I go into bookstores and I see it sometimes it's just shelved with fiction. Sometimes it's shelved with mystery, although I didn't set out to write a mystery, but I honestly believe that any good novel is a mystery. Because if you want to know what happens on the next page and you don't know, then it's a mystery. Right? But I did not set out to write, oh, the butler comes to the front door and there's a body on the floor of the drawing room kinda mystery.

ANNE: Right, right.

CHARLIE: And yet it gets shelved as mystery. Every now and then, I see it shelved as literature, which is really nice. [ANNE LAUGHS] But it was not my intention to write a mystery and yet when I sat down at one point and cataloged all the crimes that are committed over a period of 400 years in this book, there're a lot of crimes committed in this book. [LAUGHS] Including you know, there's at least one murder. So I don't know, but yeah, Peter ... There's definitely a section in the novel where Peter is sorta sucked into what I think of as the classic Hitchcockian situation. He .. The bad guys, he thinks bad guys are after him and he thinks the police are after him also. He believes that he's being framed for a crime and he believes that he has to solve a mystery at odds with bad people in order to exonerate himself and also to prove the things that he wants to prove. So it's sorta a classic you know, man against the world kinda situation for a section of the novel, yeah.

Readers, here's a harsh reality: just because it's not warm out, doesn't mean you don't sweat. So even though you might be making changes to your beauty routine this winter—like for me that means I need a lot more moisturizer and a little less sunscreen—there are some things you need year-round.

For me, that's aluminum-free coconut deodorant from Kopari! Kopari's Coconut Deodorant is a cleaner alternative to traditional deodorants. It's aluminum-free, vegan, and does not contain silicones, sulfates, parabens, GMOs, or baking soda. Instead of using a bunch of questionable ingredients you probably don't want on your body, Kopari's deodorant keeps you fresh with plant-based actives like sage oil and coconut oil. Kopari doesn't irritate my sensitive skin and I LOVE the subtle smell.

And since you're never going to not need deodorant, Kopari's made it so you never have to run out! You can subscribe and get deodorant automatically shipped to your door, as often as you choose, for free!

Kopari offers a money-back guarantee, so if you've been thinking about switching to a cleaner deodorant, this is the best way to do it!

Go to KopariBeauty.com/READNEXT to get 15% off your monthly subscription orders! That's KOPARI, K-O-P-A-R-I, beauty.com/READNEXT. KopariBeauty.com/READNEXT

ANNE: And if you haven't read *The Bookman's Tale* yet, I hope you want to by now, but much of the thread that pulls you through is trying to figure out what is real and what is fake and how could these forgers possibly have pulled this off? And the answer is that they were artists.

[00:38:07]

CHARLIE: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, there's a point in which Peter says toward the end of the book, he's thinking about the books in the rare book library at Ridgefield where he first came to know and love rare books. And he says, I wonder if there are forgeries on the shelf of this library that are so well done that they will never be detected. And to me, it's a very interesting philosophical question. If that is the case, is there a difference between the forgery and the real thing? Stephanie's going to tell me later on if I get this quote wrong or right [ANNE LAUGHS] but I believe Mr. Spock on Star Trek said something along the lines of a difference that makes no difference is no difference. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS] Yeah, I got the thumbs up, yeah. And so I was really thinking about that when I was thinking about this idea of you know, if a book in my collection that I think is one thing is actually something else but the something else is just as amazing as work of art, does it make a difference? I don't have an answer to that question, but I think it's an interesting question to play around with.

ANNE: Well, your novel does call you to wonder that because you argue through your character, well, you ... I'm putting words in your mouth [CHARLIE LAUGHS] but your characters question if these forgers are producing documents so that people, so that school children everywhere can see what Jane Austen's original works 'cause I'm sure that's what every third grader dreams of, looked like then if there was no deception, maybe they would be doing a service.

[00:39:41]

CHARLIE: Sure. Yeah, and I think that's the question ... You get to the question of the difference between the intent behind an action and the action itself. That the action of creating something is a creative action, is an artistic action, but if the intent is to deceive, how does that change the creativity of the action? Does it not change it at all? Is the intent something completely separate from the artistic impression or not? And I don't have an answer to that question, but I think that's a fun question to think about as you're reading about ...

One of the things I tried to do in *The Bookman's Tale*, if you've read it, you know there's three different timelines. So you know there's a timeline that is kinda the narrative present. It's set in the 1990s 'cause it really needed to happen before the Internet took over the book business. And then there's a timeline when Peter's in college in the 1980s and then there's a timeline that begins in London in the 1590s and ends in rural Oxfordshire in the 1870s. And so I tried to have connections between these timelines and forgery's a really good example. Because there's a place ... There's points in the book where Peter in college is learning about the guy who forged the Mormon letters. Peter in the present story is trying to figure out if this *Pandosto* is a forgery or not. And then there's characters in the historical timeline who are actually forging documents that have to do with William Shakespeare. So I love this idea of sorta playing around a theme in three different timelines. It's almost like theme and variations in a piece of music, you know?

ANNE: Something that I knew that I always wanted to write about when I started my blog is those issues that are timeless, and yet are interpreted by us in a very timely ways, and I love how you can really see that in pages of your novel. Okay, so, art is forgery. No, forgery as art.

CHARLIE: Forgery could be art. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: In the same way that you said Peter was studying the marginalia and living in the margins of his life, I really wanted to play around with, do you see any greater symbolism in the forgery?

CHARLIE: Well, I think - I think certainly one of the things that Peter is struggling with both metaphorically and in the real world is what's real and what's not real. So the question is, is something a forgery or is it not a forgery, is very much a question of what's real and what's not real. But Peter for instance is seeing his dead wife. She comes and speaks to him. Is it real or is it not real? Is it ... I didn't know what it was when I wrote it. I found out later on what it was.

Oliver Sacks explained it to me on NPR interview what it was. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] He wrote a book about, Oliver Sacks wrote a book about hallucination and I was listening to it after *The Bookman's Tale* was done, in the can, about to be published. I was driving along and I heard this radio interview and he said the most common type of hallucination ... He first said, first, to the person having a hallucination, it is not different from reality. And then he said the most common type of hallucination is hallucinating the presence of a recently deceased loved one. And I almost drove my car off the road because I was like, that, I really didn't know what was happening when Peter saw Amanda. I just knew that he saw her. So there's - I mean, that's a physical manifestation of this struggle he has to determine what's real and what's not real, but I think also he's dealing with what emotions are real and what aren't real, and what thoughts are real and what aren't real, and where ... How can he move from this sorta ... Not quite fantasy world, but this unrealistic world that he's been living in, into a more real world. So yes, I think that, I think the question of forgery or not forgery is definitely reflected in the larger themes of the novel.

[00:43:43]

ANNE: So if you tell me that story again that you told me at dinner about teaching the class on beginnings and then the class on endings, do we think this spoilery? Is that too spoilery?

CHARLIE: No, I don't think that has to be a spoiler.

ANNE: Right. I don't think so.

CHARLIE: So I was asked last summer to teach a class in Sparta, North Carolina about beginnings of novels, and so I taught a class about the beginning of *The Bookman's Tale* because I knew that one. And it's easy to get your class prepared to talk about beginnings, you just stand up and read the first chapter to them. That's all they need, right? So then this summer they asked me would I come back and would I teach a class about endings? And then I thought okay now they really need to read the whole book, so I said if the class will read *The Bookman's Tale*, I'll come back and read ... This is a sneaky way of selling 12 copies of your book, right?

[ANNE LAUGHS]

And so I started to compare the opening chapter and the closing chapter, and I encourage you to do this with any book. But I went in to this comparison, not with any preconceived notions because I didn't sit down when I wrote the closing chapter to do anything that specifically related to the opening chapter. But I discovered for instance, all these pair of words where in the opening chapter, it would say rainy and then the closing chapter it would say sunny. And then the opening chapter, it would say sad, and in the closing chapter it would say happy. All these opposite words. And I thought, wow, that's really interesting. I didn't do it on purpose, but it's pretty cool that it worked out that way.

And then I realized in the opening chapter, Peter's going into an enclosed space and then the closing space, he's coming out of an enclosed space. In both chapters, there is a slip of paper

but in the opening chapter, it's a really important slip of paper that pulls him into this entire mystery. And then in the closing chapter, it's a slip of paper that has been rendered irrelevant by what has happened in Peter's life. And so it was, again, it was not anything that I did intentionally, but it was a really interesting exercise to compare the beginning and the end, sorta ignoring 250 pages in the middle. I don't encourage you to necessarily read the book that way because there's a few bits in the middle that are kinda, I think are fun, you know. But yeah, sorta turned out that the ending of the book was almost the inverse of the beginning. And I had not done this with any other books, but I wouldn't be surprised if we find that in other things that we read as well. And maybe there are authors who do that on purpose. But it may be that a natural way of storytelling, that it's a balance, that the end sorta counter balances the beginning.

[00:46:14]

ANNE: All right. I'm going to ask Charlie one more question, and then we're going to take questions from you all. So, get thinking. Charlie, I love a good literary mystery [CHARLIE LAUGHS] and I know it is not just me. What is it about a book like *The Bookman's Tale* that pulls book lovers in?

CHARLIE: Well, you know the thing about book lovers is they love books, and this is a book about books, and again I think, I think a lot of book lovers love the same two things that I grew up with. They love the text, they love stories and characters and settings and all the things that make up a great novel, but they also love the physicality of a book. And I think this book, and most of my books, are odes to those twin towers of bookishness. Both the story and the physical book itself, and I'll tell you one quick story about the physical book of *The Bookman's Tale* that sorta shows how all of that can kinda work together.

So in *The Bookman's Tale*, there's a scene where Peter is binding a book for Amanda, his then-girlfriend, soon-to-be-fiance, to give to her as a birthday present. I used a book called *A Degree of Mastery* when writing that book. It's a book who was written by somebody who interned as a book binder. I know nothing about book binding. People keep coming to me and saying, oh, you must be a book binder! I'm like no, I'm a researcher. [ANNE LAUGHS] And the person who wrote that book sent me an email when the book was first published and said, and thanked me for mentioning her in the acknowledgements, which was really cool.

But the last thing that Peter does when he's binding that book is he stamps Amanda's initials in gold on the front cover. Now if you have a hardback copy of *The Bookman's Tale*, don't throw away the dust jacket. Always keep your dust jacket, but peel the dust jacket back and look at the front cover of the book, and you'll see my initials stamped in gold on the cover. That is a way in which the physical book and the text can interact with each other. And can sorta enhance and comment on one another in a way that an electronic book ... There's nothing wrong with electronic or audio books, read books however you want to read books, but I think a lot of people who really love books love that kind of physicality and that potential for interaction between text and design.

And so when they read a book that's all about physical books and on top of it it's got Shakespeare and it's got a mystery and it's got a romance, you know, you're going to like one of those things I hope. [AUDIENCE, ANNE LAUGHS] And - and the fact that you came to meet me here means that either that are a few of you here that like that and there's a lot of you here that came to see Anne [ANNE LAUGHS] and either way, thank you very much.

[00:49:05]

ANNE: Thank you all.

[AUDIENCE CLAPS]

[CHEERFUL OUTRO MUSIC]

ANNE: Hey readers, I hope you enjoyed my discussion with Charlie Lovett today. You can find out more about his work at charlielovett that's L-O-V-E-T-T <https://charlielovett.com> or on Twitter and Instagram @charlielovett42. For a full list of books mentioned in this episode, whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/208 You'll find everything there.

To hear more great author interviews and to discuss these books both with the author and throughout the month with your fellow readers check out the Modern Mrs. Darcy bookclub. That's our online home for community, conversation, and classes, like our recent Book Journaling for Fun and Focus and our upcoming How and Why to Write in Your books. Members can access our full library of classes at anytime, including the perennially popular 1 hour to a better bookstagram, which has now launched thousands of beautiful #bookstagram accounts.

In November will be reading *Celine* and talking with author Peter Heller, and our winter line-up is set and it looks fantastic. Now is a great time to jump in and join your fellow readers: Go to members.modernmrsdarcy.com to learn more and get started.

I'm sure you've heard me mention our patreon community before, Patreon is a podcast first community full of bookish delight and audio gold. That bonus content is built around the podcast and gives you audio extras, behind-the-scenes peeks, and lots more that's geared just toward What Should I Read Next fans. The Modern Mrs Darcy Bookclub is different. This is the only place where we have explicit teaching as well as a way to have ongoing purposeful, engaging conversation about specific titles. To check it all out, go to members.modernmrsdarcy.com to learn all about what we're doing in book club.

Subscribe now so you don't miss next week's episode in Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and more. We will see you next week!

If you're on twitter, let me know there @AnneBogel. That is Anne with an E, B as in books -O-G-E-L. Tag us on instagram to share what YOU are reading. You can find me there at

annebogel and at [whatshouldireadnext](http://whatshouldireadnext.com). Our newsletter subscribers are the first to know all the What Should I Read Next news and happenings; if you're not on the list you can fix that now by visiting whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/newsletter to sign up for our free weekly delivery.

If you enjoy this podcast and want to help us share the book love, please share it with a friend. I have to tell you, I was in Cincinnati last week for Books by the Banks, where I got to meet readers and sign books. So many readers came by to ask me to sign a copy of *I'd Rather Be Reading*, not just for themselves, but for the friend who first introduced them to What Should I Read Next. I thought that was so sweet and kind, and it also goes to show that your recommendations matter. Thanks for listening and for spreading the word about What Should I Read Next.

Thanks to the people who make this show happen! What Should I Read Next is produced by Brenna Frederick, with sound design by Kellen Pechacek.

Readers, that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for listening. And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading." Happy reading, everyone.