

Shakespeare's Missing Connections

By Alexander Waugh

In his famous book, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), Francis Meres groups the best English playwrights into two lists: the 'best for tragedy' and the 'best for comedy.' Shakespeare and Chapman are the only two playwrights whom Mere deems good enough to qualify for both groups.

Taking the names from each list of those 22 playwrights who could have been actively involved in the English theatre in the decade leading up to the publication of *Palladis Tamia* (1588-1598), I have attempted to illustrate the connections that existed between them *during their lifetimes*. Each line (Table 1) represents a strand of contemporary evidence, which may take the form of a playwright naming another in print during his lifetime, contributing an elegy immediately upon another's death, collaborating on a play script, or even simply acknowledging another's existence during his lifetime.

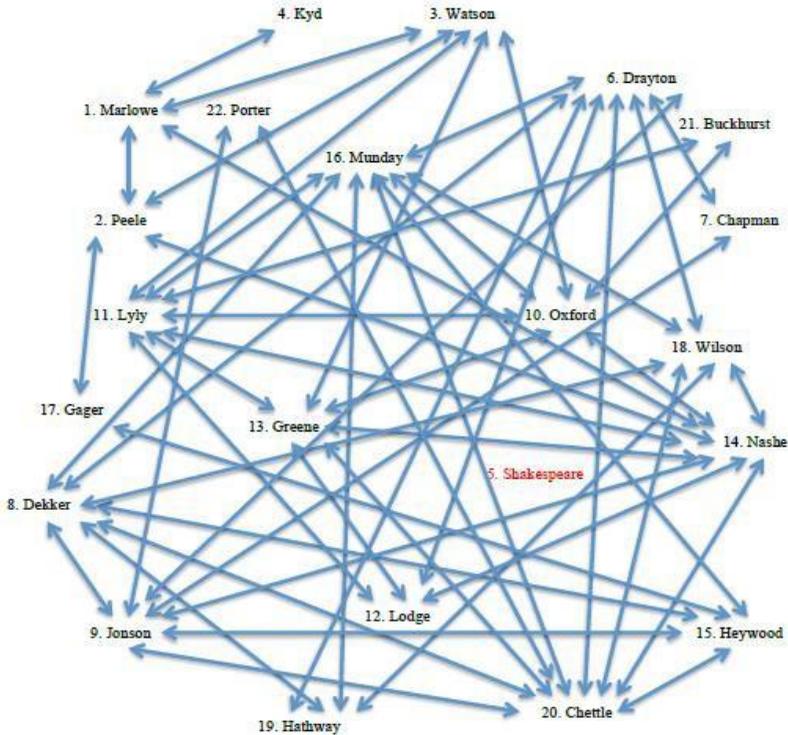
The resulting tangle gives some impression of the badinage that existed between the playwrights during this period based upon the evidence that is still retrievable after 400 years. Oxford and his secretaries (Nashe, Greene, Mundy and Lyly) appear at the centre of the theatrical conversation, while 'Shakespeare,' the most important of them all, considering the number of works and citations given to him by Meres, does not have a single line of connection to any of the 21 other prominent playwrights active during this decade. This needs some explanation, which the non-Stratfordian is easily able to supply – 'William Shakespeare' was a pseudonym.

J. Thomas Looney (1920) commenting upon Meres' pantheon of famous contemporary playwrights noted:

We have in Edward de Vere the only first-class dramatist the whole of whose plays are missing, and in the Shakespeare plays the only complete set of first-class dramas, the author of which, on the strength of probabilities amounting to a practical certainty, is also supposed to be missing. These facts alone, each in its own way so amazingly strange and wholly unique, being contemporary and complementary, would justify, without further proof, a very strong belief that the Shakespeare plays are the lost plays of the Earl of Oxford.



Table 1
Connections & Associations between the playwrights of the Shakespearean period listed by Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598).



Notes to Table 1

The following notes provide evidence of just one recorded association between each of the playwrights connected by a single line, although in many cases more than one documented connection has been found. By joining the lower number to the high number at either end of each connecting line (e.g. 7-10), the association between each of Meres’ 22 contemporary playwrights is evidenced as follows:

- 1-2 **Marlowe-Peele:** Peele published a tribute to Marlowe dated, 26 June 1593, 'Honour of the Garter' in the month following Marlowe's death.'
- 1-3 **Marlowe-Watson:** Marlowe and Watson arrested for the murder of William Bradley in Hog Lane Sep 1589.
- 1-4 **Marlowe-Kyd:** Kyd discusses his relationship with Marlowe in two letters to Sir John Puckering 1594.
- 1-14 **Marlowe-Nashe:** Co-authors of *Dido Queen of Carthage*.
- 2-3 **Peele-Watson:** Peele publishes poem in praise of Watson in the latter's *Hekatompathia* 1582
- 2-17 **Peele-Gager:** Gager writes two Latin poems in praise of Peele's *Iphigenia* c. 1577.
- 3-10 **Watson-Oxford:** Watson dedicates *Hekatompathia* 1582 to Oxford while in his service.
- 3-11 **Watson-Lyly:** Lyly describes Watson as "my good friend" in his epistle to *Hekatompathia* 1582.
- 3-13 **Watson-Greene:** Watson contributes commendatory verses to Greene's *Ciceronis Amor* 1589.
- 6-7 **Drayton-Chapman:** Drayton calls Chapman "my worthy friend" in Chapman's *Hesiod* 1618
- 6-8 **Drayton-Dekker:** Henslowe's Diary 1598 lists Drayton and Dekker with Chettle as co-authors of *Henry I*.
- 6-9 **Drayton-Jonson:** Drayton praises "Learned Johnson, who long was Lord here of the Theater" *Of Poets* 1627.
- 6-12 **Drayton-Lodge:** Lodge praises Drayton as "diligent and formal" in *Wit's Misery* 1596
- 6-16 **Drayton-Munday:** Henslowe's Diary lists Drayton and Munday as co-authors on three plays 1599-1601.
- 6-18 **Drayton-Wilson:** Henslowe Diary lists Drayton and Wilson as collaborators on three plays 1598-99.
- 6.19 **Drayton-Hathway:** Henslowe's Diary lists these playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* 1600.
- 6-20 **Drayton-Chettle:** Henslowe Diary lists Drayton and Chettle as collaborators on two plays 1598.

- 7-9 **Chapman-Jonson:** They collaborate on *Eastward Ho!* 1605. Jonson calls Chapman “my worthy & honoured friend” in Chapman’s *Hesiod* 1618.
- 8-9 **Dekker-Jonson:** Jonson and Dekker co-wrote *Page of Plymouth* and *Robert King of Scots* with Dekker 1599.
- 8-15 **Dekker-Heywood:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Lady Jane* 1602.
- 8-16 **Dekker-Munday:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* 1600.
- 8-18 **Dekker-Wilson:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Black Batman of the North* 1598.
- 8-19 **Dekker-Hathway:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Fayre Constance of Rome* 1600.
- 8-20 **Dekker-Chettle:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Robert King of Scots* 1599.
- 9-14 **Jonson-Nashe:** Collaborated on *Isle of Dogs* 1597.
- 9-15 **Jonson-Heywood:** Heywood praises Jonson’s “learned pen, dipped in Castaly” in *The Hierarchie* 1635.
- 9-20 **Jonson-Chettle:** Henslowe’s Diary lists the two playwrights as co-authors of *Robert King of Scots* 1599.
- 9-22 **Jonson-Porter:** Henslowe’s Diary Jonson and Porter as co-authors on 2 plays 1598.
- 10-11 **Oxford-Lyly:** Lyly serves as Oxford’s secretary and theatrical manager, dedicating several works to him.
- 10-13 **Oxford-Greene:** Greene dedicates *Gnydomius* 1584 to Oxford.
- 10-14 **Oxford-Nashe:** Nashe serves “My Lord of Oxford” with Greene in pamphlet war and dedicates ‘Strange News’ 1592 to him as “Apis Lapis.”
- 10-16 **Oxford-Munday:** Munday serves as secretary to Oxford and dedicates several works to him.
- 10-21 **Oxford-Buckhurst:** Sitting together in in Parliament April-May 1571; co-signatories to a letter concerning the death of Elizabeth 24 March 1603.
- 11-12 **Lyly-Lodge:** Lodge praises Lyly’s “famous facility for discourse” in *Wit’s Misery* 1596.

- 11-13 **Lyly-Greene:** The two authors under Oxford's roof launch pamphlet war and are attacked by Harvey.
- 11-14 **Lyly-Nashe:** Lyly is mentioned by name over 30 times in the works of Nashe.
- 11-16 **Lyly-Munday:** Munday coyly describes himself as Lyly's friend in *Zelauto* 1580.
- 11-21 **Lyly-Buckhurst:** Giordano Bruno reports that Buckhurst was translating Lyly's *Euphues* c. 1584.
- 12-13 **Lodge-Greene:** Co-authors of *A Looking Glass for London* c. 1589.
- 12-14 **Lodge-Nashe:** Lodge praises Nashe as "*Th. Nash*, true English Aretine" in *Wit's Misery* 1596.
- 13-14 **Greene-Nashe:** Greene says that he "writ a comedie" with Nashe in *Groatsworth* 1592; Nashe gives frequent references to Greene in his works.
- 13-20 **Greene-Chettle:** Greene entrusts Chettle with his MSS on his deathbed 1592.
- 14-18 **Nashe-Wilson:** Nashe accuses Harvey of vaunting Wilson's praise in *Pierce Penilesse* 1592.
- 14-20 **Nashe-Chettle:** the two authors dispute over false attribution of *Groatsworth* 1593.
- 15-16 **Heywood-Munday:** Both together in Admirals and Worcester's companies; Munday is a witness to Heywood's covenant of exclusivity with Henslowe.
- 15-17 **Heywood-Gager:** Heywood Praises "Learned Gager" in Apology for Actors 1612.
- 15-20 **Heywood-Chettle:** Co-authors on *The London Florentine* 1603 and *Lady Jane* 1602.
- 16-18 **Munday-Wilson:** Henslowe lists them as co-authors on *Oldcastle* 1599.
- 16-19 **Munday-Hathway:** Henslowe lists them as co-authors on *Oldcastle* 1599 and *Fayre Constance* 1600.
- 16-20 **Munday-Chettle:** Henslowe lists them as co-authors of *Cardinal Wolsey* 1601.
- 18-20 **Wilson-Chettle:** Henslowe lists them as co-authors of *Black Batman of the North* 1598.
- 20-22 **Chettle-Porter:** Henslowe lists Chettle and Porter as co-authors on 5 plays 1598-99.