Something Rotten: Research Packet for Scholarly Review

Baxter Isaac Grey · Version 1.0 · 19 November 2026

The claim in brief

All twenty-four writers in Diana Price's comparison group have an independent, sufficiently discriminating lifetime pathway connecting their historical person to authorial activity. William Shakspere of Stratford does not. His record reaches its clearest convergence with the literary Shakespeare only after his death.

This packet sets out that finding and the argument built on it so that a reader can check, repeat or overturn each step. It accompanies *Something Rotten in Stratford* by Baxter Isaac Grey. The book states the argument; this packet shows the work and is the complete reproducibility package. Chapter references are to the book.

The argument has three tasks: detection, falsification and explanation (Introduction 0.6). The rejection does not depend on the third. The comparison alone is not the falsification.

1. **Detection.** Following Price, the Stratford record is comparatively anomalous (Ch. 1, 7.7).
2. **Falsification.** The hypothesis of substantial Stratford composition is tested in four steps (Part II).
    a. **Expectation.** A substantial composing career should ordinarily leave at least one such connection (Ch. 7).
    b. **Loss.** The missing King's Men archive explains part of the absence, not all of it (Ch. 8).
    c. **Testimony.** Posthumous witnesses do not supply what the lifetime record lacks (Ch. 9).
    d. **Rejection.** Within the specified model, substantial Stratfordian composition is rejected (Ch. 10–11).
3. **Explanation.** The book then asks what the man did and how the composing credit reached him. It argues that, once the substantial authorship rejection is granted, concealment is the most explanatory hypothesis (Part III).

The packet builds on three earlier contributions, which do different work. Price supplies the comparison group and documentary categories. Peter Sturrock modeled Price's documentary contrast in Bayesian terms; his figures are not relied on here. Leigh, Casson and Ewald raised the possibility that Price's findings already falsify the Stratfordian authorship hypothesis; this study takes up that test. Their agreement is not treated as independent confirmation.

What is tested and what is not claimed

The hypothesis tested is H_S: *the Stratford individual exercised substantial, recurring composing responsibility across the Shakespearean career* (Ch. 7.1). It allows collaboration, adaptation, revision and scribal help. It does not require sole authorship or every word.

The argument runs on two levels.

The comparative test keeps person and author apart. The records of The Stratford Man and the records of the authorial name are examined separately, so the identification is not assumed in the evidence offered to prove it.

The test of H_S grants the identity in full. Shakspere is treated as the Shakespeare of the literary sources, and the book marks each place where it makes this grant. The grant settles whom the evidence concerns. It does not create an independent connection, because a granted premise cannot be returned as its own proof (Ch. 3, Revels section; Ch. 6.2).

The study does not claim that The Stratford Man was illiterate, or that he never contributed a line to the Shakespearean enterprise (Introduction 0.6). The thesis is directed against substantial, recurring authorship, not against any literary contribution whatever. A limited contribution remains possible (Ch. 11.2). Falsification is a methodological judgment within a stated model, not a deductive disproof (Introduction 0.3). No replacement author is named or needed for the test (Ch. 11.2). The book's explanation of his role is a separate task (Part III); the rejection does not rest on it.

The packet uses the study's labels. Table 1 defines them.

Table 1. *Terms used in this packet*

Term	Meaning
HLAA–ECM	Historical Literary Authorship Attribution Evidentiary Chain Method: the framework the book applies (Ch. 1.2)
$\mathcal{M}$	The specified model: HLAA–ECM with the standard, tests and gates set out in this packet. Rejection is reported within $\mathcal{M}$ only
H_S	The hypothesis tested: substantial, recurring composing responsibility (Ch. 7.1)
B	Historical background assumptions: company practice, archive loss and ordinary survival
E	The expected evidence: at least one qualifying lifetime trace
P***	The study's name for the lifetime-trace expectation, stated in the book at Ch. 7.2
Identity grant	For the test of H_S, Shakspere is treated as the Shakespeare of the literary sources (Ch. 6.2)
Causal environment	A setting in which records were generated and kept. Failures that share one environment are counted once (Gate 3)
Node removal	Testing whether the cumulative case survives when one item is removed, or when dependent items are counted once (Gate 6)
Orthodox-strong evidence	The strongest evidence offered for the conventional attribution: Meres, the Revels accounts, Davies and the Folio (Gate 5)
Level 5	The study's recorded outcome: "falsified within the specified HLAA-ECM model"

The standard

The test asks one thing of every case: **is there an independent, sufficiently discriminating lifetime pathway connecting a historical person to authorial activity?** The same test applies to all twenty-five cases.

Table 2. *The standard*

Requirement	Meaning	Book
Person anchor	A recoverable individual, distinguishable from namesakes	Ch. 1.2
Authorial activity	Composition, translation, substantive revision or editing. Copying alone does not qualify	Ch. 7.2
Independent	Supported beyond the attribution being tested	Ch. 7.2
Sufficiently discriminating	Identifying particulars constrain the inference to this person: occupation, institution, family, place, a named production	Ch. 1.2, 7.4
Lifetime	The connection must originate during life. A later copy may preserve a lifetime statement. Posthumous testimony can strengthen but cannot originate it	Ch. 7.2

No document type is required: no autograph, payment, library or single self-sufficient record. Complementary records may close a chain together, and specialist identification is permitted. A narrow contribution establishes only that contribution; no one need authenticate a whole canon (Ch. 1, 7.3–7.6).

Each decisive pathway faces five tests.

Table 3. *The five tests*

Test	Question
Namesake	Is this the right person?
Role	Does the record show literary activity, rather than acting, ownership or proximity?
Dependency	Do apparently separate witnesses repeat one source?
Temporal	Does the connection originate during life?
Authenticity	Is the document, hand or attribution sound enough to bear the inference?

Findings use two separate axes. **Continuous** means a direct or strongly combined connection with no material gap; **contingent** means a thin or qualified pathway. **Independently closed** means a qualifying connection is established; **independently unclosed** means none has been established under the rules. Unclosed does not by itself establish that the person did not write (Ch. 11.2).

Detection: the finding

Twenty-four controls close; the Stratford case does not. Each case is set out in Annex A.

Table 4. *The detection finding*

Writers	n	Price: qualifying literary paper trail	Grey: pathway	Grey: independent connection
Comparison writers	21	Present	Continuous	Closed
Beaumont, Kyd, Webster	3	Present	Contingent	Closed
Shakspere of Stratford	1	No qualifying entry	Contingent	Unclosed

Price records qualifying personal literary evidence in ten categories. This study asks how the records join an identified person to literary activity. The two are complementary findings from overlapping evidence, not independent replications (Ch. 7.7). Price's tenth category admits notices within twelve months of death; this study's connection must originate during life.

The twenty-four are a selected historical reference group, not a random sample. The finding is a comparison, not a base rate or a probability (Ch. 7.8, 10.2). Price's full chart is reproduced in Annex E.

Detection: why the Stratford chain does not close

Both ends of the chain are secure, and the lifetime evidence does not join them independently. Parish, property, legal and testamentary records recover the man. Publications and testimony establish the authorial name. His membership of the company and his will's "fellows" are granted in full (Ch. 2). The lifetime attributional case is strong and is conceded. The anomaly concerns the distribution and function of the evidence.

Table 5. *Lifetime Stratford sources and why each falls short*

Lifetime source	What it gives	Why it does not complete the connection	Book
Company records (1595 payment, 1603 patent)	The name among the players	Proof of professional proximity; no writing role stated	Ch. 2

Lifetime source	What it gives	Why it does not complete the connection	Book
Venus and Adonis, Lucrece dedications (1593–94)	First-person address to a patron under the name William Shakespeare	Serious literary evidence, but no particular joins the name to the Stratford person, and the grant cannot supply one	Ch. 3, 6.2
Title pages	The name attached to works	Mediated by stationers; records attribution, not a civic individual	Ch. 3
Meres (1598)	Names poems and twelve plays	Specific about works; nothing about the person or how he knew	Ch. 3
Revels accounts (1604–05)	"Shaxberd" under poets who made the plays	Authenticity disputed and not litigated here. Even if accepted, impersonal: no Stratford detail or stated basis of knowledge	Ch. 3
Davies ([1611])	"Our English Terence", addressed by name as player and writer	See below	Ch. 3, 9.3
Chettle (1592)	Praises an unnamed person's "grace in writing"	Subject unnamed and disputed; the writing praise is reported from others	Ch. 4.1
Hand D (Sir Thomas More)	Possible composing hand	Disputed and not conclusive: the comparison sample is six signatures. Important evidence, but not secured as his hand	Ch. 4.2

The clearest convergence comes after death: the monument and the 1623 Folio with Jonson, Digges, Heminges and Condell. This is substantial positive evidence. By rule it can strengthen a connection but cannot originate one (Ch. 5, 7.2).

Equal treatment is the test of the method. Contextual inference and specialist judgment closing a control must be available to Stratford too (Ch. 7.6). Composite reasoning is permitted in every case. The question is whether the identifying particulars constrain the inference.

Table 6. *The thinnest cases compared*

Case	Literary predicate	Discriminating particular	Independent record
Webster	*Monuments of Honor* (1624), a named civic work	"Merchant-Taylor", by birth-freedom	Guild and family records
Beaumont	Named masque quarto	Third son of Justice Beaumont, Inner Temple, this production	Inner Temple admission and accounts
Fletcher	Signed verse epistle; "the play of mr fletcher & ours"	A named collaborator, Massinger, ties the playwright to his patron Huntingdon, the household the epistle addresses (Annex D)	Signed epistle, Henslowe letter and Massinger's verse letter
Watson	Hekatompathia (1582) and the Madrigals (1590), under his name	A named third party acts at his personal request: Byrd composes "at the request of the sayd Thomas Watson". Named writers address him personally	Byrd's statement on a title page printed by his assignee; Oxford's reported perusal; Lyly, Buc, Acheley, Roydon and Peele's commendations
Stratford	Davies's address; the name in print	No work named and no basis given; "player" identifies an occupation, not an act of composition	Patent and will, which establish the company tie only

Why Davies does not close the chain. Principally, Davies names no work and discloses no basis of knowledge, whereas Webster's title page ties a named man to a specific work. Second, the comparison to Terence, a playwright already associated with disputed credit, complicates a plain reading (Ch. 3, 9.3). Third, "player" identifies an occupation, not an act of composition (compare Ch. 4.1). The epigram remains real positive evidence linking the name to acting and literary reputation. The same epigram also appears among the allegations (Table 9). The two uses draw different inferences: here, whether it joins the

man to literary activity; there, what its Terence comparison implies about literary credit (Ch. 14.1). It is weighed once in each test, and neither use supplies what the other lacks.

Falsification: from anomaly to negative evidence

An absence counts only where there is reason to expect the evidence to have been generated, survived and been found (Introduction 0.3). The anomaly alone does not falsify. Three further steps carry the argument.

Expectation (Ch. 7.2). The study states it as follows:

> Granting conventional identity [Shakspere is Shakespeare], substantial personal authorship across a long, prominent professional literary career should ordinarily generate at least one independently recoverable lifetime trace in which the historical individual is securely identified personally participating in, transacting, controlling, communicating about, or being personally witnessed in relation to literary production, rather than being known solely through authorial attribution or theatrical association.

The literary production at issue is composition, translation, substantive revision or editing. Sir George Buc's note that Shakespeare told him who wrote *George a Greene* therefore does not qualify: it reports another person's authorship and shows knowledge of provenance, not composing activity.

The grant identifies whose trace is sought. It cannot itself be the trace, because "independent" means supported beyond the attribution being tested. The same independent connection is therefore sought in all twenty-five cases.

Loss (Ch. 8). The missing King's Men archive legitimately explains the absence of internal payments and commissions, and those several gaps count as one loss. It does not explain records that would have arisen and been kept elsewhere: collaborators' letters, patrons' papers, other institutions, informed witnesses. Drayton's letter to Drummond about *Poly-Olbion* shows the kind of record that survives through another person's papers (Ch. 10.2).

Testimony (Ch. 5, 9). Heminges and Condell had real opportunities to know, and their testimony carries weight. It describes papers received. It does not disclose who composed them, how, or how the witnesses knew. Jonson, Digges and the monument confirm the attribution without identifying a particular act of composition. Their agreement may not be several independent sources of knowledge.

The conventional defense therefore needs two assumptions: that one company's loss was matched by the failure of every route outside it, and that colleagues' opportunity to know became specific knowledge of his composing (Ch. 10.3).

Falsification: the rejection test

The study reports rejection of H_s within the specified model, because all seven gates are passed. The arrow below expresses ordinary historical expectation, not logical necessity. H_s is the hypothesis, B the historical background assumptions and E the expected evidence.

$$H_s \wedge B \nsim E$$

$$\mathrm{Reject}_{\mathcal{M}}(H_s) \iff G_1 \wedge G_2 \wedge \ldots \wedge G_7$$

Table 7. *The rejection gates*

Gate	Requirement	Recorded judgment	Strongest adverse point	Disposition
G_1	Lifetime trace expectation fails under conventional identity	Pass	Lifetime attributional case is strong; Chettle conventionally identified	Attribution is not securely identified personal conduct; Chettle is unnamed

Gate	Requirement	Recorded judgment	Strongest adverse point	Disposition
G_2	Failure exceptional against inherited controls	Pass	Controls heterogeneous and nonrandom	Descriptive comparison only; weakest controls pass by different routes
G_3	≥2 independent evidence-generating pathways fail	Pass	Many apparent domains are correlated	Collapsed to four causal environments before decision
G_4	Generic archive loss cannot jointly explain pattern	Pass	King's Men loss is major and legitimate	Explains institutional transactions, not all external personal-literary pathways
G_5	Orthodox-strong evidence does not securely recover lifetime trace expectation	Pass	Meres, Revels, Davies and Folio are powerful	They secure attribution and convergence
G_6	Node-removal/dependency materially weakens cumulative case	Pass	Cumulative attribution remains strong	Attribution conceded; the independent personal-conduct joint remains qualified
G_7	Strongest H_s reconstruction requires residual accommodations	Pass	Most auxiliaries are individually plausible and supported	Rests on cumulative selective preservation, not a count of excuses

These are qualitative judgments, not a probability calculation. G_1 is conditional on Hand D not being accepted (see below). The book's reasoning is in Ch. 10–11.

Table 8. *Gate key: what each gate asks*

Gate	What it asks, in plain terms	Book
G_1	Granting that Shakspere is Shakespeare, is a qualifying lifetime trace still missing? Conditional on Hand D	Ch. 7.2, 10.1, 10.4
G_2	Is the failure exceptional? All twenty-four controls meet the minimum; Stratford alone does not	Ch. 7.7
G_3	After failures that share a cause are merged, do at least two independent environments still show no trace? The four environments: collaborators and fellow writers; patrons and households; institutions (guilds, universities, Inns of Court, law courts, the Revels Office, the Stationers' Company); informed witnesses during his life. Company custody is treated separately under G_4	Ch. 10.2–10.3
G_4	Can the loss of the King's Men archive explain the whole pattern? It explains the company's own records, not the other environments	Ch. 8, 10.3
G_5	Does the strongest conventional evidence supply the trace? Meres, the Revels accounts, Davies and the Folio secure the attribution, not personal composing conduct	Ch. 3, 5, 9
G_6	Does the cumulative case weaken when dependent items are counted once (for example, Folio voices that may share one drafter)? The attribution survives; the case for personal composing conduct weakens	Ch. 5.4, 9.3, 10.3
G_7	Does even the strongest version of H_s need unsupported accommodations? It needs the two assumptions named above	Ch. 10.3

Why rejection rather than lowered confidence. The hypothesis proposes decades of composition, and the test asks for one qualifying trace (Ch. 10.3). After supported loss and the strongest testimony are allowed, retaining H_s needs the two assumptions above, and neither has adequate independent support.

The result rests on four judgments, each of which a reviewer can contest (Ch. 11.1):

1. **Relevance.** The controls' connections reached us by different activities and hands.
2. **Loss.** The King's Men archive is one loss and does not extend across other routes.
3. **Testimony.** No colleague describes a particular composition and how he knew it.
4. **Combination.** Each Stratfordian strength answers a different question, and together they leave the central one open.

Two further lines of argument bear against H_S. Both sit outside the gates, and the rejection does not depend on either: contemporary allegations about literary credit (Ch. 9.3, 10.3; book Table 9.1) and the knowledge displayed in the works (Ch. 12). Each rests on its own evidence and could fail without the others (Part II Summary).

Table 9. *Lines of argument outside the gates*

Line	What is offered	Weight the book gives it	What would reduce it
Allegations (Ch. 9.3, 10.3)	Admitted as adverse testimony: Greene's "upstart Crow"; Davies's "English Terence". Conditional on its target: Jonson's Poet-Ape. Contextual only: Hall's Labeo; Weever's "In Spurium quendam scriptorem"	The line rests on the admitted items, Greene's Crow and Davies, with Poet-Ape if its target holds. Labeo and Weever are not counted, but the recurring complaint across the period corroborates these readings: contemporaries could tell the man who brought writing forward from the man who wrote it (Ch. 11.3)	Reading them as ordinary rivalry, or showing a different target
Knowledge: seamanship (Ch. 12.2)	The boatswain's orders show procedural fluency	Lightest: one knowledgeable sailor could have supplied much of it	A documented informant
Knowledge: law (Ch. 12.3)	Legal reasoning sustained across plays written years apart	Heavy: a single conversation or borrowed report could not supply it	A named book or a documented informant
Knowledge: Italy (Ch. 12.4)	Crossing Lombardy by water, the ferry at Fusina, the art on particular walls in Mantua and Rome	Heavy, on the details that survive independent verification (Ch. 12.5)	A named book or a documented informant

The knowledge burden compounds: no source available in England and no documented acquaintance spans these domains (Ch. 12.5). To repeat this test, state what a passage specifically demands, then test it against the books available in England and the best-documented informant.

Each allegation is weighed by the test the book sets for adverse testimony (Introduction 0.3): identify the target, establish the meaning, and assess the credibility and scope. Table 10 applies it. A status follows from the target column first: a named or self-identifying target is admitted; an argued target is conditional; an unidentified one is contextual.

Table 10. *The allegation test*

Allusion	Target	Meaning	Credibility	Scope	Status
Greene's "upstart Crow" (1592)	Identified within the passage by the "Shake-scene" pun and the parody of a line from Henry VI	A player dressed in other writers' feathers, whose repute is borrowed. Conventional reading: an actor turned dramatist	Writer disputed: Chettle and Nashe both denied it	Credit for writing, 1592	Admitted
Davies's "English Terence" ([1611])	Named: "Mr. Will: Shake-speare"	Terence was linked in English print (Ascham, Florio) to help from noblemen. Conventional reading: ordinary praise of a comic poet	A fellow poet in his lifetime; the register is playful ("in sport")	The period's model of borrowed credit; no named work	Admitted
Jonson's Poet-Ape (c.1601–12)	Unnamed. The book argues the fit with Shakspere's record; the usual alternatives are Marston and Dekker	Rose through "brokage" and old plays' reversions to wealth and credit, making "each man's wit his own"	Jonson, a colleague and exacting critic	A career of acquiring and taking credit for plays	Conditional on its target
Hall's Labeo (1597–98)	Unnamed; not securely identified	A writer who can "shift it on to another's name"	A formal satirist	The period's practice	Contextual

Allusion	Target	Meaning	Credibility	Scope	Status
Weever's Spurius (1599)	Unnamed; points toward Venus and Adonis only by inference	The "bald rimes" of a spurious writer of Venus	An epigrammatist	The period's practice	Contextual

Falsification: what would change the finding

One qualifying lifetime connection overturns the minimum-absence finding, and the two leading candidates, Hand D and Chettle, are already in the record (Ch. 10.4).

Table 11. *What would change the finding*

If this is established	Consequence
Hand D is securely his hand and shows composing or substantive revision	Finding withdrawn; a single contribution satisfies the minimum
Chettle's subject is securely identified and his testimony qualifies	Reassessed under the rule used for controls
Legal, company and Folio connections form an adequately warranted combined identification	Claim of non-closure reassessed
A difficult control fails the rule on completed review	Comparison and its scope revised
The difference disappears under reasonable, consistently applied rules	Anomaly withdrawn or narrowed
New securely identified literary evidence is recovered	Incorporated and classification reconsidered, without raising the requirement

Accepting a limited contribution would not by itself establish a substantial career. It would, however, remove the absence argued here, and any broader challenge would need other grounds.

Explanation: what the rejection leaves to explain

Everything in this section is conditional on the rejection. On the evidence of Part III alone, composition would be preferred (Ch. 15.1). The rejection, with the knowledge burden of Chapter 12, is what turns the dedications and the Folio from composition's strengths into facts that another account must explain.

Granting the rejection of substantial Stratfordian authorship, Part III asks two questions: what The Stratford Man did, and how the composing credit came to attach to his name. It states three hypotheses (composition, accretion and concealment) and what each predicts before the evidence is weighed (book Table 13.1), then compares them on twelve features of the record (book Tables 15.1 and 15.2).

Two findings result, held at different strengths. First, transmission was his principal role. His lifetime record shows him lending, brokering, negotiating and holding plays as property, and no act of composition (Ch. 13). This finding is well supported. Second, of the accounts of how the credit became his, concealment, the knowing substitution of composing credit, explains the most. It predicts or permits every feature in book Table 15.1 and has none to explain away. Its costs were named in advance: a lent name in use by 1593, a circle that knew or was deceived, and a secret kept for thirty years (Ch. 14.5). Accretion fails on the signed dedications, which do not attach themselves to a name by drift (Ch. 14.3). Concealment is therefore the most explanatory hypothesis, a judgment firmer than a contestable reading and short of an established fact (Ch. 15.2).

No principal is named, and neither finding depends on one. Book Table 15.3 lists the discoveries that would change these results.

How to repeat the test

A reviewer needs only this packet, the book and the cited sources. Software is not required, because the decisions are historical judgments. The chain for each writer is also set out at **www.somethingrotteninstratford.com**.

1. Choose a case from Annex A, or a Stratford source from the sections above and Annex B.
2. Retrieve the source at the stated locator. Prefer images of the decisive wording.
3. Record the person, the literary activity and the fact that joins them. Note what comes from the document and what from a specialist.
4. Record the date of the event, the statement and the surviving copy.
5. Apply the five tests, using the strongest reasonable conventional reading first.
6. Enter the decision and reasons on the form in Annex C. Do not copy the author's judgment.
7. Compare results, and send any disagreement with the source and reasoning.

Start with the thinnest cases, where disagreement matters most: Webster, Kyd, Beaumont, Fletcher, Marlowe, Watson and Stratford.

Disclosed limits

These limits are stated so that reviewers can direct their scrutiny.

Table 12. *Disclosed limits*

Limit	What it means
Author's judgments	The classifications are the author's reasoned judgments.
Specialist reliance	Many pathways rely on catalog or specialist identification, chiefly Beal's *CELM*. No fresh forensic examination is claimed.
Fletcher and Stratford	Both are composite pathways. Annex D gives a source-based argument for the distinction between them. No independent reviewer has yet tested it, and its source checks are listed there.
Hand D	Beal calls the attribution strongly supported and very likely. The objection is to the quality and comparability of the signature sample, following Price. The finding is conditional on it.
Italian detail	Several Italian particulars in Ch. 12.4 were first proposed by Richard Paul Roe. Only details that survive independent verification against the books available in England and the best-documented informant carry weight. A reviewer should check each against an independent source.
Search	No exhaustive negative search of all repositories is claimed.
Comparison group	The twenty-four are selected, and their careers and archives differ.
AI assistance	AI tools assisted with retrieval, comparison, coding and document preparation. Judgments are the author's.

Annex A: the chain for each writer

Each row is one chain, read left to right: the recoverable person, what joins that person to the writing, the literary activity, where to check it and how it was inspected. A chain is not a biography, and it establishes only the activity named. No original manuscript was freshly examined and no hand comparison was redone, except where a row says so. *CELM* references are entry numbers in Beal's catalog. The twenty-four are independently closed; Stratford is independently unclosed. Pathways follow the book's chapters where they name one and otherwise the author's case notes. Book Table 1.1 summarizes these chains.

Table A.1. *The chain for each writer*

Writer	Person	Join	Literary activity	Source
Ben Jonson (continuous)	Deponent who signed a deposition, 8 May 1610	Beal's identification of the hand, with the manuscript's presentation circumstances	Autograph presentation copy of *The Masque of Queens*, dated 1609	BL Royal MS 18 A.XLV (JnB 685); TNA C24/357/83 no.5 (JnB 761); Herford and Simpson VII 265–317
Thomas Nashe (continuous)	St John's College, Cambridge, entrant who signed the Admission Book, 1584	Beal identifies both as his undergraduate hand. The poem's subscription names Thomas Nashe, St John's scholar, Suffolk, 1585	Signed autograph Latin poem on Ecclesiasticus 41:1, 1585	TNA SP 15/29 f.130r item 82 (NaT 7); NaT 20; McKerrow III 298–99
Philip Massinger (continuous)	Party to Henslowe's bond, 4 July 1615; witness to Alleyn's leases	Beal's identification of the literary and transactional hands	Autograph *Believe as You List*, 6 May 1631, with changes made during writing at II.i.52 and 56. Other hands' annotations are excluded	BL Egerton MS 2828 (MsP 14); Dulwich MSS 1 art. 102, MSS 18 art. 8 (MsP 39–41); Cruickshank 177–78, 187
Gabriel Harvey (continuous)	Cambridge academic: Pembroke Hall, 1577; Trinity Hall letter to Burghley, 14 June 1580	Cambridge office and recipient circumstances, with Beal's hand identification. Clerke's 1577 reply identifies him by his rhetorical office	Signed autograph Latin verse to Burghley; *Rhetor* (1577), whose making Clerke discusses	BL Lansdowne 120 ff.179–87 (HvG 5); Lansdowne 30 f.163 (HvG 11); *Rhetor*, Philological Museum, paras 1–9
Edmund Spenser (continuous)	Respondent to the Articles for Undertakers, holding Kilcolman, c.1589	The same named estate: the dedication places the speaker's house at Kilcolman	Presents *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (1595) as his own, subscribed Ed. Sp.	TNA SP 63/144/70; STC 23077, dedication
Samuel Daniel (continuous)	Oxford subscriber, 17 November 1581; signed will, 4 September 1619	Beal's and Greg's identification of the hand, with the named recipient and marriage	Signed first-person verse address presenting *Hymen's Triumph*, 1613/14, and songs in his hand. The body is scribal	Edinburgh UL De.3.69 (DaS 49); Oxford S.P.38 Reg. Ab f.1r (DaS 63); PROB 10/371 (DaS 64); Greg, MLQ 6 (1903) 60–62
George Peele (continuous)	Oxford BA 1577, MA 1579; deponent, 29 March 1583, aged 25	The Oxford MA credential on the 1585 pageant matches the register; Bullen's identification	*Device of the Pageant* (1585), attributed to him with the credential; signed letter presenting *A Tale of Troy*	Clark II pt III p.68; Bullen I xvi-xvii, 357; BL Lansdowne 99 ff.151–52 (PlG 25)
Michael Drayton (continuous)	Michael Drayton, who signed as witness to an indenture with his patron Sir Walter Aston, 31 May 1609, and to a Polesworth lease, 3 December 1613	The same patron. The poet dedicates *The Owle* (1604) and *Poems* (1619) to Aston, who made him an esquire at his 1603 investiture. The join does not depend on matching handwriting	*The Owle* and *Poems*, under his name to that patron. Supporting: Henslowe's own entry lending money in earnest of "his playe", 20 January 1598/9, and Drayton's receipt the next day for *William Longsword*	William Salt M 593/2 (DrM 80); DrM 81; *The Owle*, dedication (DrM 45); *Poems* (1619), dedication; Dulwich MSS 7 ff.31r, 52v (DrM 77; Greg I 59, 100); NLS MS 9931 f.21 (DrM 76)

Writer	Person	Join	Literary activity	Source
George Chapman (continuous)	Litigant: signed Star Chamber answer, 30 May 1603; Chancery complaint, 1608	The Sadler household on both sides. His 1608 bill says the loan was for attendance on Sir Ralph Sadler; an inscription in a copy of *Batrachomyomachia* says his "youth was initiate" in that house. In the same suit Wolfall's answer addresses the litigant's poetry	*Batrachomyomachia* (1624), the translation carrying that inscription. Wolfall's charge that he spent his time and means on "fruitless and vain poetry". The Inigo Jones inscription is supplementary	Lowe, *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, intro paras 6, 11; Eccles, "Chapman's Early Years", SP 43 (1946) 176–93; STAC 8 A8/2 (ChG 33); Huntington RB 98537 (ChG 22); Dulwich MSS 7 f.90r (ChG 32)
William Drummond (continuous)	Laird of Hawthornden, Edinburgh graduate and library donor; signed the register, 27 November 1637	Provenance of the Hawthornden papers and Beal's identification of the working hand	Autograph drafts; three English renderings of a Bembo sonnet	NLS MS 2062 ff.8r, 40r, 161r-62r (DrW 51–52, 59); EUA IN1/ADS/LIB/3/Da.2.1/ii; Laing, *Archaeologia Scotica* 4, 227–28; MacDonald II 149
Anthony Munday (continuous)	Freeman of the Drapers by patrimony, 21 June 1585	The same guild record describes him as a poet; the 1623 title names him citizen and draper	Signed *John a Kent*; *The Triumphs of the Golden Fleece* (1623). No claim to all of *Sir Thomas More*	Drapers' Freedom List MS+278/F.A.1 p.53, in Kathman, SQ 55.1 p.35; Hamilton xix; Egan 2011
John Marston (continuous)	Oxford subscriber, 4 February 1591/2	Specialist identification of the hand, with the 1607 Hastings household occasion	Ashby entertainment: dedication and corrections in his hand, and the concluding eclogue. The body is scribal	Huntington EL 34 B9 ff.1r, 14r-15r (MrJ 6); Oxford S.P.38 Reg. Ab f.75v (MrJ 12); Butler, *Complete Works of John Marston*
Thomas Middleton (continuous)	Queen's College matriculant who signed, 7 April 1598	Beal connects the signature and the play manuscripts through handwriting consistency	Autograph *A Game at Chess*, [1624], with deleted lines; a title in his hand describes a play as composed by him	Trinity Cambridge O.2.66 (MiT 14); Folger V.a.342 (MiT 17); Oxford S.P.38 Reg. Ab f.93r (MiT 35)
John Lyly (continuous)	Magdalen College BA 1573, MA license 1 June 1575	"Master of Arte. Oxon." on *Euphues* (1578) matches the register. Patron join: he calls Oxford "my very good Lorde and Maister" in the 1580 dedication, and in a signed letter of July 1582 to Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law, defends his service to "my Lord" and "my Lady"	*Euphues* (1578) and *Euphues and his England* (1580). The petition contrasting prayers and plays (1598) is counted by Price; it survives in copies	Clark II pt III p.27; STC 17051 (EEBO-TCP A06590); *Euphues and his England*, dedication; BL Lansdowne 36 ff.192–93 (LyJ 6); Bond I 28–29, 64–65

Writer	Person	Join	Literary activity	Source
Thomas Heywood (continuous)	Deponent who signed three times, Baskerville v. Worth, 3 October 1623	Beal identifies the manuscript hand as the author's and records the legal signatures. The manuscript does not bear his name	Autograph *The Captives*, [1624], with revisions during composition (II.iii.14)	BL Egerton MS 1994 ff.52r-73r (HyT 4); Chancery Depositions 500 (9, 103) (HyT 14); Judson 9–11; Adams 29
Thomas Lodge (continuous)	Physician in College of Physicians records, 1600–10; Oxford incorporation, 25 October 1602	The title "D. in Physicke"; Munk connects the physician and the translation	Translation of Seneca (1614), claimed in its address to the reader	STC 22213; RCP MS4143 II ff.143v-44v, MS4144 III f.6r; Munk I 155; Add. MS 72351 ff.118–19 (LoT 29)
Robert Greene (continuous)	Clare Hall MA 1583; incorporated at Oxford, June 1588	The title's claim to degrees of both universities matches the records; Parr's identification. An earlier Robert Grene is distinguished	*Farewell to Folly* (1591), whose dedication claims making the book	STC 12241; Venn 363–64; Clark II pt I p.353; Parr, PMLA 77.5
Thomas Dekker (continuous)	Star Chamber defendant, sworn 3 February 1624/5	His own sworn answer, catalogd as autograph	States that he wrote the first act and a final-scene speech of *Keep the Widow Waking*	TNA STAC 8/31/16 f.30r (DkT 58); Sisson, *The Library* 4th ser. 8, 256–57; Lost Plays Database
Thomas Watson (continuous)	Thomas Watson, Gentleman: client of the Earl of Oxford and friend of named writers. Eccles identifies him with the Thomas Watson of Norton Folgate committed to Newgate, 18 September 1589	Named contemporaries deal with him as the writer in his lifetime. Byrd composed two madrigals "at the request of the sayd Thomas Watson" (1590). Oxford is said to have perused *Hekatompathia* (1582), where Lyly, Buc, Acheley, Roydon and Peele address its author. Identity with the prisoner rests on Eccles's Swift link, whose last step follows Watson's death and reinforces only	*Hekatompathia* (1582); English texts of the *Madrigals* (1590); translation of part of Palissy's *Discours admirables*, c.1590	STC 25118A (EEBO-TCP A14822); *The First Sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished* (1590), EEBO-TCP A14823; Houghton MS Eng 707; KB 29/226; Middlesex Sessions Roll 284; St Antholin's register; Eccles 34–35, 57–61
Christopher Marlowe (continuous)	Signed as witness with his father, November 1585	Sutton, following Eccles, identifies "C.M." as Marlowe, within the documented Marlowe-Watson relationship. Later and reinforcing only: a copy of the 1592 Manwood epitaph says it was made by "Christopher Marlo, who was a Shomakers son of Canterbury"	Dedicatory epistle in *Amintae Gaudia* (1592). Not Watson's poems	PRC 16/86 (MrC 24); Urry 123–27; Sutton, *Amintae Gaudia* intro sec. 21; Middlesex Sessions Roll 284, in Eccles 34–35; Eccles 163–66; Manwood epitaph, Oxinden copy (MrC 5)

Writer	Person	Join	Literary activity	Source
Francis Beaumont (contingent)	Admitted to the Inner Temple, 3 November 1600, as Justice Beaumont's third son	Inner Temple accounts pay a messenger to fetch Mr Beaumont amid the mask business	Quarto of the masque, "By Francis Beamont, Gent.", dedicated to Sir Francis Bacon and the Bench of the two houses	Inderwick I 435, II 76–77; STC 1664 (EEBO-TCP A06150); Stationers' Register, 27 February 1612/13; Chambers III 233–34
John Fletcher (continuous)	John Fletcher, who signed an epistle to the Countess of Huntingdon, c.1619–20	Massinger names him as a collaborator and names Huntingdon as his patron (Annex D)	Verse epistle; "the play of mr fletcher & ours"	Huntington HA 13333 (FlJ 8); Dulwich MSS 1 art. 68; TCD MS 877 ff.274r-75v (MsP 2); Greg, PQ 14 (1935) 373
Thomas Kyd (contingent)	Thomas Kyd, who signed the letter to Puckering	Signature on a letter catalogd as autograph. Reinforcing: the Stationers' Register names "Thomas Kydde" as author of *Cornelia*, 26 January 1593/4, and its dedication, signed T.K., cites "bitter times" endured in writing it	The deliberately literary prose of that letter. Reinforcing: *Cornelia* (1594), where the translator speaks of his own work and promises a *Portia*	BL Harley 6849 ff.218–19 (KyT 3); Boas xxiv, cviii-cx, 102, 160; STC 11622; Stationers' Register, 26 January 1593/4
John Webster (contingent)	John Webster the younger, of the coach-making family, admitted to the Merchant Taylors by patrimony	The title's "Merchant-Taylor" and the dedication's "borne free of your Company" match that family and guild record. Being born free also excludes the John Webster made free through his master in 1617	Devising and writing *Monuments of Honor* (1624)	STC 25175 (EEBO-TCP A14871); Merchant Taylors' Court Books, in Dyce; Marcus 2–4; Henslowe, 29 May 1602 (supporting)
Shakspere of Stratford (contingent; **unclosed**)	Stratford and London individual: Blackfriars Gatehouse instruments, 1613; will	**None established.** The patent and will join him to the company only (see "Detection")	Attribution under the name in his lifetime: dedications, title pages, Meres, Davies	LMA CLC/522/MS03738; BL Egerton 1787; TNA C54/2184 no.45; PROB 1/4; Meres, Nn6v-Oo4r; Davies, epigram 159

Annex B: further lifetime items a reviewer will raise

None of these establishes the connection under the standard. Apart from Digges and Buc, they are assessed here in addition to the book's discussion. They come from a bounded first-pass search, not an exhaustive one.

Table B.1. *Further lifetime items*

Item	Date	What it gives	Why it does not close	Source
Weever, "Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare"	1599	Addresses Shakespeare and names poems	No personal or Stratford particular	Shakespeare Documented
Parnassus plays, "our fellow Shakespeare"	c.1601	A stage Kemp speaks of him	Dramatic fiction; no stated basis	Chambers II
Gabriel Harvey, marginalia	c.1598–1601	Manuscript praise of poems and *Hamlet*	About the works; no personal particular	Shakespeare Documented
Scoloker, "Friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies"	1604	Epithet attached to the plays	"Friendly" states no acquaintance or particular	Chambers II 214
Buc, note on *George a Greene*	after 1599	Shakespeare reports another play's author	Reports another's authorship; not composing activity	Shakespeare Documented
Heywood, *Apology for Actors*	1612	"the Author I know much offended" with Jaggard	Concerns use of a name, not an act of composition; referent inferred	Shakespeare Documented
Belvoir accounts	31 Mar 1613	Payment "to mr Shakspeare in gold about my Lordes Impreso"	Does not state his role; an impresa is not a literary work; no Stratford particular	Chambers II 153, via Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
Digges, note in Lope de Vega's *Rimas*	c.1613	"our Will Shakespeare"	Praises the poet; no encounter described (Ch. 5.4)	Book
Howes, in Stow's *Annales*	1615	"M. Willi. Shakespeare gentleman" among poets	A list; gives rank only, with no stated basis	Chambers II 221, via Chronology

Annex C: reviewer form

Copy one form per case. Disagreement is useful and should cite the source.

Table C.1. *Reviewer form*

Field	Reviewer entry
Case	
Reviewer and date	
Source and exact locator	
Inspected as (image, edition, catalog, specialist account)	
Person anchor	
Authorial activity claimed	
Discriminating particular joining the two	
What comes from the document	
What comes from a specialist	
Dates: event, statement, surviving copy	

Field	Reviewer entry
Namesake test: result and reason	
Role test: result and reason	
Dependency test: result and reason	
Temporal test: result and reason	
Authenticity test: result and reason	
Strongest conventional reading considered	
Decision: closed, unclosed or unresolved	
Agrees with the study? If not, why?	

Annex D: why Fletcher closes and Stratford does not

Fletcher closes because a named collaborator supplies the link between the playwright and a personally situated correspondent. Philip Massinger co-signed the letter naming “mr fletcher” as a collaborator, and separately named Huntingdon as Fletcher’s patron. John Fletcher’s signed verse epistle is addressed to the Countess of Huntingdon. No surviving lifetime source does this work for Stratford.

Table D.1. *Fletcher’s chain, step by step*

Step	Source	Date	What it establishes	Inspected as
1. The correspondent	Verse epistle “To the Excelent and best Lady the Countess of Huntington”, Huntington HA 13333 (*CELM* FlJ 8)	c.1619–20	A John Fletcher sends 38 lines of verse to a named patron. Signature, address and one word are autograph; the body is scribal. Its postscript names Sir Thomas Beaumont, cousin of Francis Beaumont	*CELM*; Tannenbaum 1929 and Greg 1935; Kolkovich 86–87; Finkelpearl
2. The writer	Field, Daborne and Massinger to Henslowe, Dulwich MSS 1 art. 68: “the play of mr fletcher & ours”	c.1613–14	Collaborators, asking for money owed, name him as a partner in a specific play	Foakes and Ioppolo transcription
3. The join	Massinger, “The Copie of a Letter ... to the Earle of Pembrooke Lo: Chamberlaine”: “nor had Fletcher ever / Such Reputation, and credit wonne / But by his honord Patron, Huntington”	After 1615 (Finkelpearl); thought 1615–23; copy c.1630s	A named collaborator with personal knowledge ties the literary Fletcher to Huntingdon	*CELM* MsP 2 (Trinity College Dublin MS 877 ff.274r-75v; edited in Edwards and Gibson IV 389–91, checked by the author); printed text in Cruickshank; Finkelpearl
4. Reinforcement	*The Faithful Shepherdess*, “By John Fletcher”: signed verses to Aston, Skipwith and Townshend, and “To the Reader”. Addressed by Beaumont (“my friend”), N.F. (“my lov’d friend M. John Fletcher”), Jonson and Chapman (“his loving friend”)	c.1609–10	A specific work, with named peers addressing its writer. Skipwith was a Leicestershire neighbour of the Beaumonts tied to Huntingdon pageantry	Early editions as described in modern scholarship

Step	Source	Date	What it establishes	Inspected as
5. Reinforcement	Jonson to Drummond: “Chapman and Fletcher were loved of him”	January 1619; later transcript	A personal statement by a named peer	Published text

Table D.2. *The five tests applied to Fletcher*

Test	Result
Namesake	The poets Giles and Phineas Fletcher share the surname. Step 1 is signed John, and steps 2–3 place this Fletcher among working dramatists and in Huntingdon’s patronage
Role	Step 2 is a collaborators’ statement about a play. A signature alone would not establish composition, so step 1 serves as the identity anchor
Dependency	Three separate origins: a household letter, a Henslowe appeal and a patronage poem. Massinger stands behind steps 2 and 3; his value is the join, not a second count
Temporal	Steps 1 and 2 originate before Fletcher’s death in August 1625. Step 3 survives in a copy of c.1630s. Its addressee is William Herbert, third earl, Lord Chamberlain from 1615, and it is thought to date from 1615–23, within Fletcher’s lifetime
Authenticity	The epistle is not treated as a holograph. Hand identification relies on *CELM* and Greg

Table D.3. *Fletcher and Stratford compared*

Question	Fletcher	Stratford
A manuscript literary communication in his own name to a patron?	Yes (step 1)	None survives
A collaborator naming him in a specific writing transaction during life?	Yes (step 2)	None survives
An associate tying the writer to an identifying personal circumstance?	Yes (step 3)	None during life. Davies gives no such particular; Heminges and Condell speak after his death
A record joining the man to the literary activity, rather than to a company?	Yes (steps 1–3 together)	The will and patent join him to the company only

Checks completed (author, November 2026): Edwards and Gibson IV 389–91, for the text and dating of step 3; Finkelpearl, for the poem’s date, the postscript and Skipwith.

Sources: *CELM*, Huntington shelfmarks; *CELM*, Massinger; Henslowe-Alleyn, article 68; Spenserians, Massinger text record, for dating; Cruickshank, *Philip Massinger*; Folger, *The Faithful Shepherdess* front matter; Kolkovich, *Early Theatre* 27.1 (2024), 86–87, 92; Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (1990).

Annex E: Diana Price’s literary paper trails chart

Of the twenty-five writers in Price’s chart, only William Shakespeare has no mark in any of the ten categories. The chart is reproduced as printed in the book, following Price’s latest published chart (2018). It is distinct from the authorship-chain classifications in Annex A, and its marks are not added into a score.

Table E.1. *Price's ten categories*

No.	Category
1	Evidence of education
2	Record of correspondence, especially concerning literary matters
3	Evidence of having been paid to write
4	Evidence of a direct relationship with a patron
5	Original manuscript extant
6	Handwritten inscriptions, receipts, letters etc. touching on literary matters
7	Commendatory verses, epistles, or epigrams contributed or received
8	Personally referred to as a writer; misc. records
9	Evidence of books owned, borrowed, or given
10	Notice at death as a writer

Table E.2. *Price's chart*

Writer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ben Jonson	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thomas Nashe	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	–
Samuel Daniel	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	●
Edmund Spenser	●	●	–	●	–	●	●	●	●	●
Philip Massinger	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	–
George Peele	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	●	●	–
Gabriel Harvey	●	●	–	●	●	●	●	●	●	–
Michael Drayton	–	●	●	●	–	●	●	●	–	●
George Chapman	–	●	●	●	–	●	●	●	●	–
William Drummond	●	●	–	–	●		●	●	●	–
John Marston	●	●	●	–	–	●	●	●	●	–
Anthony Munday	–	–	●	●	●	–	●	●	–	●
Robert Greene	●	–	●	●	–	●	●	●	–	●
John Lyly	●	●	–	●	–	●	●	●	–	–
Thomas Heywood	–	–	●	–	●		●	●	–	●
Thomas Lodge	●	●	–	●	–	–	●	●	●	–
Thomas Middleton	●	–	●	–	●	●	–	●	–	–
Thomas Dekker	–	●	●	–	–	●	●	●	–	–
Thomas Watson	●	–	–	●	–	–	●	●	–	●
Francis Beaumont	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	●	–	●
John Fletcher	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	●	●	–
Thomas Kyd	●	●	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–
John Webster	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	●	–	–
Christopher Marlowe	●	–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	●
William Shakespeare	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

● = yes in Price's chart. – = a dash in her chart. Blank = left blank in her chart (Drummond and Heywood, category 6); blanks are not treated as negatives. Categories 1–9 are lifetime evidence; category 10 extends to twelve months after death.

Source: Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, revised paperback (Shakespeare-Authorship.com, 2013). Checked against the author-authorized republication in Price, "What's the Question in Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography? Literary Paper Trails," *Critical Stages/Scènes critiques* 18 (December 2018), critical-stages.org.