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# Did Shakespeare write A Lover's Complaint?

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# *Did Shakespeare write* A Lover's Complaint?[1]

Brian Vickers

for Gilles Monsarrat

1 Shakespeare's meteoric ascent to recognition as England's greatest writer, and one of the world's leading dramatists, has created a number of problems for the modern scholar. Had Shakespeare been instantly recognized as the 'genius' fêted by 18th and 19th century critics, doubtless every scrap of paper bearing witness to his life and activities would have been jealously hoarded. But unfortunately, when his star began to rise much of these records had perished, due to playhouse fires, the dispersal of properties following an owner's death, and all the usual depredations of time. Two areas for which documentation is desperately lacking are that of co-authorship, the normal practice among Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline dramatists,[2] and the wider issue of anonymous poems which have been ascribed to him. Two recent ascriptions to Shakespeare, the lyric 'Shall I die', and the *Funerall Elegie* (1612), have been successfully discredited, a process in which some fundamental methods in authorship studies were revived and extended.[3] In both cases external evidence was lacking, and scholars had to rely on the minute scrutiny of internal evidence: vocabulary and diction, parallel phrases and constructions, verse form, rhyme, rhetoric, and the identification of linguistic preferences at the level below a writer's conscious choice – the use of so-called 'function words', such as prepositions, conjunctions, the definite and indefinite article, and so on. In this essay I wish to argue that when such techniques are applied to the poem *A Lover's Complaint*, it can be shown to be un-Shakespearian. I begin by examining the external evidence, then turn to some selected aspects of the internal evidence.

# I

2 The Stationers' Register for 20 May 1609 carried this entry

> Tho. Thorpe. Entred for his copie under the handes of master Wilson and master Lownes Wardenes a book called Shakespeares sonnettes vjd.

3 When published later that summer, 'By G. Eld for T. T. and are to be solde by *William Apsley*', the volume of SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS had acquired an additional poem not mentioned in the Stationers' Register, and that poem had acquired an author: 'A Lovers complaint. / BY / WILLIAM SHAKE-SPEARE' (Sig. $K_i$v). The forty-seven stanzas of this poem conveniently fill the book's eleven remaining pages. The printer, George Eld, was a regular associate of the stationer Thomas Thorpe, with whom he produced over twenty books.[4] Thorpe had registered his ownership of the manuscript with the Stationers' Company, although there is no way of telling how he acquired the 'copy' of either the *Sonnets* or of *A Lover's Complaint*. Setting aside discussion of the famous dedication, written by Thorpe ('T.T.'), a practice he often indulged in when his author was either out of London or dead, the relevant point is that Thorpe was responsible for publishing this volume, and it was Thorpe alone who claimed *A Lover's Complaint* for Shakespeare. No other evidence links Shakespeare to the poem.

4 The key issue, then, is whether or not Thorpe's word can be trusted. Thorpe's publications between 1605 and 1608 included some carefully printed texts of plays by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, ending with the anonymous *Histriomastix* (1610). Thereafter he published theological and travel books, including John Healey's translations of *St Augustine of the Citie of God* (1610) and *Epictetus manuell* (1610). However, Thorpe also took part in at least three dubious publishing enterprises, two of which involved George Eld. Thorpe's first entry in the Stationers' Register was of 'a panegyric or congratulation' to James I, entered on 23 June 1603; but the entry was subsequently cancelled since the poem had already been registered to 'Master Seaton' – that is, Gregory Seton. As Colin Burrow observed, although Elizabethan publishing conventions were more fluid than ours, Thorpe had violated 'one of the key principles of the Stationers' company', that each printer's copy rights should be preserved.[5] Previously, in 1600, Thorpe had been involved in issuing the second edition of Marlowe's translation of *Lucans First Booke*, to which he contributed an epistle flaunting the fact that he had acquired the manuscript from Edward Blount. The circumstances behind this 'apparent piracy', as Burrow described it, are unclear, but W. W. Greg argued that Thorpe's florid and quipping epistle to Blount was in fact 'intended for bitter sarcasm', containing phrases 'deliberately meant to wound', and can be read as 'an invasion by Thorpe of what he pretends to be Blount's claim to all Marlowe's literary remains'.[6] Burrow endorsed Greg's suspicions, and pointed out that Thorpe undoubtedly did not own the copy for *The Odcombian Banquet* (1611), which the *Short-Title Catalogue* describes as 'largely a pirated reprint of the prelims of' *Coryats Crudities* (1611): as such it may have been more than a mere 'prank', as some of Thorpe's apologists have claimed.[7]

5 The preliminary pages to *Coryats Crudities* consist of a huge gathering of testimonies to the eccentric traveller Thomas Coryat, prose eulogies and a 'Character' of Coryat, poems in English, Welsh, Latin, Spanish, Italian, and French, by a distinguished group of friends or acquaintances who entered into the spirit of mock-scholarly panegyric. They include Ben Jonson (two poems), John Harington, Dudley Digges, John Donne, Hugh Holland, John

Hoskyns, Lionel Cranfield, Thomas Campion, John Owen, Michael Drayton, John Davies of Hereford, and Henry Peacham. By reprinting all these contributions (except for a poem in Greek) at his own cost, Thorpe was clearly looking to cash in on Coryat's fleeting celebrity, and on the final page he added a mocking farewell, beginning with the legal phrase *Noverint universi*, &c:

> know (gentle Reader) that the booke, in prayse whereof all these preceding verses were written, is purposely omitted for thine, and thy purses good: partly for the greatnes of the volume, containing 654 pages, each page 36 lines, each line 48 letters, besides Panegyrickes, Poems, Epistles, Prefaces, Letters, Orations, fragments, posthumes, with the comma's, colons, full-points, and other things thereunto appertaining: which beeing printed of a Character legible without spectacles, would have caused the Booke much to exceed that price, whereat men in these witty dayes value such stuff... (Sig. $P_4$v).

6 Thorpe claims to have 'read the booke with an intent to epitomize it', hoping to 'have melted out of the whole lumpe so much matter worthy the reading, as would have filled foure pages': but found the task impossible. This dismissive epistle adds insult to injury, just as Thorpe had done when he acquired Marlowe's Lucan from Blount, as if he enjoyed flaunting the fact of having acquired copy rightly belonging to someone else, whether an author or a printer. In 1614, when Thorpe issued the translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* by Sir Arthur Gorges, Burrow noted, 'questions about the origins of the copy are deliberately raised in the preliminary matter: the preface, purportedly by Gorges's son Carew, who was then only ten, states that he stumbled on the poem "in my fathers study, amongst many other of his Manuscripts" (Sig. A3v) and arranged with his schoolmaster to have it printed'. In addition, the fact that 'other sonnet-sequences ... usually only have dedications by their printers in cases where piracy is clear or suspected',[8] means that Thorpe's inclusion of *A Lover's Complaint* cannot be complacently regarded as guaranteeing its authenticity.

7 George Eld was Thorpe's partner in the Coryat piracy of 1611, as he had been for the *Sonnets* and the *Complaint* in 1609. Like Thorpe, Eld brought out several plays legitimately, but in 1607 he described *The Revenger's Tragedy* on its title page as belonging to the King's Men, and he published *The Puritan* (now known to be Middleton's), as by 'W. S.'. David Frost studied Eld's career, pointing out that between 1606 and 1608 he expanded his activities, entering many works in the Stationers' Register, and was evidently trying to become a publisher, not just a printer. As such, 'Eld needed bestsellers', which would explain his 'sharp practice' in attributing '*The Puritan*, not indeed to the King's Men, but to their leading dramatist, one "W. S."'.[9] MacDonald Jackson endorsed Frost's suggestion that Eld may have deliberately attributed *The Revenger's Tragedy* to the leading company of the day, and added: 'Eld's use of the initials "W. S." on the title-page of *The Puritan* was almost certainly intended to mislead'.[10] There is abundant evidence that Shakespeare's name had sufficient kudos by the late 1590s for publishers to think of the cash benefits that might accrue from ascribing not only plays but apocryphal poems to him.[11] The most notorious of these mis-attributions took place in 1612, for on 13 February the Stationers' Register recorded the following entry:

> Thomas Thorpe. Entred for his copy under th' [h]andes of the wardens. A booke to be printed when it is further authorized called, *A funerall Elegye* in memory of the late virtuous master WILLIAM PEETER of Whipton neere Exetour ... vj d.[12]

8 When the poem was published, Thorpe's name was not included on the title-page (perhaps implying that it was issued privately), which only names his regular printer:

'Imprinted at London by G. Eld'. But in the interval between registration and publication, this poem, like *A Lover's Complaint*, had acquired an (imputed) author: the title-page carried the claim '*By W. S.*', and the Epistle is signed 'W. S.'.

9 Now that most scholars, even Donald Foster,[13] have accepted that the *Funerall Elegye* was actually written by John Ford (of Ilsington near Exeter), the question of how much veracity we can impute to Thomas Thorpe and George Eld takes on a rather different tinge from the benevolent motives ascribed to them by proponents of Shakespeare's authorship of *A Lover's Complaint*, notably Katherine Duncan-Jones, MacDonald Jackson and David J. Kathman.[14] Since Jackson himself indicted Eld of sharp practice in ascribing *The Puritan* to 'W. S.', and since Greg and Burrow have cast severe doubts on Thorpe's integrity, we can no longer take their collaboration on the 1609 volume – which contains Shakespeare's undoubted *Sonnets* – as in any way establishing the authenticity of *A Lover's Complaint*.

## II

10 The internal evidence so far assembled for Shakespeare's authorship of 'A Lover's Complaint' is dubious in the extreme. The case against it was made most forcefully by J.W. Mackail in 1912[15], who drew attention to the poem's awkward syntax and its many rare words, Latinate coinages some of which were never used by Shakespeare, or by anyone else. Reinterpreting this evidence, Kenneth Muir and MacDonald Jackson argued that Shakespeare often coined new words, some of them based on Latin models.[16] These points are justified, of course, but the scholarship they cited is outdated. Both Muir and Jackson relied on the pioneering work of Alfred Hart, dating back to the 1930s, which claimed that Shakespeare was unusual in his verbal preferences, such as for words beginning with *un* or ending with *less*, for turning nouns into verbs, and other linguistic choices.[17] However, the best modern study of linguistic innovations in the age of Shakespeare, Charles Barber's *Early Modern English*,[18] has shown that in all these instances, Shakespeare simply reflected general linguistic developments. Furthermore, several recent statistical analyses of Shakespeare's neologisms have shown that the proportion of rare words in *A Lover's Complaint* is far greater than in any of Shakespeare's authentic works.[19]

11 Before adducing some additional linguistic evidence that will further weaken the case for Shakespeare's authorship, I should like to mention two significant features of the poem's style and ethos which render it unShakespearian. First, the diction and many details of the language are closely modelled on the early poems of Edmund Spenser. Israel Gollancz, in his edition of the *Sonnets* (1896), assigned the *Complaint* to Shakespeare, calling it 'an early exercise in the Spenserian style'[20], having been suggested by the opening lines of Spenser's *Ruines of Time* (1591)

> It chaunced me on day beside the shore
> Of silver streaming Thamesis to bee ....
> There on the other side, I did behold
> A Woman sitting sorrowfullie wailing,
> Rending her yeolow locks, like wyrie golde
> About her shoulders careleslie downe trailing,
> And streames of teares from her faire eyes forth railing.
> ... But seeing her so pitiouslie perplexed,
> I (to her calling) askt what her so vexed.
> Ah what delight, (quoth she) in earthlie thing,

Or comfort can I wretched creature, have?
Whose happines the heavens envying,
From highest staire to lowest step me drave,
And have in mine owne bowels made my grave,
That of all Nations now I am forlorne,
The worlds sad spectacle, and fortunes scorne.
Much was I mooved at her piteous plaint,
And felt my heart nigh riven in my brest
With tender ruth to see her sore constraint;
That shedding teares a while I still did rest,
And after did her name of her request.
Name have I none (quoth she) nor anie being,
Bereft of both by Fates unjust decreeing. (1-2, 8-12, 20-35)[21]

12 Gollancz made no detailed analysis of the *Complaint*'s debts to Spenser, and subsequent critical observations remained general, as in Sidney Lee's statement in his *Life of Shakespeare* (1898) that 'the poem, in a gentle Spenserian vein, has no connection with the *Sonnets*' (Rollins 1938, p. 592). W. J. Craig, in his edition (1905), agreed with Malone and Gollancz, finding the poem 'full of beauties; and though it more resemble the style of Spenser's *Complaints* than that of Shakespeare, we are every now and then reminded of Shakespeare by some expression or another. There seems to be little doubt but that it is an early study by Shakespeare in the style of Spenser' (*ibid*., p. 594).

13 Critical discussion of Spenser's influence on *A Lover's Complaint* seems to have remained at this generalized level until 1990, when MacDonald Jackson published an essay proposing an additional Spenserian model.[22] Jackson quoted the second stanza of *Prothalamion* (1596), using italics to indicate borrowings in the *Complaint*:

There, in a Meadow, by the Rivers side,
A Flocke of Nymphes I chanced to espy,
All louely Daughters of the Flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks all loose untyde,
As each had been a Bryde,
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs entrayled curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket:
And with fine Fingers, cropt full feateously
The tender stalkes on hye.
Of every sort, which in that Meadow grew,
They gathered some; the Violet pallid blew,
The little Dazie, that at euening closes,
The virgin Lillie, and the Primrose trew,
With store of vermeil Roses,
To decke their Bridegromes posies,
Against the Brydale day, which was not long:
Sweete Themmes runne softly, till I end my Song. (19-36)

14 Jackson commented:

> The beginning of the *Complaint* tells of 'a fickle maid' whom the poet 'espied' (line 5), though in fact she proves to be neither maid nor fickle; she stands by the 'weeping margent' of 'a river' (38-9), which is also referred to as 'the flud' (44), and carries a 'maund' (36), which is a wicker basket, and her hair, though 'nor loose nor ti'd in formall plat' (29), is partly 'untuck'd' (31) and 'slackly braided in loose negligence' (35); although she does not gather flowers to make posies, she does have 'many a ring of *Posied* gold and bone' (45), and both 'flower' and 'stalke' are mentioned in connection with her (75, 147). (Jackson 1990, p. 180)

15 Spenser's nymphs 'out of their baskets *drew*' flowers, which 'upon those goodly Birds they *threw*, / And all the Waves did *strew*', two of those three rhyme words recurring in the *Complaint*, in which the woman 'favours from a maund she *drew* / Which … she in a river *threw*' (my italics). Spenser's description of the nymphs' baskets, Jackson pointed out, made of 'fine twigs *entrayled curiously*', in which they put the flowers they have 'cropt *full feateously*' (25-7), is echoed by the author of the *Complaint* in describing the Woman's destruction of love-favours, including

> letters sadly pend in blood
> With sleided silke, *feate* and *affectedly*
> *Enswath'd* and seald to *curious* secrecy (*LC*, 47-9)

16 As Jackson observed, some of these elements may derive from the conventions of Elizabethan pastoral, such as the 'loose' hair of the female protagonists, 'but very few of these young women carry wicker baskets laden with pretty things which they throw into rivers', while the verbal links between the *Complaint* and Spenser are certainly very close – far closer, I suggest, than with Shakespeare. Jackson never questioned Shakespeare's authorship of the *Complaint*, even though the poem's debt to Spenser included words which are rare in Shakespeare, but the evidence in fact suggests a quite different conclusion, that the *Complaint* was written by some other poet having far deeper Spenserian affiliations. Jackson rightly indicated additional close parallels between the *Complaint* and Spenser's *Prothalamion*, but the more detail he accumulated the further that poem recedes from Shakespeare. Both poems share the words 'christall' (*Pr*., 5.7; *LC*, 57) and 'palyd' / 'pallid' (*Pr*., 30; *LC*, 198). The poet in *Prothalamion* suffers from '*discontent*' and disappointment at his frustrated hopes of court advancement, which 'did *afflict* my brayne' (*Pr*., 5-11), while in the *Complaint* it is the woman who suffers from '*discontent*' and is '*afflicted*' (*LC*, 56, 61). In *Prothalamion* the speaker regrets 'expectations vayne / of idle hopes, which still do *fly away*' (7-8), just like the sympathetic *senex* in the *Complaint*, who 'had *let go by* / The swiftest houres observed as they *flew*' (*LC*, 59-60). Finally, Jackson drew attention to the echo phenomenon in both poems, met immediately in *A Lover's Complaint*, but further on in *Prothalamion*:

> From off a hill whose concave wombe reworded,
> A plaintfull story from a sistring vale
> My spirrits t'attend this doble voyce accorded,
> And downe I laid to list the sad tun'd tale. (*LC*, 1-4)
> So ended she; and all the rest around
> To her redoubled that her vndersong,
> Which said, their bridale daye should not be long.
> And gentle Eccho from the neighbour ground,
> Their accents did resound. (*Pr*., 109-12)

17 As Jackson observed, 'In the *Prothalamion* we have "redoubled" and "resound", and in the *Complaint* "reworded" and "doble", while "a sistring vale" parallels "the neighbour ground", "sistring" being a coinage on the analogy of "neighbouring", and the word "attend" also links the *Complaint* with this stanza of the *Prothalamion*' (123). Jackson added a footnote conceding that 'The fourth stanza of Spenser's *The Tears of the Muses* (1591) also has voices echoing off the landscape: "th'hollow hills, from which their silver voyces / Were wont redoubled Echoes to rebound" (21-2); but', he argued, 'the poem lacks the *Prothalamion*'s other parallels to *A Lover's Complaint*' (p. 181, n. 7).

18 Jackson's aim in publishing this note was to undermine claims that *A Lover's Complaint* was written in the early 1590s, deducing that it 'cannot have been written before 1596' (p.

182), an undeniable conclusion. However, the very density of the borrowing he documented, with 'so many of the words and images connecting the two poems … concentrated in the second stanza of the *Prothalamion*, and especially in the rhymes and the phrases leading into them' (*ibid.*), taken together with the *Complaint*'s many other debts to Spenser's *Ruines of Time*,[23] actually casts doubt on Shakespeare's authorship, for this degree of close imitation seems foreign to him at any stage of his career. Shakespeare read widely, remembered much of what he had read, but associatively rather than literally, transforming it in the process. By contrast, the author of *A Lover's Complaint* either wrote with a copy of Spenser open before him, or had read his poems so attentively that he could reproduce not only Spenser's vocabulary and phraseology but some individual details of style. To use the appropriate classical-Renaissance terminology, the *Complaint* remains at the level of *imitatio*, the close rendering of a model, whereas Shakespeare's treatment of his sources exemplifies the higher process of *aemulatio*, in which a writer absorbs his models and goes beyond them.

## III

19 The second large-scale difference between *A Lover's Complaint* and Shakespeare's authentic works concerns the poem's treatment of a suffering woman. Shakespeare's great essay in the tradition of what has become known as 'The Female Complaint'[24] is, of course, *The Rape of Lucrece*.[25] In this full-length treatment of a brief episode in the Roman historical sources Shakespeare dramatized Tarquin's tortured conscience before and after the rape, making him condemn himself out of his own mouth. All the poet's sympathies go to the victim, who feels irremediably soiled, preferring death to a life of shame. In her laments Lucrece expresses the 'helplesse shame I feele' (756), a condition made worse since she has 'no one to blush with me' (792) – to share her shame – and can only contemplate a future life of 'reproch' and 'defame' (816-17). But she seeks no further exoneration, resolving that the only 'remedie… / Is to let forth my fowle defiled blood' (1028-9), expressing her indelible sense of being polluted.[26] Her maid, summoned to bring 'paper, ink, and pen', bursts into tears on seeing her mistress's condition, and Lucrece weeps in response, allowing Shakespeare's narrator to comment on women's sensitivity to the suffering of others: 'Their gentle sex to weepe are often willing' (1237). This observation leads the poet on to a general defence of women, and an indictment of men:

> For men have marble, women waxen mindes,
> And therefore are they form'd as marble will,
> The weake opprest, th' impression of strange kindes
> Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, by skill.
> Then call them not the Authors of their ill,
> No more than waxe shall be accounted evill,
> Wherein is stampt the semblance of a Devill. (1240-46)

20 To have minds made of 'marble' is hardly a flattering attribute for men, especially if they both oppress the weaker sex and impress 'strange kindes', or 'unnatural natures' on their receptive vessels. Shakespeare's defence of women includes an indictment of men who like to make them guilty of their own downfall: '*Then call them not the Authors of their ill*'. Women are not responsible for their misfortune, the narrator insists, and if 'rough winter' should kill a flower, then 'Not the devour'd, but that which doth devour / Is worthie blame' (1254-7). The narrator becomes so involved in his plea that he exclaims

ô let it not be hild [held]
Poore womens faults, that they are so fulfild
With mens abuses, those proud Lords to blame,
Make weake-made women tenants to their shame. (1257-60)

21 Where earlier poets writing 'Female Complaints' were content to invoke women's weakness to explain their heroine's yielding to male desire, Shakespeare points out the other side of the equation, that men, 'those proud lords', take advantage of their strength and 'fulfil' (fill up) women with their own 'abuses', a word that can mean both 'deceits' and ill-usage in general.

22 In the 'Female Complaint' tradition, of which the major English instance before *Lucrece* were Churchyard's *The Tragedy of Shores Wife* in *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1563 edition), Daniel's *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592; 'Augmented' edition 1594; further revisions in 1599 and 1607), and Thomas Lodge's *The Complaint of Eldred* (1593), the dominant plot structure was one by which the heroine reappeared from the dead to narrate her story to a listening, and sympathetic poet. Once her story had been told, the ghost vanished and the poet wound up her tale. Whereas these poets used a first-person narrative, with a past episode being retold in the present, for *The Rape of Lucrece* Shakespeare broke with this tradition. He used a narrator to recount the story as it happens, starting with Tarquin's lust-filled journey to Collatium and ending with the horrified reaction of Lucrece's husband and friends to her suicide. The narrative follows the actual order of events, with the two protagonists speaking soliloquies, as in a play, before and after the brief dialogue of their fateful confrontation. The poet of *A Lover's Complaint* chose a different, and more complicated plot-structure. His poem begins, like those by Churchyard, Daniel, and Lodge, with the narrator hearing a woman's lament; but she then tells her story to a bystander, not to the poet. And while the other 'Female Complaints' bring closure by the ghost narrator completing her story and returning to her grave, this poem leaves everything open, as the woman breaks off in mid-utterance, with both the bystander and the poet left suspended in their unresolved frameworks. Moreover, although the seducer does not appear in the poem, in this *Complaint* the victim is made to reproduce his temptings in a long passage of reported speech. The unusual structure of the poem can be clarified by a summary of its action, divided into four sections. (The excellent edition by Hyder E. Rollins numbers the stanzas; modern editors number the lines only. I give both.)

*(I) The Woman, in the present, is introduced.*

1. Stanzas 1-8: the poet hears the woman's lament and observes her, evidently distraught, sitting by a stream and destroying love-tokens (lines 1-56).
2. Stanzas 9-10: a friendly old man sits down with her, to whom she tells her story (57-70).

*(II) The Woman describes her seducer, and their past love affair.*

3. Stanzas 11-20: the woman describes how she fell in love with a young man having many attractive qualities, who was sought after by many women (71-140).
4. Stanzas 21-22: she recounts how she yielded to him, even though she knew of the suffering that he had caused other women (141-54).
5. Stanzas 23-24: she claims that neither the examples of others, nor moral principles can hold human beings back from satisfying their desires (155-168).
6. Stanza 25: she herself was fully aware that her seducer had got other women pregnant, who were either bearing or rearing his children while deceiving their own partner, and that nothing that he wrote or said could be trusted (169-175).

*(III) The Woman recounts her Seducer's successful persuasion.*

7. Stanzas 26-41: she recounts his seduction speech, in which he admitted that he had always used women for his own pleasure, boasted of his conquests, displayed

the 'trophies of affections hot' which he had received from other women, affirmed the all-conquering power of love, given her all the presents that they had given him, before throwing himself on her mercy, bursting into tears (176-287).
*(IV) The Woman describes her fall yet reveals she is still in love with her seducer.*
8. Stanzas 42-45: the woman describes how her tender heart gave in to his appeal, even though she was well aware of his falseness and the devastating effect it would have on her (288-315).
9. Stanzas 46-47: she admits that, although she now sees him as the tempter who destroyed her innocence, she could easily fall in love with him again (316-329).

23 Even from that brief summary the poem's unusual construction is visible. The action begins in the present, with the Woman's despairing state, having been seduced and abandoned (I). Then it moves into the past by retelling how she fell in love and yielded (II). It then moves further into the past by making her recount, for over a hundred lines, the exact words that her seducer used in persuading her (III). Finally, it returns to the present with her giving another description of her fall, followed by a sudden volte-face, revealing that, even though she now knows all her seducer's deceitfulness, she would yield again (IV). This is a highly unusual structure, which involves both repetition and narrative awkwardness, such as the woman first denouncing her seducer's ruthless behaviour to other women (stanzas 21-25), then recounting his victorious persuasion (26-41), and finally repeating her denunciation of his immorality (42-45), while reaffirming her readiness to yield again (46-47).

24 As my summary suggests, the aesthetic element of narrative construction in *A Lover's Complaint* is subordinate to the poet's moral scheme, in which the female victim is accorded no sympathy. Churchyard, Daniel and Lodge presented a victim whose beauty caused a powerful and ruthless man to fall in love with them, with fatal consequences, but all three poets allowed their heroines to admit their complicity in their fall, and to express a remorse which should serve as an example and deterrent to other women. The poet of the *Complaint* differs at every point: the woman's beauty is very briefly mentioned, but she is made to describe her seducer's beauty at great length (stanzas 11-20); she yields to his seduction, even though she already knows how rotten he is (21-22); far from accepting moral norms, she denounces them, together with any notion of learning from experience (23-24); and she is ready to ruin herself all over again (46-47).

Aye me I fell, and yet do question make,
What I should doe againe for such a sake.
O that infected moysture of his eye,
O that false fire which in his cheeke so glowd:
O that forc'd thunder from his heart did flye,
O that sad breath his spungie lungs bestowed,
O all that borrowed motion seeming owed,
Would yet again betray the fore-betrayed,
And new pervert a reconciled Maide. (321-29)

25 The dislocated narrative structure, placing her reproduction of her seducer's speech *after* her account of the whole tragic episode, reveals to us that the fallen woman, in rejecting morality and justifying sensual pleasure, reproduces attitudes her seducer taught her (compare her views, stanzas 23-4, with his, stanzas 35, 38-9). Most strikingly, in using the libertine arguments in favour of *voluptas* rejecting virtue and moral law, both protagonists echo Shakespeare's account of the moral norms Tarquin will knowingly violate in order to gain the 'great treasure' he desires (*Lucrece*, 135-161). Shakespeare articulates the destructive effects of *voluptas* just before Tarquin

doth premeditate
The dangers of his lothsome enterprise:
And in his inward mind he doth debate,
What following sorrow may on this arise. (183-6)

26 Tarquin's self-debate, like a soliloquy, stretches over twelve stanzas (190-245, 253-280), following the same self-validating course as that of the lovers in the *Complaint*. His passion overcomes his reason, he rejects all moral laws to satisfy his lust:

My will is strong past reasons weake remooving:
Who feares a sentence or an old mans saw,
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe. (243-5)

27 Tarquin sees himself as enlisted in the army of 'Affection', or passion, fighting against Reason:

Affection is my Captaine and he leadeth.
And when his gaudie banner is displaide,
The coward fights, and will not be dismaide. (271-3)

28 Rejecting 'childish feare', 'Respect and reason', Tarquin follows 'Desire' to gain his 'treasure' (274-80). Just so, the woman in the *Complaint* recalls her seducer's apostrophe to the power of desire – 'O most potentiall love' – to conquer all moral qualms:

When thou impressest what are precepts worth
Of stale example? when thou wilt inflame,
How coldly those impediments stand forth
Of wealth or filliall feare, lawe, kindred fame,
Love's armes are proof gainst rule, gainst sence, gainst shame... (*LC*, 264-71)

29 And the woman, his dutiful pupil, repeats this cynical and amoral lesson in her own words:

But ah who ever shun'd by precedent,
The destin'd ill she must her selfe assay,
Or forc'd examples gainst her owne content
To put the by-past perrils in her way?
Counsaile may stop a while what will not stay:
For when we rage, advise is often seene
By blunting us to make our wits more keene.
Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood,
That wee must curbe it uppon others proofe,
To be forbod the sweets that seemes so good,
For feare of harmes that preach in our behoofe;
O appetite from judgement stand aloofe!
The one a pallate hath that needs will taste,
Though reason weepe and cry it is thy last. (155-68)

30 Where Churchyard, Daniel, and Lodge presented their women sympathetically, acknowledging their complicity in their ruin, and expressing due remorse, and where Shakespeare had explicitly demanded sympathy for women as the weaker sex, this poet has no sympathy for women. *A Lover's Complaint* is, in this respect, a riposte to *The Rape of Lucrece*, challenging Shakespeare's compassion for women and falling back on man's stereotypical view of woman: '*varium et mutabile semper / Femina*' (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.569).

31 Shakespeare could never have written this poem. Its misogynistic attitude, and its slavish imitation of Spenser, are two good reasons for thinking that.

# IV

32 All other forms of internal evidence support the conclusion that *A Lover's Complaint* is unShakespearian. I can only provide a fraction of this evidence in the confines of this essay, and shall limit myself to two items, syntax and rhyme.

33 One feature of *A Lover's Complaint* which seems to have escaped attention is the number of times its poet had to invert normal word-order. The economical way of making this point is to take a segment of *The Rape of Lucrece*, the first 47 stanzas (329 lines), equalling the length of *A Lover's Complaint,* and compare the two. I find that inversion occurs in 80 lines of *Lucrece*, or 24.3 per cent of the whole, while in the *Complaint* it affects 149 of the 329 lines, or 45.3 per cent of the whole. The difference between the two poems is not only quantitative but qualitative. Inversion is permissible in poetry, Renaissance authorities agreed, but it should be functional, only disturbing the syntax for particular purposes, and it should not be overdone. In accordance with these principles (whether or not he was consciously aware of them), Shakespeare's inversions are neither frequent nor complex. We find a few simple inversion of pronoun and verb: 'him lent' (17), 'oft they' (70), 'thinks he' (78), 'holds he' (246). Shakespeare is more inclined to retain pronoun and verb as a grammatical unit: 'by the light he spies' (316), 'his finger pricks' (319), 'with swift intent he goes' (46), 'long he questioned' (122), 'by him inforst' (304). Shakespeare has longer sequences of inversion which can best be seen if I use numbers to represent the normal word-order, as when describing the 'Herauldry in Lucrece face':

> Argued by Beauties red and Vertues white,
> 5 6 7 3 1 2 4
> Of eithers colour was the other Queene.(65-6)

34 But a particular effect was intended there, referring to the reciprocal interchange between beauty and virtue in Renaissance thought. Again, at the climax of Tarquin's self-questioning about his desire to 'enjoy' Lucrece, the narrator brings out his internal conflict by a syntactical dislocation:

> 6 7 1 4 2 3 5
> Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,
> Pawning his honor to obtaine his lust,
> 5 6 4 1 2 3
> And for himselfe, himselfe he must forsake.
> Then where is truth if there be no selfe-trust?
> 2 1
> When shall he thinke to find a stranger just,
> 3 1 2
> When he himselfe, himselfe confounds, betraies,
> To sclandrous tongues & wretched hateful daies? (155-61)

35 That double collision of 'himselfe, himselfe' in the middle of lines 157 and 160 (the rhetorical figure *anadiplosis*, where the same word ends a clause and begins the one following), is an intended effect, graphically portraying Tarquin's self-division. And Shakespeare is careful to follow each line containing an inversion with one in normal word-order.

36 As any reader will discover, Shakespeare's inversions in this opening section of *The Rape of Lucrece* seldom seem awkward. An inversion in one line often brings the meaning-bearing element closer to its links in the line following:

2 3 1
And to Colatium beares the lightlesse fire,
2 3 4 1
Which in pale embers hid, lurkes to aspire,
10 11 12 1 2
And girdle with embracing flames, the wast
3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Of Colatines fair love, Lucrece the chast (4-7)

37 There the inversions are arranged so as to throw metrical emphasis on the powerful verbs of action – 'beares', 'hid', 'lurkes', 'aspire', and 'girdle', while the proximity of verb and complement – 'girdle with embracing fires' – being placed first, throws the object of Tarquin's desire into a passive, suffering role. Shakespeare uses inversion to emphasise a meaning-bearing element elsewhere, underlining the point by repeating key words and adding alliteration:

5 6 7 1 2 3 4
Within his thought her heavenly image sits,
3 4 5 6 7 2 1
And in the selfe same seat sits Colatine. (288-9)

38 In both lines the inversion places the verb 'sits' in an exposed position, while the second line creates an ominous effect by placing the four monosyllabic words beginning with 's' in an inexorable series, delaying to the end of the sentence the co-occurrence in Tarquin's thoughts of a presence he could wish away, his friend Colatine.

39 Although some of the inversions in the first 47 stanzas of *Lucrece* may be put down to poetic convention, many of them are functional in context. For a final instance of such productive dislocation of normal word-order I cite the stanza where Tarquin lights his torch to light his way:

4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3
His Faulchon on a flint he softly smiteth,
6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5
That from the could stone sparkes of fire doth flie,
4 5 6 1 2 3
Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth,
Which must be lodestarre to his lustfull eye.
4 5 6 1 2 3
And to the flame thus speakes advisedlie;
5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4
As from this cold flint I enforst this fire,
4 2 1 3
So Lucrece must I force to my desire. (176-82)

40 Once again Shakespeare achieves continuity by the inversion in the first line, postponing the verb so that a clause of purpose emerges in its most compressed form ('smiteth / That from…'). By postponing the verb 'flie' to the end of the second line, Shakespeare achieves another continuous effect, the sparks leading to the 'waxen torch' in the next line. In line 5 it is not the verb that is postponed, but the adverb 'advisedlie', or 'deliberately', giving an ominous effect to his brief speech ending the stanza. In the first line of this 'resolve' the inversion places the 'cold flint' in the middle of the line, paralleling the position of 'flint' in line 1 and 'cold stone' in line 2, and postpones to the end the 'sparkes of fire' (line 2) and 'this fire' (line 6), a reiterated sequence of cause and effect against which the closing line seems even more implacable:

So Lucrece must I force to my desire

41 And there the inversion places the greatest metrical stress on 'must' and 'force', validating his lust.

42 Inversion is ubiquitous in *A Lover's Complaint*. Some simple inversions of the personal pronoun and verb are clearly made for metrical reasons, a strong stress falling on the verb, a weak stress on the pronoun: 'had she' (43), 'bath'd she' (50), 'slides he' (64), 'Yet did I not' (148). Other simple inversions are made for the sake of a rhyme, often on a verb: 'their gazes lend' (26), 'the lines she rents' (55), 'the ruffle knew' (58), 'in mee you behold' (71), 'over me hath power' (74), and so forth. A majority of the inversions in the *Complaint* involve the second half of the verse line, so that rhyming is obviously the main factor governing the dislocation of normal word-order. Such short-term inversions, affecting the position of two to six words, are common throughout English Renaissance poetry, and often escape a reader's notice. But all too many of the inversions in *A Lover's Complaint* involve seven words and more, as can be seen from the following examples:

3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2
A thousand favours from a maund she drew (36)
1 7 8 9 2 4 5 6 3
Which one by one she in a river threw (38)
6 7 8 2 1 3 4 5
Of folded schedulls had she many a one (43)
3 4 5 6 7 1 2
Her greevance with his hearing to devide (67)
5 6 7 2 3 4 1
Upon his lippes their silken parcels hurles (87)
6 7 1 2 3 4 5
Even there resolv'd my reason into teares (296)
Sometimes the inversions become really awkward, spreading over two lines:
1 2 3 7 8 9 10
His rudenesse so with his authoriz'd youth,
4 5 6 11 12 13 14 15
Did livery falsenesse in a pride of truth (104-5)
These constructions are so awkward that the reader must peruse a sentence a second time in order to parse it:
1 2 3 4 9 10 11 8
Workes under you, and to your audit comes
5 6 7 12 13 14
Their distract parcells, in combined summes. (230-31)

43 It is as if the poet is having difficulty juggling his words into the right order, so as to fulfil the constraints both of metre and rhyme. In this stanza (42) the first two lines end with 'lies' and 'teare', with which the next two must rhyme:

1 10 11 12 13 14 15
But with the inundation of the eies:
2 3 4 8 9 5 6 7
What rocky heart to water will not weare? (289-90)
The poet created equally awkward dislocations of word order when beginning a stanza:
1 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Thus meerely with the garment of a grace,
11 12 13 14 15 2 3
The naked and concealed feind he coverd (316-7)

44 We have seen enough instances to know that the poet's poor handling of language was responsible for these and other unidiomatic inversions, which cannot be explained as

intended for specific narrative puposes, such as emphasis or characterization. In the section where the seduced maiden recounts her seducer's persuasion the poet inverted normal word order repeatedly:

> 1 6 7 8 9 2 3 4 5
> And long upon these termes I held my Citty,
> 1 6 2 3 4 5 6 7
> Till thus he gan besiege me: Gentle maid,
> 1 5 6 7 8 2 3 4
> Have of my suffering youth some feeling pitty
> 1 2 3 5 6 7 8 4
> And be not of my holy vowes affraid,
> 1 3 4 2 8 9 5 6 7
> Thats to ye sworne to none was ever said,
> 1 7 8 9 2 3 4 5 6
> For feasts of love I have bene call'd unto
> 8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6
> Till now did nere invite nor never woo. (176-82)

45 It could be argued that these dislocations are intended to show the seducer's insincerity, and a degree of assent may be given. But nowhere in Shakespeare will we find seven consecutive lines so thoroughly disordered, dislocating 49 of the 57 words in the stanza. Indeed, the density of inversion in *A Lover's Complaint* is truly remarkable.

46 We can sum up the difference between *The Rape of Lucrece* and *A Lover's Complaint* in terms of inversion by examining the superscript numbers I have used to mark the dislocation of word order. Shakespeare, as I pointed out, liked to preserve the pronoun and verb as a unit, and he tended to treat half-lines of verse as coherent units. This allows the reader to take in an inversion as a simple change of sequence within the line, a mental operation not requiring great effort. Normal prose word order could be restored with one, or at the most two interchanges, as in such sequences as 6 7 8 9 / 1 2 3 4 5; 5 6 7 8 / 1 2 3 4; 4 5 6 / 1 2 3. In *A Lover's Complaint*, by contrast, the dislocations of sense-units and grammatical units are much greater, as in such sequences as 1 7 8 9 2 4 5 6 3; 5 6 7 2 3 4 1; 6 7 8 2 1 3 4 5, and 1 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 / 11 12 13 14 15 2 3. These inversions would require several stages of re-arrangement to produce 'the playne and easye composition' which Thomas Wilson asked for.

47 Comparisons may be odious or odorous, but I take it that a clear distinction can be drawn between *A Lover's Complaint* and Shakespeare's *Lucrece* in their use of inversions, in terms both of quantity and quality.

## V

48 Finally, I should like to discuss the use of rhyme in *A Lover's Complaint*. In the course of a study of George Wilkins's rhyme preferences,[27] which clearly differentiated his use of rhyme in the first two Acts of *Pericles* from Shakespeare's normal practices, MacDonald Jackson relied on the list of 8,170 rhymes used by Shakespeare as compiled by Helge Kökeritz.[28] I have used the same list to check the rhymes used in *A Lover's Complaint* against those used by Shakespeare. The *Complaint* consists of 47 stanzas of 7 lines, rhyming *ababbcc*, giving five rhymes in each stanza (*aa*; *cc*; $b^1b^2$; $b^2b^3$; $b^1b^3$), or 235 rhymes in all. Kökeritz's total was 242, a slight over-count.[29] Kökeritz used original spelling editions, which complicates computation, given the many variations in spelling in early

modern English. Since we need only to identify the head words, I have taken *A Lover's Complaint* as my reference point, and not recorded spelling variants in Shakespeare.

49 The first point to emerge was that 123 rhymes, or about half the total number in *A Lover's Complaint*, occur nowhere in Shakespeare. This result is not as surprising as it may initially appear, for Jackson has shown that of the 723 rhymes in the *Sonnets*, 368 (or 50.9 percent) are used nowhere else in Shakespeare.[30] Of the 112 rhymes in the *Complaint* that are also used by Shakespeare, I have discovered that quite a large proportion occur in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. (My figures are based on different rhyme words, treating variant inflexions, singular or plural, as the same rhyme.) In 24 cases, these rhymes in the narrative poems also occur in Shakespeare plays published before 1609, and were hence available for imitation by some admirer of Shakespeare. But in 35 cases, according to my count, rhymes shared between *A Lover's Complaint*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Rape of Lucrece* were not re-used by Shakespeare. Those scholars who are still convinced that Shakespeare wrote the *Complaint* may dismiss this fact as a chance occurrence, but to others it will suggest that the author of *A Lover's Complaint* had diligently read and remembered the two narrative poems, especially *Lucrece*, that supreme instance of Female Complaint. I append a list of these rhymes, so that the reader may judge according to the evidence.

**Rhymes in *LC* also found in Shakespeare's narrative poems**

| A Lover's Complaint | The Rape of Lucrece; Venus and Adonis |
|---|---|
| appeares/feares (298-9) | RL 456-8: feares/appears;<br>RL 143-4: appeare/feare |
| beare/heare/teare (51-4) | RL 1129-31: beare/heare [hair]/teare; RL 1472-5: beare/here/teare |
| beares/teares (18-19) | RL 1712-13: beares/tears |
| beares/feares (272-3) | RL 610-12: beare/feare |
| beguiling/defiling/smiling (170-73) | RL 1842-5: beguild/defild/mild |
| begun/donne/Sunne (9-12) | RL 23-5: begunne/done/Sunne |
| begun/Sunne (260-2) | RL 372-4: begun/Sunne |
| blood/flud/mud (44-7) | RL 653-6: blood/flood/good;<br>RL 1740-41: bloud/flood/stood |
| case/grace/place (114-17) | RL 709-12: case/grace/pace;<br>RL 310-13: case/face/place |
| chinne/skin (92-4) | RL 419-20: chin/skinne |

| | |
|---|---|
| Citty/pitty (176-8) | RL 468-9: Citty/pittie;<br>RL 1553-4: Citty/pitty |
| cote/dote/note (233-6) | RL 205-8: coate/dote/note |
| designe/mine (276-7) | RL 1691-2: designe/mine |
| devide/side (65-7) | RL 1737-9: devide/side |
| drawne/sawne (90-91) | RL 1672-3: draw/saw |
| drew/knew (58-61) | VA 541-3: drew/knew |
| eye/flie (249-50; 323-5) | RL 177-9: eye/flie; RL 1014-5: eye/flie |
| face/grace/place (79-82) | RL 562-5: face/grace/place |
| find/minde (88-9; 135-7; 184-6) | RL 1654-6: finde/mind |
| forme/storme (99-101) | RL 1518-19: forms/stormes |
| incloses/Roses (286-7) | RL 71-3: encloses/Roses |
| know/wo (62-3) | RL 1310-12: know/woe |
| last/taste (167-8) | VA 445-7: last/tast |
| low[31]/wo (20-21) | VA 1140-41: lo/wo |
| raigne/remaine (127-9) | RL 1451-3: raign/remaine |
| showes/woes (307-8) | RL 1808-10: woe/show |

50 Considering these rhyme-links between *A Lover's Complaint* and Shakespeare's narrative poems, there seem to be three possible hypotheses: (i) the resemblances are purely fortuitous; (ii) the resemblances are due to Shakespeare writing the *Complaint ca.* 1604-8, recalling rhymes he had used ten years previously, but not in the intervening years; (iii) the resemblances are due to an admiring imitator who picked up words, phrases, rhymes, and larger units of sense from other poets. As I have shown,[32] the author of *A Lover's Complaint* modelled several features of his poem on predecessors in the Female Complaint tradition, notably Daniel's *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592) and Shakespeare's *Lucrece*.

51 Perhaps the most striking feature of these 30-odd rhyme links with *Lucrece* is the number of triple rhymes that the author of the *Complaint* took over: 'beare' / 'heare' / 'teare' (*LC*, 51-4); 'case' / 'grace' / 'place' (*LC*, 114-17); 'face' / 'grace' / 'place' (*LC*, 79-82) – although the 1598 Quarto of *Love's Labour's Lost* also has this rhyme (III.i.67-9); 'begunne' / 'done' / 'Sunne' (*LC*, 9-12); and 'cote' / 'dote' / 'note' (*LC*, 233-6). Surely, so many parallels in poems written ten years apart are neither fortuitous, nor an instance of delayed recall on Shakespeare's part, but the result of diligent imitation. The last-cited rhyme, in particular, shows the methods of an imitator writing down rhymes in his notebook for future re-use. In Shakespeare's *Lucrece* the rhymes occur in a stanza where Tarquin is

being made to articulate the lasting shame that this deed would bring on himself and his family:

> Yea though I die the scandale will survive
> And be an eie-sore in my golden *coate*:
> Some lothsome dash the Herrald will contrive,
> To cipher me how fondlie I did *dote*:
> That my posteritie sham'd with the *note*
> Shall curse my bones. (*RL*, 204-9)

52 Here the rhyme words are an integral part of the heraldic conceit, in which a mark of disgrace was placed in the escutcheons of those persons who 'discourteously used a widow, maid, or wife, against her will' (Rollins 1938, p. 139, citing Malone 1780 and Knight 1841). This mark took the form of a 'dash' or 'abatement ... denoting some ungentleman-like dishonorable ... stains in the Bearer' (*ibid*., citing Guillim 1610), a 'note' or reminder of dishonour. In *A Lover's Complaint* the rhyme words faintly recall the heraldic metaphor, but in the unlikely context of a 'Nun' in her cloister:

> Lo this device was sent me from a Nun,
> Or Sister sanctified of holiest *note*,
> Which late her noble suit in court did shun,
> Whose rarest havings made the blossoms *dote*.
> For she was sought by spirits of ritchest *cote*,
> But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
> To spend her living in eternall love. (*LC*, 232-8)

53 Readers will instantly recognize this poet's characteristic tautology and vagueness: 'a Nun, / Or Sister' momentarily leaves one unsure whether the second noun is clarificatory or tautological; the connotations of 'sanctified' are repeated in 'holiest note', where 'note' has no specific meaning. 'Which' and 'Whose' refer back to the subject, the 'Nun, / Or Sister', and although editors have strained themselves to gloss 'rarest havings' and 'made the blossoms dote', both phrases are irredeemably opaque, especially compared to the simple clarity of the *Lucrece* passage. Finally, the poet's desire to alliterate, whether appropriately or not, accounts for the equally vague 'sought by *spirits*' – are they not men? – 'of ritchest cote', where the epithet may confuse readers into thinking that the 'cote' is an item of clothing, not a heraldic term. But at least the poet managed to re-use the triple rhyme 'cote' / 'dote' / 'note'.

54 MacDonald Jackson recently cast doubt on the validity of some technical statistical tests used by Elliott and Valenza, which found that *A Lover's Complaint* had 'too many' unique or rare words, on the grounds that this was 'a case where mechanical counting is less informative than hands-on analysis of the poem's vocabulary ...' (Jackson 2004, p. 270). I should like to invoke the same principle to perform a 'hands-on analysis' of some features of the use of rhymes in this poem which seem to me unShakespearian. I have already observed that its author had difficulties with word-order and syntax as he formed his utterance into iambic pentameters and a seven-line stanza having five rhymes. In one stanza he was forced to use a rhyme-word twice, 'makes' / 'takes' / 'takes' (107-10), and in several places he had to repeat a rhyme used not long before. Thus the rhyme 'heart' / 'art' in lines 142/145 recurs as 'art' / 'heart' at lines 174-5. The poet rhymed 'eies' and 'lies' in lines 50/52, and again as 'lies' / 'eies' in lines 288/90. He rhymed 'grace' and 'place' in lines 261/3, and again some fifty lines later (316/8). Another rhyme pressed into service within a rather short space is 'eie' / 'flie' / 'eye' (274-50), which recurs as 'eye' / 'flye' at lines 323/5. The most blatant instance of recycling a rhyme is the pair 'find' / 'minde' (88-9), which turns up again within 50 lines as 'mind' / 'find' (135/7), and within

another fifty lines as 'mind' / 'find' (184/7). To re-use a rhyme eleven times within a poem of only 329 lines, or once every 30 lines, displays a lack of invention of which, I believe, Shakespeare was never guilty.

55 Elsewhere the poet of *A Lover's Complaint* used too much invention, one might say, when deploying his rhymes. That is, in two places the exigencies of rhyme caused him to invent a word. When the betrayed woman recalls her seducer's beauty, she hyperbolizes by invoking the Garden of Eden:

> For on his visage was in little drawne,
> What largenesse thinkes in parradise was *sawne*. (90-1; my italics)

56 As already noted, Malone suggested that the italicized word meant: 'seen. This irregular participle, which was forced upon the writer by the rhime, is, I believe, used by no other writer' (*cit*. Rollins 1938, p. 342). But a competent poet does not have rhymes 'forced' upon him; he controls them, always striving to link sound and sense. Despite editors proposing different derivations, such as the verbs 'to sow' and 'to saw', in order to save Shakespeare's reputation – Collier objected in his 1843 edition that 'Surely ... [the need of a rhime] could hardly be Shakespeare's reason for using so irregular and unprecedented a participle [for *seen*]' (*ibid*.) – there is no doubt that the poet meant 'seen', and was forced to this desperate measure by having no alternative expression to fall back on. Revealingly, he had found in *The Rape of Lucrece* the rhyme words 'draw' / 'saw' (1672-3), and 'du sublime au ridicule n'est qu'un pas'. The author of *A Lover's Complaint* caught himself in another enforced neologism when recording the woman's self-defence of having capitulated to her tempter:

> Who young and simple would not be so *loverd* (320; my italics)

57 The rhyme-scheme he had chosen had already given him 'coverd' and 'hoverd', so at this point he evidently could not think of anything better than turning the noun 'lover' into a past participle, a singularly ugly creation. To have been forced to make two such distortions of the English language in a short poem, due to a lack of invention, is not something we could attribute to Shakespeare.

## VI

58 The answer to the question posed in my title is: 'no!' Shakespeare did not write *A Lover's Complaint*, and the sooner it is removed from his canon, the better. The real author, as I have argued, is the prolific but mediocre poet and writing-master, John Davies of Hereford.[33] But that is another story.

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## NOTES

**1.** This essay derives from my book, *Shakespeare,* A Lover's Complaint*, and John Davies of Hereford*, copyright Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2007).

**2.** See Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author. A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford, 2002).

**3.** See Gilles Monsarrat, '*A Funeral Elegy*: Ford, W.S., and Shakespeare', *Review of English Studies*, 53 (2002): 187-203, and Brian Vickers, *'Counterfeiting' Shakespeare. Evidence, Authorship, and John Ford's* Funerall Elegye (Cambridge, 2002).

**4.** For details of their printing and publishing activities see A.W. Pollard & G.R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad*, Second edition, ed. W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London, 1976-91), vol. 3, 'Index 1: Printers and Publishers', p. 58, 168.

**5.** Colin Burrow, 'Life and Work in Shakespeare's Poems', *PBA*, 97 (1998): 15-50, at p. 48. Burrow points out that 'Thorpe otherwise only signed prefatory matter for volumes whose authors were dead ... or out of the country' (p. 49). It is also significant that the only other sonnet collection lacking an authorial dedication is the pirated version of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591), 'an edition which was called in, and which is manifestly the printed offshoot of a manuscript which walked away from its rightful owner' (p. 41).

**6.** W. W. Greg, 'The Copyright of *Hero and Leander*', *Library*, 4th series, 24 (1944): 165-74, at p. 170-1.

**7.** See Kathleen Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London, 1997), p. 155, and David J. Kathman, 'Thomas Thorpe' in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2005). In the limited space available to him Mr. Kathman gives space to the unconvincing theories of Donald W. Foster (by which Thorpe's dedication to 'the onlie begetter' of the *Sonnets* was addressed to Shakespeare himself, which implies that 'our ever-living poet' would refer to God), and follows Foster in seeing Thorpe as an entirely honest tradesman. However, Kathman conveniently passes over Thorpe's 1603 appropriation of another printer's copy, his pirated 1611 collection, *The Odcombian Banquet* (which Kathman describes as 'lighter fare'), and the mis-ascription of *A Funerall Elegy* (1612) to 'W.S.'. As I pointed out in letters to *The Times Literary Supplement* (17 December 2004, 21 January 2005), it is scandalous that a scholarly publication as the *ODNB* should include such an incomplete and misleading account. Several correspondents drew attention to instances of errors and bias in other articles: see the 'Letters to the Editor' in the issues between 10 December 2004 and 11 February 2005.

**8.** Burrow, 'Life and Work', p. 49-50.

**9.** David Frost, *The School of Shakespeare. The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama 1600-1642* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 261.

**10.** MacDonald P. Jackson, *Studies in Attribution. Middleton and Shakespeare* (Salzburg, 1979), p. 171-2.

**11.** See Brian Vickers, *'Counterfeiting' Shakespeare*, p. 69-78.

**12.** *Cit.* Donald W. Foster, *Elegy by W. S. A Study in Attribution* (Newark, NJ, 1989), p. 72.

**13.** Vickers, *'Counterfeiting' Shakespeare*, p. xxi.

**14.** Jackson has recently given Thorpe a licence for good conduct: 'The internal evidence [for Shakespeare's authorship of *A Lover's Complaint*] carries considerable weight: the poem is included within Thomas Thorpe's 1609 quarto', is attributed to Shakespeare, 'and Thorpe could have had no commercial motive for fraudulently adding *A Lover's Complaint* to a volume that would have sold just as well without it; he was, in any case, a reputable publisher, whose dealings with Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, appear to have been perfectly honourable': '"A Lover's Complaint" Revisited', *Shakespeare Studies*, 32 (2002): 267-94, at p. 272.

**15.** J. W. Mackail, 'A Lover's Complaint', *Essays and Studies*, 3 (1912): 51-70.

**16.** Kenneth Muir, '"A Lover's Complaint"'. A Reconsideration', in Muir, *Shakespeare the Professional and Related Studies* (London, 1973), p. 204-19; and MacDonald P. Jackson, *Shakespeare's 'A Lover's Complaint': its date and authenticity* (Auckland, 1965).

**17.** Alfred Hart, 'Vocabularies of Shakespeare's Plays', and 'The Growth of Shakespeare's Vocabulary', *Review of English Studies*, 19 (1943): 128-40 and 242-54.

**18.** Charles Barber, *Early Modern English* (London, 1976); revised edn., Edinburgh 1997.

**19.** Jürgen Schäfer, *Shakespeares Stil: Germanisches und romanisches Vokabular* (Frankfurt, 1973), p. 158 note; A.C. Partridge, *A Substantive Grammar of Shakespeare's Nondramatic texts* (Charlottesville, VA, 1976); Bryan Garner, 'Shakespeare's Latin Neologisms', *Shakespeare Studies*, 15 (1982): 149-70, repr. in V. Salmon and E. Burgess, *Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1987), p. 207-28.

**20.** See Hyder E. Rollins's superb New Variorum edition of Shakespeare's *Poems* (Philadelphia, 1938), for the text of *A Lover's Complaint* (p. 333-66), the edition used here, with an invaluable Appendix of 'Scholarly Opinion and Criticism' (p. 584-603). The Gollancz quotation is on p. 591. This work will be cited as 'Rollins 1938', and the abbreviated references to the poem will be to *LC*.

**21.** My quotations are from Richard A. McCabe (ed.), *Edmund Spenser. The Shorter Poems* (London, 1999).

**22.** 'Echoes of Spenser's *Prothalamion* as evidence against an early date for Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint*', *Notes and Queries*, 235 (1990): 180-82.

**23.** See Vickers, *op.cit.* in note 1, chapter 3 for further documentation of the poem's borrowings from Spenser's *Complaints*.

**24.** See, e.g., Götz Schmitz, *Die Frauenklage: Studien zur elegischen Verserzählung in der englischen Literatur des Spätmittelalters und der Renaissance* (Tübingen, 1984), translated as *The fall of women in early English narrative verse* (Cambridge, 1990), and J. Kerrigan (ed.), *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and 'Female Complaint'* (Oxford, 1991).

**25.** My quotations are from the text in Rollins 1938.

**26.** Cf. also lines 1156 ('with my body my poor soul's pollution'); 1172 ('Her sacred temple spotted, spoil'd, corrupted'); 1175 ('this blemish'd fort').

**27.** Jackson, 'Rhyming in *Pericles*: More Evidence of Dual Authorship', *Studies in Biliography*, 46 (1993): 239-49.

**28.** *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (New Haven and London, 1953), Appendix 3 (p. 399-495).

**29.** Jackson, 'Rhyming in *Pericles*', p. 245.

**30.** 'Rhymes in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*: Evidence of Date of Composition', *Notes and Queries*, 244 (1999): 213-19, and private email, 6 June 2004.

**31.** MacDonald Jackson has pointed out that the parallel goes further, since the preceding words in both poems are 'high or low' (*VA*, 1139), 'high and low' (*LC*, 21). To me, this is the sign of an imitator at work.

**32.** 'See Vickers, *op. cit.* in note 1, chap. 4.

**33.** See note 1.

## RÉSUMÉS

Le seul témoin à affirmer que Shakespeare était l'auteur de « A Lover's Complaint » est Thomas Thorpe, qui le fait dans ses *Sonnets* de 1609. Cependant, il existe suffisamment de preuves sur ses façons retorses de se procurer des textes pour en faire un témoin plus que douteux. Une lecture attentive du poème révèle de nombreux éléments non-shakespeariens.

The only witness to Shakespeare's authorship of "A Lover's Complaint" is Thomas Thorpe, who claimed as much in his 1609 *Sonnets*. However, enough evidence exists of Thorpe's devious ways of procuring copy for him to be regarded as a less than reliable witness. A careful reading of the poem reveals many unShakespearian elements.

# AUTEUR

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