SHAKESPEARE, *A LOVER’S COMPLAINT*, AND JOHN DAVIES OF HEREFORD

When Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* were published in 1609 a poem called *A Lover’s Complaint* was included by the publisher, Thomas Thorpe, who was notorious for several irregular publications. Many scholars have doubted its authenticity, but recent editions of the *Sonnets* have accepted it as Shakespeare’s work. Now Brian Vickers, in the first full study of the poem, shows it to be un-Shakespearian both in its language and in its attitude to women. It is awkwardly constructed and uses archaic Spenserian diction, including many unusual words that never occur in Shakespeare. It frequently repeats stock phrases and rhymes, distorts normal word order far more often and more clumsily than Shakespeare did, while its attitude to female frailty is moralizing and misogynistic. By close analysis and comparison, Professor Vickers attributes the poem to John Davies of Hereford (1565–1618), a famous calligrapher and writing master who was also a prolific poet. This book will redefine the Shakespeare canon.

SHAKESPEARE, A LOVER’S COMPLAINT, AND JOHN DAVIES OF HEREFORD

BRIAN VICKERS
For Helen
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Reproduced by permission of the Syndics, Cambridge University Library  page 14

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(1612). Reproduced by permission of the British Library  21
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Abbreviations

WORKS BY JOHN DAVIES

For a detailed list of poem titles within the main collections see the Bibliography on pp. 307–24.

BV  Bien Venu (1606)
CP ‘Commendatory Poems’, in Grosart 1878, vol. ii (separately paginated)
EC ‘An Eclogue between yong Willy the singer of his native Pastorals, and old Wernocke his friend’ (1614)
HE Humours Heav’n on Earth (1609)
HR The Holy Roode (1609)
MI Microcosmos (1603)
MM Mirum in Modum (1602)
MS The Muse’s Sacrifice (1612)
MT The Muses Teares (1613)
SF The Scourge of Folly (1611)
SH A Select Second Husband for Sir Thomas Overburie’s Wife, now a Matchlesse Widow (1616)
ST Summa Totialis (1607)
UP Uncollected poems (see Appendix 2)
WB Wits Bedlam (1617)
WP Wittes Pilgrimage (1605?)

OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

LC A Lover’s Complaint
LION Literature Online, a web resource: ProQuest UK http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk
RL Shakespeare, The Rape of Lucrece
VI Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis
### List of Abbreviations

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

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<td>MacDonald P. Jackson, <em>Shakespeare’s A Lover’s Complaint</em>: Its Date and Authenticity (Auckland, New Zealand, 1965)</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Charles Driscoll Murphy, ‘John Davies of Hereford’, PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1940</td>
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List of abbreviations

Rollins 1938  

STC  

Vickers 1999  