

A4 Courts scorne, states disgracing

Notes. This attack on Raleigh is linked with Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, although the case for his authorship is weak, and the attribution to the Earl may simply reflect his notorious hostility towards Raleigh. One manuscript copy suggests that it circulated as early as 1595, predating the second and final rupture between Essex and Raleigh in 1597 (DeVere 107-08). This makes it unlikely that Essex himself wrote this riposte, although it is conceivable that the anonymous circulation of “Goe Soule the bodies guest” provided the Earl with an opportunity to vent his own political frustrations in a way which enabled him to cast himself as the champion of political orthodoxy. Regardless of its authorship, this verse scorns the content and the author of “The Lie” almost stanza by stanza. It is answered in kind in (“Courts commender states mantayner”).

“Another answeare thought to bee made by R. Essex”

Courts scorne, states disgracinge

Potentates scoffe, goverments defacinge

Prelates nippe, churches unhallowinge

Artes injurye, vertues debasinge

Ages monster honours wastinge

Beauties blemish, favours blastinge

Witts excremente, wisdoms vomitte

Physickes scorne, lawes commette¹

Fortunes childe,² natures defiler

Justices revenger, frindshippes beguiler

Such is the songe, such is the author

Woorthy to bee rewarded with a halter.³

5

10

Source. Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 212, fol. 91r

Other known sources. DeVere 60; Bodleian MS Ashmole 781, p. 164; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 172, fol. 13r; Rosenbach MS 1083/15, p. 34

¹ *lawes commette*: comets were seen as portents of major events. This phrase seems to imply inevitable legal retribution against “the author” rather than disaster for the legal system.

² *Fortunes childe*: Raleigh was often associated with Fortune. To his critics, his success in winning Elizabeth’s favour was otherwise incomprehensible and the fortunate nature of this success was emphasized to indicate that it was undeserved.

³ *halter*: a noose for a hanging.
