D15 Heere lyes interred wormes meate

Notes. The author of this “invictive Epitaph” (Crum H832) on Robert Cecil was identified at the time as the Welsh-speaking Shropshire poet Richard Edward John (Owen 4-5, citing PRO STAC 8/205/21, 22). This much-copied poem is discussed by McRae (Literature 61-62).

Heere lyes interred wormes meate
Robin\(^1\) the little that was so greate
Not Robbin goodfellow,\(^2\) nor Robbin-hood\(^3\)
But Robbin the Divell that never did good\(^4\)
He studied nothing but mischevous ends
Trickes for his foes, traynes\(^5\) for his frends,
A cruell monster sent by fate
To devoure both cuntrye, king, and state
I care not, nor I cannott tell
Whether his soule be in heaven or Hell
Butt sure I am they have earthed the foxe\(^6\)
That stunke alive, and dyde of the poxe.\(^7\)

Source. BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 33v

Other known sources. Osborne 87; “Poems from a Seventeenth-Century Manuscript” 40; Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, p. 182; Bodleian MS Ashmole 1463, p. 13; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10, fol. 97r; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 155, p. 70; Bodleian MS Tanner 299, fol. 12r; BL MS Harley 6947, fol. 211r; V&A MS D25.F.39, fol. 71r; NCRO MS IL 4304; Folger MS V.a.339, fol. 258r

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1 Robin: common diminutive or nickname for Robert.
2 Robbin goodfellow: the mischeivous goblin of English folklore.
3 Robbin-hood: the legendary English outlaw.
Francis Osborne’s printed version and some earlier manuscript copies have an interesting variant for this line, giving it as “But Robin th’Encloser of Hatfield wood” (Osborne 88; Croft, “Reputation” 52).

5  traynes: deceits.

6  foxe: referring here to Cecil’s political cunning.

7  poxe: syphilis.