

F11 Heere lyes one nowe not worth despising

Notes. John Rous, the Suffolk parson, ardent consumer of news and ambivalent collector of libels, received a copy of this poem in April 1633 with an attribution to “Sir W. R.”, possibly Sir Walter Raleigh (70, 72). The poem’s hostility to Overbury, and lack of any allusion to the charge he had been murdered, fits with a composition date after Overbury’s death in September 1613 but before the September-October 1615 revelations that he had been poisoned.

“Upon Sir Thomas Overburie who dyed in the Tower”

Heere lyes one nowe not worth despising

Who Persian-like worshipt the Sunne ryseing¹

Who Courtier-like embrac’d the brave

Nowe Lazarus-like lyes in his grave

Who Stoicke-like contemn’d a wife²

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God sheild heereafter it breed noe strife

Nowe read his fate though hee weere brave & bold

Yet Like a Jewe was bought, and sold³

O burie him, burie him quoth the higher power⁴

Least hee poyson court cittie, and tower

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And was it not sinne to burie him then

Who liveing stunck⁵ in the face of Men.

Source. Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 6

Other known sources. Rous 72; BL Add. MS 22959, fol. 49r

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¹ *Persian-like...ryseing*: refers to Overbury’s alliance and friendship with the rising royal favourite (the “Sunne”) Robert Carr.

² *contemn’d a wife*: Overbury was the author of a stereotypically misogynistic poem against marriage, “A Wife”, first printed early in 1614, but possibly known earlier in manuscript copies. Overbury’s

rejection of marriage is here compared to the philosophical practice of stoicism.

³ *Like a Jewe...sold*: this presumably refers at least in part to Overbury's alleged fiscal corruption (the taking of bribes, etc.). The Jewish comparison probably works because of the contemporary anti-semitic association between Jews and corrupt fiscal practices.

⁴ *the higher power*: could refer either to James I or to divine providence.

⁵ *stunck*: this may well simply refer generally to Overbury's moral corruption, but it may also extend the "jew-like" comparison of an earlier line by deploying the anti-semitic myth that Jews gave off a peculiar and offensive stench (Shapiro 36-7).
