

H11 The wealth he gott to make his meanes greate

Notes. The sole extant copy of this attack on Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, is in the commonplace book of William Davenport of Bramhall, Cheshire (CCRO MS CR 63/2/19). The poem draws heavily from “Poore Pilote thou hast lost thy Pinke” and alludes to the final line from the 1613 version of “A page, a knight, a viscount and an Erle”. The fact that the libel notes that Carr’s “Ladie” was “before” described as “whore, wfyfe, widdowe, wiche”, suggests that Davenport himself might have penned this poem, alluding in the process to the 1613 poem transcribed earlier in his commonplace book. Bellany (Politics 102, 177) discusses this poem’s authorship and its representation of Carr.

The wealth he gott to make his meanes greate
not from his purchase came, but Kingelye seate¹
the land his late made Lordship did possese
was Westmorelands & Raweleys knowne distress²
the honore that his Lordship did inheritte
was Herefords purchase³ not his proper merritte
the Spouse he had to grace his nuptiall bedd
was Essex wyfe without a maidenheadd.⁴
she was the Ladie kyld his leacherouss Iche
before described, whore, wyfe, widdowe, wiche,
the witte whereby he gotte all but his wyffe
was his poore Knight,⁵ whome he bereft of lyffe
this wyfe undide what all those did before
and left him Lorde of nothings but a whore.

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Source. CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 11v

H11

¹ *Kingelye seate*: i.e. by the King’s gift.

² *Westmorelands & Raweles*: James I gave Carr land confiscated by the Crown from the Earls of

Westmoreland (in north-east England) and from Sir Walter Raleigh (in Sherborne, Dorset).

³ *Herefords purchase*: the exact meaning of this allusion is unclear. Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, was also 4th Viscount Hereford, and Carr (as the next couplet makes clear) took Essex's wife. If this couplet also refers to Essex, it is not clear what else Carr was supposed to have taken from him. Another reading, however, would see "Hereford" as a mistake for "Hertford". Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford (d.1621), was the son of the attainted Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, so this couplet could refer to the Earldom of Somerset granted to Carr in November 1613.

⁴ *the Spouse...maidenheadd*: referring to Carr's marriage to Frances Howard after the nullity of her marriage to Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex. During the nullity hearings, Frances Howard had been physically inspected to prove her virginity; few, however, believed her chaste.

⁵ *poore Knight*: Sir Thomas Overbury.
