

H12 Why how now Robine? discontented quite

Notes. The sole extant copy of this savagely vitriolic poem on Carr survives in William Davenport's commonplace book (CCRO MS CR 63/2/19). Lindley (189-190) explores the poem in his analysis of the contemporary images of Frances Howard seducing Robert Carr into corruption and crime, while Bellany (Politics 167, 175, 237) discusses the poem's depictions of Carr, Overbury, the betrayal of friendship, and the need for violent retribution.

Why how now Robine?¹ discontented quite
hath greatness with the playd the skytische Jayde²
hath fortune kyste thee, & now doth she byte
and of her alter thee her footstoole make
hath she taught the to shew a tumblinge cast 5
and raysed thee highe to breake thy neck at last.
O noe I wronge her twas not shee that threwe
thee on thy necke or was thy ruins cause
but lustfull leacher twas thy self that drewe
thy selfe into confutions Jawes 10
when thou didst first touch that vyle castol³ vyce
thy wronge stylde Countess,⁴ Englands Cokeatryce.⁵
what new strange maddness did possese thy mynde
what Franticke humor haunted thee, what fitte?
that thou to launch noe other place could fynd 15
but there where thou wert shewer thy barke⁶ to splytt
had the whole Ocean but one dangerouse shelfe
and wouldst thou neades runn there and ground thy selfe.
did Englands fruitfull bosome yeald such store
of vertuose plants, and trulye noble stemes 20
and yett must thou neades couple with a whore
to gaine base dross, despicinge pretiouce Jemes
loosinge thy share in heaven and earth and all

to tast a bitt which tasted was with galle
 And yett did honor give the so deare a frend⁷ 25
 whose love streames towards thee soe much did flowe
 that he foreseinge thy sadd fall, did spend
 his braynes deepest dryft to stopp thy overthrowe
 O, yett couldst thou conspire to cutt his throate
 who was thy greatness, trewest Antydote.⁸ 30
 And thorroughe his harte did digge the out awaye
 with poysons pickaxe to injoye thy lust
 who was a maine cheefe pillar which didde staye
 thee on that throwne from which thou now art thrust
 And who spent all his wisdome to the dreggs 35
 to keepe thy state upright uppon itt leggs
 and yett couldst thou betraye him, O vyle fact
 whose horred stayne can never be out worne
 how worthie for it arte thou to be ract
 and pecemayle in some fearefull Engine torne 40
 that men maye saye behould shuch was his ende
 that for his whores sake murthered his derest frend
 ye therefore Impe & dyinge lett thy goste
 carrie thy Countess with itt quicke to hell
 that when shee arivethe at the Sulphrie coste 45
 Shee to the fynds the tragedie maye tell
 divills, not men are fitte to heare this murther
 it is foule, O then, cease pen and wryte no further.

Source. CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 12r

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¹ *Robine*: diminutive for Robert.

² *Jayde*: jade; a horse.

³ *castol*: unclear.

⁴ *Countess*: Frances Howard.

⁵ *Cokeatryce*: cockatrice; a serpent and/or a whore.

⁶ *barke*: boat.

⁷ *so deare a frend*: Sir Thomas Overbury, who was believed to have opposed Carr's liaison with Frances Howard.

⁸ *Antydote*: antidote. Here the meaning is that Overbury's counsel counteracted the dangers inherent in Carr's ascent to power.
