

## H18 from Cathernes docke theer launcht A pritty Pinke

*Notes.* This poem appears to be an adaptation and extension of a libel originally written around the time of the marriage of Robert Carr and Frances Howard in December 1613 (see “From Katherins dock there launcht a pinke”). Like other poems, this libel depicts Frances Howard’s alleged sexual transgressions through an extended series of puns based on the organizing metaphor of the Countess as a leaky, wandering boat. Bellany (Politics 155, 175) discusses this 1615 version of the poem in his analyses of representations of Frances Howard, Robert Carr and Sir Thomas Overbury.

### “On the Countess of Sommersett”

from Cathernes docke<sup>1</sup> theer launcht a pritty Pinke<sup>2</sup>

Leake<sup>3</sup> she did often, butt did never sinke,

in falling downe to Essex<sup>4</sup> pleasant shore

long she exspected rigging, and yards<sup>5</sup> store

but out of hope theer to obteine content

with wind in Poope,<sup>6</sup> away she flyes for Kent

and faine she would att Rochester<sup>7</sup> cast anchor

but hideous dangers, and chill feares much blank her

beside to Cross good Canterburyes<sup>8</sup> house

and London<sup>9</sup> too, did cross the Ocean lawes

yet winchester averd she might, and Ely<sup>10</sup>

by scriptum est<sup>11</sup> would prove itt, did not he ly

well wheer she would be, they tow tugd her thether

Maugre<sup>12</sup> the sea, the Tide, the winde, the wether,

them Som-are-sett<sup>13</sup> to Caulke, and fresh her beake<sup>14</sup>

make yare<sup>15</sup> her geare<sup>16</sup> new yard<sup>17</sup> her, stop her leake

and bravly furnisht now with all munition

to sea she goes upon an expedition

her Canvas spreading, when she was inclind too

up she would fetch, whome ere she had a mind too

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clap him a boord, take the best things he had  
and in exchang give him some oreworne bad<sup>18</sup>  
Manny a Gallant Top, foreyard, and mast<sup>19</sup>  
her rude incounters layde in helpless wast  
and now her beake comaunds what ere she please 25  
without controule even over all the seas,  
in triumph thus she revels, till debate  
arose betweene his master and his mate<sup>20</sup>  
the Pinke was tender sided and unsteady<sup>21</sup>  
att every Gust to turne her keele<sup>22</sup> up ready 30  
the mate diserning that, did sore distast her  
his thoughts, her faults, discovers to the Master  
forwarning him such tempest weer a bruing  
as not to leave her brought apparant ruine  
the master wholly on his Pinke enamour'd 35  
into his head could have no counsell hamerd  
still he would keepe her, like her, love her best  
but doth in hart his honnest Mate detest  
consults with his belov'd, a fitt time watches  
when by a tricke they clapt him under hatches<sup>23</sup> 40  
wheer fed with art composed Tart<sup>24</sup> he lay  
tell att A port hole<sup>25</sup> he was made away  
thus, Over-bury-ed<sup>26</sup> head and eares in water  
wast not great pittie she should act this slaughter  
this Treacherous practise Neptune<sup>27</sup> winnowed out 45  
and vowed Just vengance all the seas aboute  
the grudging winds with angry murmer swell  
and sad disasters in blacke Stormes fortell  
no rest, no refuge the proude Pinke wude have  
tost, tumbled, rumbled on the boysterous wave 50  
her ends, her frends prevailes not, nor her prayers

up she was cast att the black fryers stayres<sup>28</sup>  
 wher in requitall of his former Jadeing<sup>29</sup>  
 ransackt and rifled, mard & bard from trading  
 on Ground she sitts, and tho as yett she splitts not 55  
 crackt and halfe rackt, for sea againe shees fitt not  
 nay though her owners safly of should wind her  
 no man a live would ever venture in her  
 but her deare master close unto a mountaine  
 was driven A shore nigh Ignoramus fountaine<sup>30</sup> 60  
 from whence the stormes increasing, fury strooke him  
 downe to a Moore<sup>31</sup> wher now you may goe looke him.

**Source.** Huntington MS HM 198, 1.19-21

**Other known sources.** “Poems from a Seventeenth-Century Manuscript” 74; Bodleian Rawl. Poet. 84, fol. 68r

## H18

<sup>1</sup> *Catherines docke*: a multi-layered pun, this refers both to St. Catherine’s dock on the river Thames in London, an area of town Lindley (118) notes was “notorious for brewhouses and taverns, and therefore a haunt of prostitutes”, and to Frances Howard’s mother, Catherine Howard, Countess of Suffolk, from whose “dock, rump or vagina”, Frances was born (launched).

<sup>2</sup> *Pinke*: sailing ship.

<sup>3</sup> *Leake*: leakiness was a common metaphor for female sexual insatiability, and lack of bodily control.

<sup>4</sup> *Essex*: Frances Howard’s first husband, Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex; and the English county.

<sup>5</sup> *yards*: a bawdy pun, yard being both a spar on a ship’s mast and common slang for penis.

<sup>6</sup> *wind in Poope*: literally with wind blowing astern the boat, but probably with bawdy innuendo here.

<sup>7</sup> *Rochester*: both the town in Kent, and Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester since 1611.

<sup>8</sup> *Canterburyes*: George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had opposed the Essex nullity in 1613.

- <sup>9</sup> *London*: John King, Bishop of London, who had opposed the Essex nullity in 1613.
- <sup>10</sup> *winchester...Ely*: Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, and Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Ely; both bishops voted to grant Frances Howard a nullity.
- <sup>11</sup> *scriptum est*: literally, it is written; here refers to the Bishop of Ely's claim to find legal warrant to justify the nullity.
- <sup>12</sup> *Maugre*: in spite of.
- <sup>13</sup> *Some-are-sett*: some are set; and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset.
- <sup>14</sup> *beake*: projection from the prow of a ship.
- <sup>15</sup> *make yare*: make ready.
- <sup>16</sup> *geare*: a bawdy pun; gear could mean both equipment and genitals.
- <sup>17</sup> *yard*: a bawdy pun; yard could mean both a spar for a mast and a penis.
- <sup>18</sup> *some oreworne bad*: syphilis.
- <sup>19</sup> *Top, foreyard, and mast*: all parts of a ship; all standing in here as bawdy puns for the men Frances Howard has seduced and conquered.
- <sup>20</sup> *master and his mate*: the master of the ship is Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset; his mate, Sir Thomas Overbury.
- <sup>21</sup> *tender sided and unsteady*: in nautical terms, the boat had weak timbers on its sides and sailed unsteadily; in sexual terms, Frances Howard was promiscuous and uncontrolled.
- <sup>22</sup> *keele*: in nautical terms, the timber on the underside of a boat; in sexual terms, the underside of Frances Howard's body.
- <sup>23</sup> *tricke...under hatches*: Carr was alleged to have engineered Overbury's imprisonment in 1613 by tricking him into refusing a royal order to assume an ambassadorship.
- <sup>24</sup> *art composed Tart*: the murderers sent the imprisoned Overbury tarts laced with poison.
- <sup>25</sup> *att A port-hole*: Overbury was allegedly finished off by a poisoned enema—the port-hole here is his anus.
- <sup>26</sup> *Over-bury-ed*: overburied. This pun on Overbury's name was quite widely made at the time.

<sup>27</sup> *Neptune*: god of the sea, and here probably flattering James I as the discoverer of the truth surrounding Overbury's death.

<sup>28</sup> *black fryers stayres*: stairs down to the Thames in London. Before being sent to the Tower, Frances Howard was placed under house arrest in the Blackfriars district.

<sup>29</sup> *Jadeing*: jading, playing the jade; and here probably meaning sexual promiscuity.

<sup>30</sup> *Ignoramus fontaine*: the meaning of this is not entirely clear. After a day confined in his chamber in Whitehall, Carr was moved to house arrest in the residence of the Dean of Westminster, and it may be that the Ignoramus fountain is associated with or near that house. For other possible connotations, however, see "There was an ould ladd rode on an ould padd", note 21.

<sup>31</sup> *a Moore*: in nautical terms, a mooring place, but alluding here to Carr's imprisonment in the Tower under the custody of the new Lieutenant, Sir George More.

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