

H23 Sir you are one of those, who dare commend

Notes. A number of poems commending Overbury were composed and circulated in 1615 and 1616 in the wake of the scandal surrounding the revelations of the true circumstances of his death. Many of these commendatory epitaphs include libellous attacks on Robert Carr and Frances Howard, but we can also read the idealized Overbury conjured in these verses as a kind of yardstick against which contemporaries measured Carr and found him wanting. Three of the four Overbury poems collected here circulated both in manuscript and in printed form in the 1616 editions of Sir Thomas Overbury His Wife. This poem, however, survives only in this fragmentary transcription that seems unquestionably incomplete.

“To a friend of Sir Tho: Overburyes”

Sir you are one of those, who dare commend

A worthy though a lamentable friend;

Your tongue is so triumphant, when it saies

Any thing in dead Overburyes praise,

That wee could wish you alwayes might survive

If but to keepe his Epitaphe alive.

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Oh, you doe nobly to maintaine the Truth:

If¹ second you. Sir Thomas was a youth

That had a Mint of Witt, a mint of money,

And master was of both that gathred honey

From others gall, and made himselfe good sport

To see how he was envyed in the Courte;

That lovd King James, because King James lovd him²

And for noe other reason. that sawe dmime³

In maters of selfe profitt and selfe honnor,

That where hee mett a whore, cryd out upon her,

Although shee were a Ladie, or a Countesse,⁴

That did not scatter but well place his Counties,⁵

That with his manlike Beauty, as he went,

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Ravisht beholders; that held nought mispent 20
Or to relieve the Poore or grace the Church;
That oft would plundge into a willing lurch
Rather then lett the mighty and the strong
Doe their weake lille⁶ harmelesse Neighbours wrong
That knew what twas to bee a favorit, 25

Source. Folger MS V.a.170, pp. 321-2

H23

¹ *If*: probable scribal error; read “I”.

² *King James lovd him*: the opposite, in fact, was true.

³ *dmime*: probable scribal error; read either “dimme” or “himme”.

⁴ *That where...Countesse*: these lines allude to Overbury’s attacks on Frances Howard as he tried to dissuade Robert Carr from contemplating marriage with her.

⁵ *Counties*: possibly “Counters”.

⁶ *lille*: little.
