

H27 The house of the Howards

Notes. This poem—which celebrates (somewhat prematurely) the fall of the Howard family at Court—does not explicitly dwell on the Overbury case. William Davenport, however, transcribed the libel as part of his materials on the Overbury affair (CCRO MS CR 63/2/19); and, indeed, there was much talk in 1615-16 that Lord Treasurer Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, consistently rumoured to be complicit in the Overbury murder, would soon follow his daughter, Frances, and his son-in-law, Robert Carr, into disgrace.

The house of the Howards

Is now growing towards

 Theire wonted declining

For that generation

Nere had moderation

 In theire sunne shining.

5

For when they are greate

They imprison and beate

 To make themselves awfull;

Yet ever and anone

Fate drives them upon

 Some instance unlawfull;

10

From whence itt doth arise

That wee see with oure eyes

 Theire quick revolution

They wax and they wayne

And that is the payne

 Of theire absolution.¹

15

Source. BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 70r

Other known sources. BL MS Harley 1221, fol. 74v; BL MS Harley 6038, fol. 18v; BL MS Harley 7316, fol. 5r; CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 10v

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¹ *absolution*: it is just possible that the choice of a word from the Roman Catholic penitential system is a deliberate allusion to the Howard family's reputation for crypto-popery.

