

Q2 Romes worst Philenis, and Pasiphaes dust

Notes. Of all the Castlehaven libels, this verse most nearly approximates the moralizing horror found in the prosecutorial descriptions of the Earl's alleged crimes. The poet insists that Castlehaven's sexual offences are, without the aid of royal justice, simply inexplicable, transcending even the worst acts recorded in classical mythology and biblical history. In our chosen source, this poem is attributed to "Jo: R:".

"Uppon the Lord Audleys¹ Convictio Aprill 1631"

Romes worst Philenis,² and Pasiphaes³ dust

Are now chast Fictions and noe longer lust

This wilder age hath monstred out a sinne

That vertues them and saints an Aretine⁴

Scorning to owe a studyed vice to times

example burnes out with more noble crimes

Such as weake Gibeahs Fire,⁵ or that loose Flame

Lot durst not looke at,⁶ want a sinne to name

This blacker engine⁷ is soe hardly scand

That vertue hath not witt to understand

How sinne can bee soe learned, that man should know

To rape himselfe and make one rape proove too⁸

That lust should grow more barren⁹ than the grave

it merrits, for to a wise man, and slave

And how at onc'd a strange incestuous love

Should both a Father and an husband proove

That soe high blood should prompt soe base a spirit

To gett an heir...to disinheritt¹⁰

If yet thy chast beleife cannot discern

The monster Know a King will make thee learne

whose justice thus the riddle doth untye

was such a crime for such an earle must dye

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15

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And yet this sinne above dispayre may sit
Since ther's a King¹¹ can pardon it

Source. Bodleian MS Ashmole 47, fols. 88v-89r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.97, p. 67; Bodleian MS Rawl. A. 346, fol. 141v; Beinecke MS Osborn b.125, fols. 38r

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¹ *Lord Audleys*: this is technically incorrect. Lord Audley was the title of Castlehaven's son, James Touchet.

² *Romes worst Philenis*: the lesbian Philaenis, attacked in several epigrams by the Roman poet Martial.

³ *Pasiphaes*: in Greek myth, Pasiphae, wife of King Minos, lusted for and then mated with a bull, later giving birth to the Minotaur.

⁴ *Aretine*: Pietro Aretino, author of the most notorious works of Renaissance pornography, the *Sonnetti lussuriosi* (1527) and the *Ragionamenti* (1534-36).

⁵ *Gibeahs Fire*: allusion to the biblical story of a travelling Levite's stay in Gibeah, where his concubine was brutally raped and murdered (Judges 19).

⁶ *Lot durst not looke at*: allusion to the story of God's destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). God allowed Lot and his family to flee Sodom before its destruction. As they fled, Lot's wife looked back at the burning cities and was turned into "a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19.26).

⁷ *blacker engine*: "black...Ænigma" is a variant reading (Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.97).

⁸ *To rape himself...proove too*: reference to Castlehaven's crime in commissioning the rape of his own wife. The line suggests that this bizarre action meant that Castlehaven was not only in effect raping himself, but also making one rape—Giles Broadway's actual physical assault on the Countess—into "two" rapes, one by Broadway, the other (by proxy) by Castlehaven.

⁹ *That lust should grow more barren*: perhaps an allusion to Castlehaven's alleged sodomy with his servant, Fitzpatrick.

¹⁰ *To gett an heir his blood to disinheritt*: one of the allegations against Castlehaven was that he had encouraged a servant, Henry Skipwith, to sleep with the Earl's own daughter-in-law, Lady Audley, in order to produce an illegitimate heir.

¹¹ *a King*: “a higher King”—i.e. God—is a variant, and preferable, reading (Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.97).
