

#### F4 From Katherins dock there launcht a pinke

*Notes.* Like “*Were itt nott a brutish crueltye*”, this libel on Frances Howard frames its vicious attack on the Countess’s sexual transgressions through a series of geographical and bawdy puns worked around the central metaphor of the Countess as a wandering boat. There are two versions of this poem. The shorter version was written around the time of Frances Howard’s second marriage, to the Earl of Somerset, in December 1613. A longer version (‘*from Cathernes docke theer launcht A pritty Pinke*’) was composed during the Overbury murder scandal of 1615-16. Both Lindley (117-18) and Bellany (Politics 154) discuss this 1613-14 version.

From Katherins dock<sup>1</sup> there launcht a pinke<sup>2</sup>

Which sore did leake,<sup>3</sup> yet did nott sinke

Ere while shee lay by Essex<sup>4</sup> shore

Expecting rigging, yards,<sup>5</sup> and store,

Butt all disasters to prevent

With winde in poepe<sup>6</sup> shee sayl’d to Kent

Att Rochester<sup>7</sup> shee anchor cast

Which Canterbury<sup>8</sup> did distaste

Butt Winchester with Eelyes<sup>9</sup> helpe

Did hale a shore this Lyons whelpe<sup>10</sup>

Weake was shee sided,<sup>11</sup> and did heele<sup>12</sup>

Butt Sum-ar-sett<sup>13</sup> to mend her keele,<sup>14</sup>

And stopp her leake,<sup>15</sup> and sheath her port<sup>16</sup>

And make her fitt for any sporte:

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**Source.** BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 71r

**Other known sources.** “Poems from a Seventeenth-Century Manuscript” 60; *Dr Farmer Chetham Manuscript* 2.121; Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, pp. 135 and 136; Bodleian MS Don. c.54, fol. 23r; Bodleian MS Firth d.7, fol. 151r; Bodleian MS Malone 19, p. 94; Bodleian MS Rawl. D. 1048, fol. 64v; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 18r; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 160, fol. 163r; BL Add. MS 34218, fol. 165r; BL Add. MS 61944, fol. 77v; BL MS Harley 1221, fol. 96v; BL MS Harley 6038, fol. 28v; BL MS Harley 6057, fol. 13v; BL MS Harley 7316, fol. 4r; BL MS Sloane 2023, fol. 60v; Nottingham MS

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- <sup>1</sup> *Katherins dock*: a multi-layered pun, this refers both to St. Catherine's dock on the River Thames in London, an area of town that 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 mast and common slang for a penis.
- <sup>6</sup> *winde 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> *Canterbury*: both the town in Kent, and George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury and an opponent of the Essex nullity.
- <sup>9</sup> *Winchester...Eelyes*: Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, and Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Ely, both voted to grant Frances Howard a nullity.
- <sup>10</sup> *Lyons whelp*: literally a lion's cub, but in this case also having several nautical overtones. A royal ship the "Lion's Whelp" was in service by at least 1603, and shortly thereafter was seized by its crew in a mutiny led by the future Barbary Coast pirate John Ward (Vitkus 25, 29); a "whelp" is also a nautical term referring to projections attached to the capstan; and, in the 1620s at least, "whelp" was also used as a name for a small boat.
- <sup>11</sup> *sided*: in nautical terms, the boat had weak timbers on its side. The last four lines of this poem describe the refitting of the boat, using language with clear bawdy innuendo that turns the refitting into a marital taming of the sexually loose Countess.
- <sup>12</sup> *heelee*: a ship that heels leans to one side.
- <sup>13</sup> *Sum-ar-sett*: "some are set", and Somerset; both the county and Robert Carr, who was elevated to the Earldom of Somerset shortly before marrying Frances Howard.
- <sup>14</sup> *keele*: the timber on the underside of the boat.

<sup>15</sup> *stopp her leake*: plug the leak in the bottom of the boat, and halt the Countess's leakiness, her sexual wandering and lack of bodily control.

<sup>16</sup> *sheath her port*: port has two nautical meanings, the left hand side of a boat (facing forward) or, as better fits the bawdy humour here, a hole in the side of a boat for loading and unloading goods or from which to fire cannon.