

H24 Once dead and twice a live; death could not frame

Notes. This poem is one of three commendatory epitaphs on Overbury that circulated simultaneously in print and manuscript. In the printed version, first published in the 1616 edition of *Sir Thomas Overbury His Wife*, the author is identified as “Jo. Fo.”—perhaps the playwright John Ford, author of a now lost book on the Overbury case.

“On Sir Tho Overbury”

Once dead and twice a live; death could not frame
a death, whose sting could kill his fame
he might have lived, had not the life which gave
life to his life, betraid him to his grave¹
if greatnes could consist in being good 5
his goodnes did add titles to his blood.
only unhappie in his lives last fate,
in that he liv'd so soone and die² so late;
alas, where to should men oppressed trust
when innocence cannot protect the Just? 10
his error was his fault, his truth his end,
noe enimie his ruine but his frend
cold frendshipp, where hott vows are but a breath
to guerdon³ poore simplicity with death:
was never man that felt the sence of greife 15
soe Overbury'd⁴ in a safe believe
believe? o cruell slaughter! tymes unbred
will say, who dies that is untymely dead,
by treachery of lust, or by disgrace
in frendship twas but Overburyes case, 20
which shall not more commend his truth then prove
theire guilt whoe were his opposites in love
rest happy men; and in thy spheare of awe

behold how Judgstice swaies the sworde of law
to weed out those whose hands inbrew'd in blood
Cropt off thy youth and flouer in the bud
sleepe in thy peace, thus happie hast thou prov'd
thou might'st dide more knowne, not more belov'd.

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Source. Folger MS V.a.162, fol. 14v

Other known sources. Overbury 2¶1v

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¹ *had not...grave*: this slightly convoluted passage refers to Overbury's betrayal by his friend Robert Carr. The theme of false friendship is taken up later in the poem, and is common in writings on the Overbury affair.

² *die*: probable scribal error; read "died".

³ *to guerdon*: to requite; to reward.

⁴ *Overbury'd*: i.e. over buried. This pun on Overbury's name was quite common.