

I16 Thou seest my tombe, Grey haire lye in this grave

Notes. This poem adopts Raleigh's voice and, unlike most of the epitaphs, engages with the circumstances of the failed Guiana expedition of 1617-18.

"Upon Sir Walter Rawleigh"

Thou seest my tombe, Grey haire lye in this grave
first a Comannder in my end a slave
to unhappy mens base Butcher,¹ to that wretch
eyes saw my one much honer'd body stretch.²

My thoughts perswaded mee Mars Larum bell³
his sword should mount mee, by the Axe I fell
wast for grand treason, neere demand for what
for my division hath decided that

5

Yet while I liv'd I prayd till that dire stroake
the passage of my breath and Conditt⁴ broake
God save the Kinge if I wrongd Spanish lawes⁵
with them, Right and religion pleade my cause

10

Lett not falce malice my true project spott
some have adventur'd (was not blanke their lott)⁶
for the weste Indies from the highest Kinge⁷
not from the west, all rich promotions springe

15

Companions, of Sticks you gott a towne⁸
I gott a blocke,⁹ and therewith gott a Crowne
of purest Gould¹⁰ (was the whole voyage lost)
No twas to my preferment to your Cost

20

Kicke not my urne heele Judge mee thats most just

(in lieu of oare)¹¹ Adventurers take my dust
the Lord will reunite, this earth doth keepe
mee slumbringe, dreame yee that my name doth sleepe

Source. BL MS Harley 6057, fol. 50v

Other known sources. Raleigh, *Poems* 196

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¹ *base Butcher*: the executioner.

² *body stretch*: reference to the posture of the body before beheading.

³ *Mars Larum bell*: the god of war's alarm bell.

⁴ *Conditt*: conduit; i.e. the neck and throat.

⁵ *Spanish lawes*: referring to Raleigh's alleged offences against the Spanish on the Guiana expedition.

⁶ *some have adventur'd...weste Indies*: allusion to the fact that the adventurers who accompanied Raleigh to Guiana contributed £30 to £50 each to the costs of the expedition. In effect, therefore, they invested in the voyage's financial success (i.e. the discovery of gold). Since the voyage failed to find gold, the adventurers' investment was like a "blanke...lott" in a lottery.

⁷ *highest Kinge*: God.

⁸ *a towne*: perhaps an allusion to the capture of the town of San Tomé in Guiana, which had been a mere stockade twenty years earlier.

⁹ *a blocke*: i.e. the executioner's block.

¹⁰ *Crowne of purest gould*: the crown of salvation and, perhaps, more daringly, a martyr's crown.

¹¹ *oare*: ore; i.e. the precious metals that the voyagers had hoped to find.