

Pi21 And art thou dead! who whilome thought'st thy state

Notes. This verse marries the conventional theme of the sudden death of a great man, with several specific allusions to Buckingham's scandalous reputation for lust, excess and luxury. The poem ends with the relatively sympathetic, though theologically awkward, hope that Buckingham might eventually be saved after a thousand years of suffering in purgatory.

And art thou dead! who whilome¹ thought'st thy state

To bee exempted from the power of Fate!

Thou, that but yesterday (illustrious bright,

And like the Sunne) did'st with thy pregnant light

Illuminate inferior Orbs! Shall death

5

Bereave thee, in a moment, of that breath

Whereby soe many liv'd? Did not thy hand

Monopolize the glorie of this land?

Did not thy smiles or frowns make Princes kneele?

Did not thyne Enemies thy Vengeance feelee?

10

Did not thy Atlas² shoulders seeme to beare

The pleasant burthen of this hæmispheare?

Or was thy power lesse in the watrie world?³

For, whether forreyne Armes, or billowes curl'd

Conspir'd the Merchants wreck; did they not bring

15

To thee a sweet and peacefull Offering?

The Sea thy power (her Neptune)⁴ oft did feelee,

Her fomie clouds submitting to thy keele.⁵

What though, Mars-like, to Pallas thou didst yeild?⁶

Yet thou of Venus⁷ ever had'st the Feild.

20

The Nymphes,⁸ whose browes bright wreathes of honour twine,

Judg'd thee to bee a Man neere halfe divine,

And freely would expose unto thy pleasure

The curious virtues of their hidden treasure.

Of honour, power, and pleasure, thou mightst bee 25
 To all the world a just Epitomie.
 Yet thou, even thou, like other Men art dead,
 And to th'infernall shade thy spiritt's fledd;
 Which thou had'st sooner done, if Men had thought
 By such a wound thy death might have been wrought. 30
 Where's now thy Riches, power, thy splendour, lust?
 And though extracted from ignoble dust,⁹
 Yet thou, like Lucifer,¹⁰ did'st still aspire,
 And scorn'dst those hopes that did not mount thee higher.
 Where's thy Ambition, Pollicie, and Hate? 35
 Thy Pleasures to thy soule incorporate;
 Thy curious fare;¹¹ unlimited excesse?
 The splendour of thy Ivorie Pallaces?
 What boots¹² it that the worlds farr Ends for thee
 Made contribution to thy Luxurie? 40
 Where bee thy Friends, thy hopes, thy favour; which
 Might both thy self and many more enrich,
 Had'st thou not play'd the Prodigall, and spent
 Without foreseeing of this dire event?
 All these have left thee, like a blast or breath; 45
 And thou, now swallowed by the Jawes of death,
 For all thy quondam¹³ power, thy Name shall bee
 For ever hatefull to Posteritie.
 Yet I could wish one thing for thee, belowe,
 In those infernall shades where thou do'st goe, 50
 Thou mightst a Purgatorie¹⁴ finde, wherein
 A thousand yeares might expiate thy sinne,
 By purging those deepe staines, and vices fowle,
 Which in thy life-time did infect thy soule,
 That soe, at last, thou mightst enjoy that blisse 55

Where our Creator and Redeemer is.

Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fols. 178v-179v

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 198; PRO SP 16/114/70; Huntington MS HM 198, 1.159

Pi21

¹ *whilome*: once.

² *Atlas*: in classical mythology, Atlas supported the heavens on his shoulders.

³ *Or was thy power...watrie world*: allusion to the power and profits that accrued to Buckingham as Lord Admiral.

⁴ *Neptune*: Neptune god of the sea.

⁵ *keele*: the bottom timber of a ship, running from stern to bow.

⁶ *What though...thou didst yeild?*: Mars was the god of war; Pallas Athena, a goddess of wisdom and war. This line might be a general comment on Buckingham's military adventures and their failures, but it might also allude more specifically to the incident in Book 5 of Homer's *Iliad*, in which Mars (Ares) is wounded in the battle for Troy by the Greek warrior Diomedes and the goddess Athena.

⁷ *Venus*: goddess of love.

⁸ *Nymphes*: goddesses. In this and the following three lines, these nymphs are the ladies who succumbed to Buckingham's sexual charms.

⁹ *extracted from ignoble dust*: Buckingham's relatively humble (yet gentle) social origins had long been a focus of criticism.

¹⁰ *Lucifer*: Satan, driven from heaven for his pride and ambition.

¹¹ *Thy curious fare*: the exotic foods served at Buckingham's banquets.

¹² *boots*: benefits.

¹³ *quondam*: sometime.

¹⁴ *Purgatorie*: the Roman Catholic Church taught that purgatory occupied a middle place in the

afterlife, between heaven and hell, and that sinners sent there would suffer and pay the price of their sins before ascending to heaven. English Protestants believed purgatory to be a popish fiction.

