

Pi28 At Portsmouth Duke I will no longer staye

Notes. This poem is the shorter of the two surviving dialogues between Buckingham and Charon, ferryman of the dead (cf. "Great Duke, which art commaunder of the Seas"). The last three speeches (i.e. the last six lines) may be unique to our chosen source.

"The Admiralls ferriman, Duke Buckingham"

Charon. At Portsmouth¹ Duke I will no longer staye

my boat'es at hand, nowe therfore come awaye,

Duke. Who calls greate George? (Charon.) tis Charon that commaunds

thy guilty ghost to goe him none withstands.

Duke. but whither must I goe? (Charon.) to land at Styx²

from whence you had your stratagemes and trickes.

Duke. nay pritheee stay, sweete Charon, thou shalt see

that if George lives, then all shall come to thee.

Charon. pish³ come I saye! my boate shall stay for none.

thy sweete perfumed sins will fill't alone,

yf not thy Titles.⁴ (Duke.) Sure thou'lt stay a while

that I may Charles a little more beguile

Charon. No no I cannot, Felton make no delaye

if thou lov'st Charles send me proud George awaye

Duke. Am I of sea & land that greate Commaunder⁵

when this small boate doth scorne I should command her

sweete pleasures, honors, titles, fortune brittle,

Adieu, I have no tittle to a tittle.⁶

Charon. ho, ho! now welcome George; no soule shall more

For these twelve moneths be lanced from this shoare

but see my bottome sinkes whence comes this weight

Duke. Greate Brittaines burdthen is thy heavy freight

Charon. then use thy art Charon to gaine the strand⁷

this wood till nowe was ne're so basely man'd.

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Source. BL Add. MS 29492, fol. 56r-v

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Douce f.5, fol. 13v; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.14, fol. 19r; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 14r; Bodleian MS Tanner 465, fol. 103r; BL MS Sloane 826, fol. 188r; BL MS Harley 791, fol. 57r; St. John's MS K.56, no. 22; St. John's MS S.32, fol. 42v; Rosenbach MS 240/7, p. 60

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- ¹ *Portsmouth*: Buckingham was assassinated in the southern English town of Portsmouth.
 - ² *Styx*: a river in Hades, the classical realm of the dead.
 - ³ *pish*: an exclamation of contempt.
 - ⁴ *Titles*: Buckingham held a number of titles in addition to his dukedom, including Earl of Coventry and Baron Whaddon. His list of offices was longer still.
 - ⁵ *of sea & land...Commaunder*: Buckingham was Lord Admiral and the commander of English armies at the Ile de Ré in 1627.
 - ⁶ *a tittle*: a tiny amount.
 - ⁷ *strand*: shore.
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