

Piii22 Noe Poets triviall rage that must aspire

Notes. This elegy, which provocatively attempts to link the popular celebration of the assassination to the threat that Puritanism posed to monarchy and hierarchy, is accepted as the work of Sir William Davenant. G. Hammond (54-55) briefly but persuasively situates the poem within the era's growing ideological divisions. Interestingly, our chosen version differs quite significantly from that in BL Add. MS 33998, which is used as the basis for the only modern edition of the poem. (Significant variations are documented in footnotes.)

"An Elegy on the Duke of Buckingham"

Noe Poets triviall rage that must aspire

And highten in his song by enforc't fire

Shall his loud Dirges mix with my sad Quire

Such sell their Teares like Inke for sordid hire

And he that husbands greife that his dull sight

And moisture spends but on thy funerall Night

T'augment the bauling¹ Showre, when onely good

And noble eyes shall thaw into a flood

Doth want the naturall touch, he mournes by Art

His breast containes a Pibble not a Hart

Buckingham! (ô my Lord!) soe may I find

(With strickt endeavour of my sight) the wind

That veiwlesse moves about the world, as thy

Great soule now wandring in the purple sky;

It hath shooke of this mortall coyle,² the rage

Of those who were but Chollericke³ with age;

Or with a drunken flux of Gall;⁴ which still

Like to their slimy Phlegme⁵ they did but spill

To make the ground more slippery, for thy foot

But thou ne're movd'st but where thou took'st new root.⁶

I am noe Chronicler, nor can impart

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Unto the world in smooth ore-comeing Art
Thee and thy worth; but yet ere Fames hot breath
Is mix'd with cooler Ayre that spoke thy death,
I will pronounce what thou wert found in, warre 25
Heare then, from forth thy Mansion in yon starre
A souldier sing; whose numbers⁷ flow and rise
As if he bath'd his Temples in his Eyes
And not in mighty wine. O happy those
Whose humble sorrowes reach but to loose Prose. 30

In deeds that appertain'd to warre & blood
Not the lofty Memnon when he withstood
Priams tall sonnes⁸ did shew such noble rage
His heat noe violence could tame, nor age
Yet when you courted him the gentle winde 35
That cooles the Lipps of Queenes was not soe kinde
His breath would then, like spices in their Smoke
Perfume the neighbour Aire, till it did Choke
Your greedy sence; then leave you rapt to prove
Which was more strong, his anger or his love. 40

Luxurious sleepes and surfeitts that have made
This Nation tame, and spoil'd the glorious Trade
(Loud Iron warre!) he did dismissee the Court,
And taught our silken youth a noble sport
The soft and whispring Lute he straight stricke dumbe 45
With noise and made them dance unto the Drumme
He lov'd to walke in powder,⁹ in blew Mists
Where some for wealthy Braceletts on their Wrists
Did were Chain'd shott;¹⁰ there danger taught him more
Then all the flattered worthy'es knew before. 50

But oh you harsh false starrs! when he was fitt
For Active discipline, you did permitt

A Leprous hand to touch his hart; and so
 Encreasd your lights, but darkned us below.
 Whilst warme Idolaters that onely bow 55
 To their fraile Mettall, and the industrious Plough
 Picke from the Act a subtill Providence
 Which their Wealth guards from their owne heires expence¹¹
 Now rare divinity! since the precise¹²
 Doe relish murder as a sacrifice 60
 Dull easy Faith and Ignorance no more
 Shall flatter crooked Bondage as before
 Predominance shall cease; the Sonnes of men
 Shall now enjoy equality agen;
 For ruminat (o triviall Fooles!) if high 65
 Heroique Princes, are constrain'd to dye
 By oblique force whilst your Religion too
 Applauds the Act, what will become of you?¹³
 But where are now his plumed Troopes? those high
 Cedars,¹⁴ which tooke swift growth but in his Eye? 70
 Those gilded Flatterers too that did torment
 Their Active Lungs, t'indeavour a consent
 An Eccho to his speech? are they all fledd?
 Will none imploy their Lipps to sooth him dead?
 O fond Ambition! that can nere survive 75
 The warmth of flesh, and serv'd but whilst alive
 Whom supple knees adore for secrett ends,
 Greatnesse many followers hath but few friends.
 Yet know sweet Lord: when the last day shall doome¹⁵
 The world thou needst not creepe into thy Tombe 80
 Nor wrap thy Person in a sulphurous Cloud
 Nor strive to hide thee in th'unweildy Croude
 Of sinners lost, for those that knew desart

Did rather chide thy Titles then thy heart.

Thy Dutchesse¹⁶ spends the treasure of her Eyes 85
In hope some Northerne blast, may strait surprise
The Teares which if congeal'd thy earthy part
Is then entomb'd in pearle, yet know my Art
Out climbs her reach, shee may advance thy Herse
But Fame shall sing thy story in my Verse 90
Let a dull souldier greet thee with a groane
I heard thy death and Clapt my Corslett¹⁷ on
For a distracted rage did soe inflame
My powrefull blood, wonder soe shooke my frame
That but the Iron sheet did fast Combine¹⁸ 95
My flesh, my Ribbs had started from my Chine.¹⁹

Source. BL MS Egerton 2725, fols. 79r-80v

Other known sources. Davenant 272; BL Add. MS 33998, fol. 41r

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¹ *bauling*: bawling.

² *mortall coyle*: the turmoil of life.

³ *Chollericke*: i.e. choleric; angry. Given the allusions to gall and phlegm that follow, Davenant may literally be referring to the excess of the bodily humour of choler that was thought to trigger an irascible temperament.

⁴ *flux of Gall*: discharge of gall (bile); hence bitterness.

⁵ *Phlegme*: one of the four bodily humours.

⁶ *It hath shooke...took'st new root*: these lines do not appear in the version in BL Add. MS 33998.

⁷ *numbers*: verse.

⁸ *the lofty Memnon...Priams tall sonnes*: Agamemnon was commander of the Greek armies during the

war with Troy, and killed Isus and Antiphus, sons of the Trojan King Priam (Homer, *Iliad* book 11).

⁹ *powder*: i.e. gunpowder.

¹⁰ *were Chain'd shott*: i.e. wore on the wrists chain-shot (two balls chained together used in naval warfare to destroy masts and rigging).

¹¹ *expençe*: at this point, the version of the poem in BL Add. MS 33998 includes a couplet which strengthens Davenant's anti-Puritan critique, and begins with his indictment of those from the lower orders who had interpreted the assassination in providential terms: "Their Poets drinke Towne Breath, t'infuse some Qualme / That may Convert the story to a Psalmē".

¹² *the precise*: contemptuous term for the self-proclaimed "godly", also known by the opprobrious nickname "Puritans".

¹³ *you*: at this point, the version in BL Add. MS 33998 includes the following lines, that locate the dead Duke in the Elysian Fields, the realm of the blessed souls in the classical underworld: "Sleepe, sleepe my Lord, and while the Scythians boast / In bloud, doe thou permitt no prattling ghost / To tell thee, in the smooth Elysian playne, / Beneath some pleasant hedge, their rash disdayne".

¹⁴ *high / Cedars*: great men; the figure of speech derives from the biblical "cedars of Lebanon".

¹⁵ *doome*: judge.

¹⁶ *Thy Dutchesse*: Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham.

¹⁷ *Corslett*: body armour.

¹⁸ *Combine*: unite with; here with the connotation of contain or restrain.

¹⁹ *Chine*: backbone, back.
