

Piii5 I did not flatter thee Alive, and nowe

Notes. Under no illusion about the moral compromises demanded by a successful career at court, and acutely aware of the favourite's role to deflect criticism from the King, this poem nonetheless presents Buckingham as a man of virtue, and chides the political arrogance of his parliamentary critics.

“An Apologie, in memorie of the most illustrious Prince George Duke of Buckingham”

I did not flatter thee Alive, and nowe

I might be thought to late to fix my vowe

Upon thy shrine, If I had other end,

Then for respect of honor, to defend

And vindicate thy Fame, from th'envious breath

5

Of fowle detraction, smileing in thy death

Noe modest penn will vex thy grave; but their

Will rather make oblation¹ in a teare;

I am not yet ingag'd, or fondlie ledd

In loud Hiperbolies thy cause to plead

10

My plume soares not above its native straine

Truth walketh safest in the humble plaine.

I sing not Rhodes made great by Villars name

Nor Palestine whence Beaumont takes his fame.²

The things wee did not, and the blood that flowes

15

From noble Ancestors, Hee onely owes

That vertuous is himselfe, and crownes the storie

Of his great Grandsire, by his proper³ glorie,

A subject worthier sweetest Poets verse

Then all the Armorie that guilds thy hearse;⁴

20

The vertues of thy mynd rais'd thee more highe

Then this great length of style wee call thee by⁵

Too true thy fate was hard, to knowe these tymes

Where nothing is of note, besides our crymes
 Where nobler vertue is, or not regarded 25
 Or is mistaken, or is ill rewarded:
 And where the Ulcerous breath of Malecontent
 Turnes into poison what was truely meant,
 And measures deepest Councells of the State
 By their events which still are ruled by fate 30
 (As what's in Chamber of the Starrs decreed⁶
 Should bee A like by all on earth Agreed)
 The Vulgar els would sing thy worth and praise
 Thy highe endeavours upon holy daies
 Sing funerall dirges to thy name, and spend 35
 Theire deep tongu'd Mouths unto another end.
 It is a destinie belongs to State
 Him whome the Prince doth love, the people hate,
 Whose indigested humors ever are
 In opposition unto what is rare 40
 And what they cannot apprehend, doe hate
 Taxing him most, who's greatest in the State
 Which wise kings knowe, and what it is to have
 A Favorite, whose office is to save
 Their goverment from blame, as what's amisse 45
 The fault bee not there owne; but counted his
 O burthen'd state of Favorits, that must
 Not onely make themselves; but others just.
 Noe doubt hee had his faults, but who are cleere
 First throwe the stone,⁷ soe it will soone appeare 50
 That his weere but of Natures brittle mould
 Which being common are the best untould
 The Court creates fewe Saints, who theire deserves
 A mediocritie⁸ of vertue serves

As what is counted vertue in A cell⁹ 55
 Is held perhaps A vice, by them that dwell
 In Princes pallaces, where all things goe
 Not as they are, but what they are in showe
 Where to bee great is good, els little found
 But emptie caske,¹⁰ wild looks, and fruitles sound 60
 Which was noe character of thine, who wer't
 A frend to all in whome was found desert
 And who loves vertue in another, still
 Doth vertuous things, or wanteth of his will
 Who shutt them selves from grace, must not expect 65
 That they bee courted, where they use neglect
 To have their meritt priz'd at such A rate
 As but to right them, Greatnes must abate.
 A Favorite should have enoughe to doe
 To grace all that deserves and woo them too; 70
 Those men cry downe the Favour of A king
 Who keepe noe longer tyme then hee doth sing
 Besides who sits in that highe circle, throwes
 His smyles not allwaies on the purple rose,
 But doe wee therefore blame the Sunn whose heat 75
 Produceth cockle¹¹ there in stead of wheate
 Els howe hee lov'd all noble spiritts best
 Those Armes may witnes, and that royall brest
 That did receive his coole, and latest breath
 By bloodie hand under Arreast of death 80
 Thoughe not soe suddaine; but his Angell might
 Take him upon his wings, in his highe flight
 Then, what is gain'd pale Envie heere? but some
 Moore choller for the Angrie day of doome
 When wilt thou blush? hadd'st thou but any grace 85

Even with the Roses taken from his face
 Though not soe much his owne, as of two kings¹²
 Who crops the flower, the stemme whereon it springs
 Must also suffer. O it is too bold
 To strike whome Princes in their Armes enfold 90
 Whose sacred persons noe small dainger runn
 When such excesse is in their bosome done,
 Whereon if Princes but reflect, they will
 Emptie they veynes, that doe these cesternes fill
 Deplore th'effects; but blame those maisters, who 95
 Inspire th'Assassines such foule deeds to doe
 Proscribing Men, when for none other ill
 A Sacrifice to expiate their will.¹³
 As to bee of the Cabbinet, is but
 To deale the cards some leaprous hand must cutt¹⁴ 100
 If such the State of Princes bee to have
 Their Grace the Beere¹⁵ to laud men on their grave
 Their case is not soe rich, but that it weere
 Much better bee their subjects once A yeare
 To ryfle all their Actions, and cast downe 105
 The men they cannot relish with A frowne
 In case they are not th'object false, on whome
 They thus discharg'd, till they come neerer home.
 Doth it with Monarchie in sequence fall,
 The comons thus should doe? and undoe all 110
 Give lawes unto their kings, they may not smyle
 Without an Act of parliament the while,
 Then to deface what heerein little was
 The gracefull modell of that greater masse
 A peice whome Nature framed with such Art 115
 As was througheout, noe fault in any part

Was soe much more to aggravate th' offence
 That Heaven had bene on him at such expence
 And where some have affirmed the Soule to bee
 Mixt with his Mould in such A Simpathie 120
 As by the bodies structure wee may knowe
 The disposition of the mynde, if soe
 Noe doubt his Soule, that lodg'd therein was faire
 Like as the Inne to which it did repaire
 And that the harmonie in him was such 125
 As Orpheus¹⁶ made when hee his lyre did touch
 By which and other Arts of court weere gain'd
 All noble harts which hee with love mainetain'd
 That hee could not reclame the vulgar presse¹⁷
 The fault was not his owne but of successe 130
 Great Lord my lynes doth now fall short, but ere
 Th'inconstant yeare runn out his course, I darr
 Sing thy Lord praise, and in full verse proclame
 Since thou wer't taken hence, this state is lame
 Nor shall the vurgar therefore chyde my verse: 135
 But runn to pay their Teares upon thy hearse.

Source. Bodleian MS Malone 23, pp. 123-27

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¹ *oblation*: offering.

² *I sing not Rhodes...his fame*: here the poet refuses to praise Buckingham for the great deeds of his ancestors, a Villiers and a Beaumont (Buckingham's mother was Mary, daughter of Anthony Beaumont). Although the specific allusions are not entirely clear, two possible candidates are Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, an early sixteenth-century Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, and Robert (sometimes known as de Beaumont), 4th Earl of Leicester, who went on crusade with Richard I (the Lionheart) in the late twelfth century.

³ *his proper*: his own.

⁴ *the Armorie that guilds thy hearse*: aristocratic funeral hearses were typically adorned with heraldic devices and family coats-of-arms.

⁵ *this great length...call thee by*: allusion to the long list of Buckingham's titles.

⁶ *in Chamber of the Starrs decreed*: determined by the stars (in astrological thinking), or, more generally, determined by the heavens. There may also be a pun here on the court of Star Chamber.

⁷ *but who are cleere...throwe the stone*: allusion to Christ's comment to those about to stone a woman for adultery, that "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8.7).

⁸ *A mediocritie*: a middling amount.

⁹ *cell*: monk's or hermit's room; thus a place of religious virtue.

¹⁰ *emptie caske*: presumably a reference to the excessive consumption of drink at court; but may also pun on "caske" and "casque" (helmet).

¹¹ *cockle*: a weed that grows in cornfields.

¹² *two kings*: James I and Charles I.

¹³ *those maisters...expiate their will*: presumably an attack on those MPs whose 1628 Remonstrance against Buckingham was cited by Felton as motive for the assassination.

¹⁴ *As to bee...hand must cutt*: this image anticipates the ensuing charge that by attempting to bring down Buckingham, the Commons was in effect staking a claim to control the King's freedom to govern in the way he saw fit. Thus to be "of the Cabbinet" (in the King's Privy Council), under parliament's desired way of doing things, would be to play with a deck of cards already cut by another ("leaprous"; i.e. lower-class and diseased) hand.

¹⁵ *Beere*: i.e. bier; tomb.

¹⁶ *Orpheus*: in Greek myth, Orpheus played the lyre so beautifully that he charmed all who heard it.

¹⁷ *presse*: crowd, mob.
