

H17 She with whom troops of bustuary slaves

Notes. This ambitious attack on Frances Howard as the quintessence of darkness, a sorceress and sexual transgressor, borrows the character of the Neapolitan witch and whore Canidia from Horace's "Epodes" and "Satires". Bellany explores the poem's depiction of witchcraft and sexual transgression in his analysis of the Overbury scandal's multiple political meanings (Politics 150, 176, 230).

"Supposed to be made against the Lady Frauncis Coun: of Somerset"

She with whom troops of bustuary¹ slaves
(Like legions) sojourn'd still a mounst the graves;
And there laid plotts which made the silver moone
To fall in labour many times to soone:

Canidia now draws on.

5

She that in every vice did soe excell,
That she could read new principles to hell;
And shew the fiends recorded in her lookes
Such deeds, as were not in their blackest books:

Canidia now draws on.

10

She that by spells could make a frozen stone,
Melt and dissolve with soft affection:²
And in an instant strike the factours dead
That should pay duties to the marriage bedd:³

Canidia now draws on.

15

She that consisted all of borrow'd grace,
Could paint her hart as smoothly as her face;
And when her breath gave wings to silken words,
Poysons in thoughts conceite, and murthering swords:

Canidia now draws on

20

She that could reeke within the sheets of lust,
And there be searcht,⁴ yet passe with out mistrust;
She that could surfle⁵ upp the waies of sinne,
And make strait posternes⁶ where wide gates had beene:

Canidia now draws on.

25

She that could cheate the matrimoniall bedd
With a false stamp, adulterate maidenhead;
And make the husband thinke those kisses chast,
Which were stale panders to his spouses wast:

Canidia now draws on.

30

Whose brest was that Aceldama⁷ of bloud,
Whose virtue still became the cankers food;
Whose closet might a Golgotha⁸ be stil'd,
Or else a charnell where dead bones are pil'd:

Canidia now draws on.

35

Whose waxen pictures fram'd by incantation,
Whose Philters, Potions for loves propagation
Count Circe,⁹ but a novice in the trade,
And scorne all Drugs that Colchos¹⁰ ever made;

Canidia now draws on.

40

Oh lett no bells be ever heard to ring,
Lett not a chime the nightly houres sing;
Lett not the lyrik larke salute the day,
Nor Philomele¹¹ tune the sad darkes away:

Canidia still draws on.

45

Lett croking ravens, and death boading owles,
Lett groning mandraks,¹² and the ghastly howles
Of men unburied bee the fatall knell

To ring Canidia downe from earth to hell;

Canidia still draws on

50

Let wolves and tygers howle, lett serpents cry,

Let basilisks¹³ bedew their poysoning eie;

Let Plutos dogg¹⁴ strech high his barking note,

And chaunt her dirges with his triple throate:

Canidia still draws on.

55

Under his burthen lett great Atlas¹⁵ quake,

Lett the fixt earths unmoved center shake;

And the faire heavens wrappt as it were with wonder

That divells dy, speake out their loudest thunder:

Canidia still draws on.

60

Noe longer shall the pretty marigolds

Ly sepulchred all night in their owne folds;

The rose should florish, and throughout the yeare

No leafe nor plant once blasted would appeare:

Were once Canidia gone.

65

The strarres wold seeme as glorious as the moone,

And she like Phœbus¹⁶ in his brightest noone;

Mists, clouds, vapours, all would passe a way,

And the whole yeare bee as an Halcyon day:

Oh were Canidia gone.

70

Source. BL MS Sloane 1792, fols. 2v-4r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 8; BL MS Harley 3910, fol. 26r; Nottingham MS Portland PW V 37, p. 135; Folger MS V.a.103, fol. 66r; Huntington MS HM 198, 1.33

- ¹ *bustuary*: pertaining to funeral pyres.
 - ² *She that by spells...affection*: some reports alleged that Frances Howard had used love potions to seduce Robert Carr.
 - ³ *strike the factours...bedd*: many reports suggested that Frances Howard had used witchcraft to render her first husband, Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, sexually impotent.
 - ⁴ *searcht*: during the 1613 proceedings to nullify her first marriage, Frances Howard was inspected by a panel of midwives to prove that she was still a virgin and that her marriage had never been consummated.
 - ⁵ *surfle*: to cover up, paint over (usually with cosmetics). The implication is that Frances Howard used magical assistance to fake the signs of virginity.
 - ⁶ *posternes*: posterns; private doors.
 - ⁷ *Aceldama*: the field of blood (Acts 1.19).
 - ⁸ *Golgotha*: graveyard.
 - ⁹ *Circe*: a witch in Homer's *Odyssey*.
 - ¹⁰ *Colchos*: Colchis, or Medea; witch, poisoner and murderess.
 - ¹¹ *Philomele*: in classical mythology, Philomela was transformed into a nightingale.
 - ¹² *mandraks*: mandrakes; plants believed to emit a fatal cry when pulled from the ground.
 - ¹³ *basilisks*: serpents whose gaze was fatal.
 - ¹⁴ *Plutos dogg*: the three-headed Cerberus who guarded Hades.
 - ¹⁵ *Atlas*: in myth, sentenced to hold up the heavens.
 - ¹⁶ *Phæbus*: the sun.
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