

## Pii6 The Duke is dead, and wee are ridd of strife

*Notes. This remarkable poem offers a legalistic and a providential defence of the assassination, and concludes with the stunning and rarely voiced claim that not only an individual king, but also monarchy itself, is subject to divine justice. Holstun (179-181) offers an important extended analysis.*

### “Upon the Dukes Death”

The Duke is dead, and wee are ridd of strife,

By Feltons hand, that tooke away his life.

Whether that Fact were lawfull or unjust,

In two short Arguments may bee discust:

One: Though the Duke were one whom all did hate,

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Being suppos'd a Greivance to the State,

Yet hee a subject was, And thence wee draw

This Argument, Hee ought to die by Law.

Another: Were hee Traytor most apparant,

Yet hee that killd him had noe lawfull warrant,

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But as a Murtherer hee did it act,

And ought himself to die for such a Fact.

These bee the Arguments, than which shall need

Noe more to prove it an unlawfull deed.

Now, for an Answer, justly is objected,

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When Law was offer'd, it was then neglected:

For when the Commons did, with just intent

Pursue his Faults in open Parliament,<sup>1</sup>

The highest Court of Justice, soe supreame

That it hath censur'd Monarches of the Realme,

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There might his Grace have had a legall triall,

Had hee not it oppos'd with strong deniall.

But hee then scorn'd, and proudly sett at nought

The howse, and those that him in question brought.  
 Therefore when Law nor Justice takes noe place, 25  
 Some desperate course must serve in such a case.  
 A rotten Member,<sup>2</sup> that can have noe cure,  
 Must bee cutt off to save the body sure:  
 Soe was the Duke: For when he did withstand  
 The auntient course of Justice of this land, 30  
 Thinking all meanes too weake to cast him downe,  
 Being held up by him that weares the crowne;  
 Even then, when least hee did expect, or know,  
 By Felton's hand God wrought his overthrowe.  
 What shall wee say? Was it Gods will or noe, 35  
 That one sinner should kill another soe?  
 I dare not judge; yet it appeares sometime  
 God makes one sinner 'venge anothers crime,  
 That whenas Justice can noe hold-fast take,  
 Each others ruyne they themselves should make. 40  
 But howsoe're it is, the case is plaine,  
 Gods hand was in't, and the Duke striv'd in vaine:  
 For what the Parliament did faile to doe,  
 God did both purpose and performe it too.  
 Hee would noe threatnings or affronts receive, 45  
 Nor noe deepe Pollicies could him deceive,  
 But when his sinne was ripe, it then must downe  
 Gods Siccle spares not either King or Crowne.

**Source.** BL MS Sloane 826, fols. 189r-190r

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<sup>1</sup> *For when the Commons...open Parliament*: allusion to the attempt by the 1626 Parliament to impeach Buckingham.

<sup>2</sup> *Member:* body part.