

Piii11 Our countrie Merry England (once so styl'd)

Notes. Couched in Buckingham's voice, this poem memorably establishes a series of links between the assassination and its celebration, on the one hand, and pagan cults of human sacrifice and antimonarchical politics, on the other.

“George Duke of Buckingham to that part of his Countrie-men who are worst affected to his life & memorie A Funerall Prosopopæia.”¹

Our countrie Merry England (once so styl'd)

Great & Brave nation, never was defyl'd

With trecherous assassinate, till nowe,

A publique Murther staines the publique browe

I was displeasing by the common fate

5

Of Favorites of kings; I was your hate

Yee have my blood in sacrifice prophane

A private hand hath lawless vengeance tane

Upon my life, and wreck't your mortall wrath

And beyond that (I hope) it nothing hath

10

If blood soe shedd shall not asswagement give,

Why did yee not much rather lett me live?

The Altars of Busiris² never heere

Blacke Egipt made to blush; nor allwaies deere

Diana did appease;³ Men Scythia slew⁴

15

And Affricks Saturne did his beames imbrowe

In blood of Babes,⁵ as Taranis in gall⁶

Her kingly syre sawe Iphigenia fall

A virgin-victim;⁷ and there was a tyme

When humane Heccatombs⁸ engrav'd this clyme

20

With healthes of blood drunke to infernall Elves

But both the Druids⁹ rites, and Druids selves

The Romans banisht, and did purge our Isle

And all their Empire from a cryme soe vile.
 But those of you, who blesse the Murtherers hand 25
 (Against all lawes) and each where gazing stand
 About his picture,¹⁰ as an Idoll sett
 Humanitie (alas) too much forgett
 And make it seeme, as if from Hell againe
 That superstition weere return'd to raigne. 30
 Is Moloch¹¹ Brittaines God? you then doe well
 To celebrate the deeds of night, and hell
 Is Druidisme come backe? Then Rome did ill
 To drive it hence, if Just it be, to kill
 An unattainted and untryed Peere 35
 Lett kings bewarr That Doctrine striketh neere
 Ordain'd selfe-arbiters to please, and such
 As would old Patriotts seeme, ascribeing much
 To th'antient Pagan schooles of Greece & Rome
 Who liveing under Monarchies become 40
 Hott popularians,¹² and in crosse of kings
 Love Cantons, Leagues, and states¹³ as better things.
 Returne to Natures sence, the Man putt on
 With generous sighes; and since the deed is done
 O lett my wyde wound be th'eternall grave 45
 Both of your Ire, and of his guilt who gave
 That thunderbolted blowe; and may noe age
 Behold the like againe upon our stage.
 The topp, and the topp gallant of my style¹⁴
 The common Envie weere of Albions Isle¹⁵ 50
 My plumes of titles in my crest of fame
 The fanns to coole good will, and spight t'inflame;
 Those blazing lures of flyes, the blynding skreen
 Wise Providence, and headlong waies betweene

Meere stands for vanitie; a grove to hyde 55
 Their ambuscado's¹⁶ who noe light abyde
 That weight too great, made me there Atlas¹⁷ fall
 Few please a Multitude, and none please all.
 My youth and two kings¹⁸ favours well might make
 Great Buckingham forgett, and much to take 60
 Above his strength, who finds he was a man;
 And be unto him such in all yee cann.
 The rest lett others care for, who survive.
 Myne Exit wants applause: But if alive
 I had remain'd, and still king Charles my frend 65
 My merritt should have woo'd a fairer end
 For to recover favour was the scope
 Of all my counsell, as it was their hope
 Or on myne owne sword in the sight of all
 You should have seene me voluntarie fall: 70
 For life allreadie was become to bee
 A greivance and A burthen unto mee;
 Untill I had by noblest prooffe made knowne
 That Buckingham was yours, or not his owne
 These my last vowes Heavens witnes it, are true 75
 Soe under goe my clouds, and bidd adiewe.

Source. Bodleian MS Malone 23, pp. 135-38

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¹ *Prosopopæia*: i.e. prosopopoeia, "A rhetorical figure by which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting" (*OED*).

² *The Altars of Busiris*: in the Hercules legends, Busiris, a ruler of Egypt, sacrificed to the gods any foreigner who entered his kingdom.

- ³ *nor allwaies deere / Diana did appease*: the goddess Diana was a huntress and deer were sacred to her.
- ⁴ *Men Scythia slew*: ancient historians described the Scythians as a savage people.
- ⁵ *Affricks Saturne...blood of Babes*: the god Saturn was said to have devoured his own children, thus imbruing (defiling) his “beames” (probably “eyes” here) with the “blood of Babes”.
- ⁶ *Taranis in gall*: according to hostile Roman commentators, the ancient Gauls offered human sacrifices to their thunder god Taranis.
- ⁷ *Her kingly syre...A virgin-victim*: King Agamemnon attempted to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to appease the wrath of the goddess Artemis/Diana.
- ⁸ *humane Heccatombes*: mass human sacrifices.
- ⁹ *Druids*: the priests of pre-Roman Britain and Gaul. Roman accounts alleged that the Druids performed human sacrifice.
- ¹⁰ *his picture*: a number of contemporaries allude to a picture or pictures of Felton. The one extant engraving of the assassin—depicted standing, with boots spurred, his hat under his left arm, and a dagger poised in his right hand—is entitled “The lively Portraiture of John Felton who most miserably kil’d The right Hono:ble George Villiers Duke of Buckingham: August ye 23 1628”. The copy owned by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is reproduced in Wolfe (image 9).
- ¹¹ *Moloch*: i.e. Molech; an ancient Middle-Eastern deity to whom children were sacrificed (see, e.g., 2 Kings 23.10; Jeremiah 32.35).
- ¹² *popularians*: courtiers of the people, seditionists and, in this context, republicans.
- ¹³ *Cantons, Leagues, and states*: names for early modern republican polities; e.g. the Swiss (“Cantons”) and the Dutch United Provinces (“states”).
- ¹⁴ *The topp...of my style*: this line uses nautical terminology (the top and top-gallant are parts of a ship’s mast) to connote the elevation of Buckingham’s status that prompted such envy.
- ¹⁵ *Albions Isle*: England.
- ¹⁶ *ambuscado’s*: ambushes.
- ¹⁷ *Atlas*: in classical mythology, Atlas held aloft the heavens.
- ¹⁸ *two kings*: James I and Charles I.
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