

### Piii8 Sooner I may some fixed statue be

*Notes.* After originally circulating in manuscript, this marvellously complex poem was eventually printed by its author, Owen Felltham. Interesting readings of various facets of Felltham's ambivalent assessment of the assassination can be found in *Pebworth* (Owen Felltham 97-99), *G. Hammond* (62-63), *Holstun* (178-79) and *Norbrook* (54-55).

"In Buckinghamiæ Ducem. ultimo Aug: 1628"<sup>1</sup>

Sooner I may some fixed statue be

Then proove forgetfull of thy death and thee.

Can'st thou begonn soe quickly? Can a knife

Lett out soe many titles,<sup>2</sup> and a life?

Nowe Ile mourne thee. Oh that soe huge a pyle

5

Of state should passe thus, in soe small a whyle!

Lett the rude Genius of the giddie traine

Bragg in a furie, That it hath stabb'd spaine,

Austria, and the skipping French, yea all

Those home-bredd Papists, that would sell our fall,

10

Th'ecclips of two wise Princes judgements, more

The waste whereby our land was still kept poore<sup>3</sup>

I'le pittie yet; at last thy fatall end

Shott like a lightning from a violent hand

Taking the hence unsumm'd.<sup>4</sup> Thou art to me

15

The great example of Mortalitie.

And when the Tymes to come shall want a name

To startle Greatnes; heere is Buckingham

Fall'n like a Meteor: and its hard to say

Whether it was that went the strainger way,

20

Thou, or the hand that slue thee, thy estate

Was highe, and hee was resolute bove that,

Yet since I hold of none engag'd to thee

Death, and that liberty shall make me free.  
 Thy Mists<sup>5</sup> I knowe not, If thou hadd'st a falt 25  
 My Charitie shall leave it in thy vault  
 There for thyne owne accompting: 'tis undue  
 To speake ill of the dead, thoughe it be true,<sup>6</sup>  
 And this, even those that envy'd thee confesse  
 Thou hadd'st a mynd; a floweing noblenesse 30  
 A fortune, frends, and such proportion  
 As call for sorrowe, thus to be undone.  
 Yet should I speak the Vulgar,<sup>7</sup> I should boast  
 Thy bold assassinate, and wish all most  
 He weere noe Christian, that I upp might stand 35  
 To praise th'intent of his misguided hand  
 And sure when all the Patriots in the shade  
 Shall ranke, and their full musters their be made  
 Hee shall sitt next to Brutus,<sup>8</sup> and receive  
 Such bayes,<sup>9</sup> as heath'nish Ignorance can give 40  
 But then the Christian checking that, shall say  
 Thoughe hee did good, hee did it the wrong way  
 And oft they fall into the worst of ills  
 That act the Peoples wish, without their wills.<sup>10</sup>

**Source.** Bodleian MS Malone 23, pp. 132-33

**Other known sources.** Felltham 2.6; Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, p. 20; Bodleian MS CCC. 328, fol. 51v; Bodleian MS Douce 357, fol. 17v; Folger MS V.a.125, fol. 1r; Houghton MS Eng. 1278, item 7

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<sup>1</sup> *In Buckinghamiæ Ducem. ultimo Aug:* 1628: "On the Duke of Buckingham, the last day of August, 1628".

<sup>2</sup> *soe many titles:* while many libellers made fun of the excessive list of the Duke's titles, Felltham's

tone here is more astonished than mocking.

<sup>3</sup> *Lett the rude Genius...still kept poore*: in these lines Felltham alludes to many of the charges commonly levelled against Buckingham: that he was in league with England's Catholic enemies, both external (Spain, Austria and France) and internal; that he had deluded the judgements of his royal masters (James I and Charles I); and that his riotous excess had impoverished the nation.

<sup>4</sup> *unsumm'd*: uncounted, not summed up; perhaps unsummoned.

<sup>5</sup> *Mists*: perhaps mistakes, errors.

<sup>6</sup> *'tis undue...thoughe it be true*: a commonplace moral saw held that one should speak nothing of the dead unless it was complimentary.

<sup>7</sup> *speake the Vulgar*: speak what the common people say. Just as he associates the criticism of Buckingham with the "rude Genius" of the lower orders, Felltham links support for Felton to vulgar opinion.

<sup>8</sup> *Brutus*: i.e. Marcus Brutus, the assassin of Julius Caesar.

<sup>9</sup> *bayes*: laurels, the leaves of which were used to make crowns of victory.

<sup>10</sup> *without their wills*: "without Laws will" (Felltham).

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