

R6 A health to my Lady Duchess

Notes. Like the preceding poem (“See what a love there is betweene”), “A health to my Lady Duchess” has an anachronistic air: more in accord with Restoration libels, which would focus insistently on sexual scandal and rumour. While many of the poem’s targets have links to Queen Henrietta Maria, the poet seems principally concerned to survey the morality of the nation’s peerage. As would become a pattern in Restoration libels, the tone here is questionable: partly moralistic, and partly in the thrall of sexual gossip.

“A lybell calld the health to divers Lords & Ladies 1636”

A health to my Lady Duchess¹ [m. note: “of Buckingham”]
that loves redd hayr so well²
and to my Lord her husband³
that made her belly swell.⁴

A health to my Lady Marques⁵ [m. note: “of Hamilton”] 5
that hath so good a grace
and to my Lord her husband⁶
with his ill-favourd face

A health to my Lady Arundell⁷
whose travailing days ar past⁸ 10
and to my Lord her husband⁹
I hope t’ will be his last.

A health to my lady of Kent¹⁰
with her fat bouncing¹¹
and to my Lord her husband¹² 15
that fucks my Lady Hunt¹³

A health to my Lady Pembroke¹⁴
that lookes so like a witche
and to my Lord her husband¹⁵

that so well indures the switche¹⁶ 20

A health to my Lady Essex¹⁷
who once had lost her fame¹⁸
and to my Lord her husband¹⁹
that is so ill at the game²⁰

A health to my Lady Dorsett²¹ 25
that of gravity hath store
and to my Lord her husband²²
that gives his soule for a whore

A health to my Lady Warwick²³
beeing made a Countess glories²⁴ 30
and to my Lord her husband²⁵
that loves to tell strange stories.

A health to my Lady Lindsey²⁶
that's quickly moov'd to rage
and to my Lord her husband²⁷ 35
that brought his child on the stage.²⁸

A health to my Lady Holland²⁹
of wemen shee's the best
and to my Lord her husband³⁰
that goes so neatly drest. 40

A health to my Lady Dover³¹
that was first wife to a citt³²
and to my Lord her husband³³
that hath more wrath than witt

A health to my Lady Denbigh³⁴
that's groome o'the stoole to her grace³⁵ 45

and to my Lord her husband³⁶
whose nose has fyrd his face

A health to my Lady Carnarvan³⁷
that's a pearl in eache mans ey
and to my Lord her husband³⁸
that will both sweare and ly

50

A health to my Lady Newport³⁹
that loves to play and dance
and to my Lord her husband⁴⁰
that rann away in France⁴¹

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A health to my Lady Desmond⁴²
with her frend shee loves to play
and to my Lord her husband⁴³
that's oft sent out of the way

60

A health to my lady Portland⁴⁴
that was whipt to her marriage bedd⁴⁵
and to my Lord her husband⁴⁶
with his great loggerhead

A health to my Lady Wimbledon⁴⁷
but eighteene years of age⁴⁸
and to my Lord her husband⁴⁹
that's jealous of his page.⁵⁰

65

A health to my Lady Goring⁵¹
in devotion shee's not cooling⁵²
and to my Lord her husband⁵³
that hath gott all by fooling.⁵⁴

70

Source. BL MS Harley 6383, fols. 49r-50r

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- ¹ *my Lady Duchess*: Katherine Villiers (née Manners), Duchess of Buckingham and widow of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. At the time this poem was written, her recent remarriage to the younger Lord Dunluce was a topic of much discussion at court.
- ² *that loves redd hayr so well*: allusion to Katherine Villiers's new husband, Randal MacDonnell, Lord Dunluce, who succeeded as Earl of Antrim at the end of 1636.
- ³ *my Lord her husband*: Randal MacDonnell, Lord Dunluce.
- ⁴ *that made her belly swell*: probably a false rumour; Katherine bore no children in the course of her second marriage.
- ⁵ *my Lady Marques*: Mary Feilding, Marchioness of Hamilton, daughter of the Earl and Countess of Denbigh, and niece of the Duke of Buckingham.
- ⁶ *my Lord her husband*: James, Marquis of Hamilton; prominent advisor to Charles on Scottish affairs.
- ⁷ *my Lady Arundell*: Alatheia Howard (née Talbot), Countess of Arundel.
- ⁸ *whose travailing days ar past*: possibly a reference to the fact that, after twenty-eight years of marriage, she is past child-bearing age (i.e. the "travailing" of labour); possibly a reference to her own continental travels (notably, to Italy in 1623), and a reflection on the diplomatic missions undertaken by her husband, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, in the 1630s.
- ⁹ *my Lord her husband*: Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel.
- ¹⁰ *my lady of Kent*: Elizabeth Grey (née Talbot), Countess of Kent.
- ¹¹ *with her fat bouncing*: at this point, in accord with the poem's puerile humour, a word is omitted from the manuscript.
- ¹² *my Lord her husband*: Henry Grey, Earl of Kent and Lord Ruthin.
- ¹³ *my Lady Hunt*: possibly Lady Anne Campbell, wife of George Gordon, who became Marquis of Huntly in 1636 (although she did not have a significant presence at court).
- ¹⁴ *my Lady Pembroke*: Lady Anne Clifford, best known today as a writer, who was unhappily married to Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.

- 15 *my Lord her husband*: Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.
- 16 *that so well indures the switche*: possibly a muddled allusion to an incident in 1634, in which Herbert broke his staff over the back of Thomas May. But possibly merely invoking misogynist stereotypes of a shrewish woman domineering her husband, on account of Anne Clifford's notoriously strong will.
- 17 *my Lady Essex*: Elizabeth Devereux (née Paulet), Countess of Essex.
- 18 *who once had lost her fame*: presumably a reference to a fresh scandal. In mid-1636 the Countess was accused, by relatives of her husband, of conducting an affair with Sir William Uvedale. A son she bore on 5 November—her first after six years of marriage—was widely suspected to be the illegitimate product of this affair, though Essex accepted it, albeit uneasily, as his own. The baby died just over a month after its birth, and Essex and his wife were thereafter permanently estranged.
- 19 *my Lord her husband*: Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex.
- 20 *that is so ill at the game*: clearly a sexual reference, which constructs an image of Essex based on the gossip and rumours generated by both his marriages. In 1613 he was divorced from Frances Howard, on grounds of his alleged sexual insufficiency (see Section F). The suggestion that his second wife's baby had been fathered by another reinforced the scandalous image of Essex as impotent—an image that would feature prominently in royalist propaganda of the Civil War, when Essex was a prominent Parliamentarian general.
- 21 *my Lady Dorsett*: Mary Sackville, Countess of Dorset, governess of Prince Charles and Prince James.
- 22 *my Lord her husband*: Edward Sackville, Earl of Dorset, Lord Chamberlain in Henrietta Maria's household.
- 23 *my Lady Warwick*: Susan Rich (née Rowe), Countess of Warwick.
- 24 *beeing made a Countess glories*: the Countess, Robert Rich's second wife, was the daughter of Sir Henry Rowe, who had served as Lord Mayor of London in 1607, and the widow of city alderman William Halliday. This line therefore reflects on her social rise as a result of her second marriage.
- 25 *my Lord her husband*: Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick.
- 26 *my Lady Lindsey*: Elizabeth Bertie, Countess of Lindsay.
- 27 *my Lord her husband*: Robert Bertie, Earl of Lindsay.
- 28 *that brought his child...stage*: while it has not been possible to trace a particular incident to which

this line refers, it is most likely that the Earl is being accused of allowing members of his family to participate in a masque or courtly entertainment. Such performances were popular at the Caroline court, but were vehemently denounced by many Puritans.

29 *my Lady Holland*: Isabel Rich (née Cope), Countess of Holland.

30 *my Lord her husband*: Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, High Steward in Henrietta Maria's household.

31 *my Lady Dover*: Mary Carey, Countess of Dover.

32 *that was first wife to a citty*: Mary Carey's first marriage was to Alderman (hence a man of the "citty") Sir William Cockayne.

33 *my Lord her husband*: Henry Carey, Earl of Dover.

34 *my Lady Denbigh*: Susan Feilding (née Villiers), Countess of Denbigh, Mistress of the Robes for Henrietta Maria.

35 *that's groome...her grace*: the title "Groom of the Stool" was in this period used to identify the Queen's "first lady".

36 *my Lord her husband*: William Feilding, Earl of Denbigh.

37 *my Lady Carnarvan*: Anne Dormer (née Herbert), Countess of Carnarvon.

38 *my Lord her husband*: Robert Dormer, Earl of Carnarvon.

39 *my Lady Newport*: Anne Blount (daughter of John, Baron Boteler), Countess of Newport.

40 *my Lord her husband*: Mountjoy Blount, Earl of Newport.

41 *that rann away in France*: probably an allusion to Blount's role as a leader of the failed naval expedition to Rochelle in 1628.

42 *my Lady Desmond*: wife of George Feilding, Earl of Desmond.

43 *my Lord her husband*: George Feilding, Earl of Desmond.

44 *my lady Portland*: Frances Weston (née Stuart), wife of Jerome, Earl of Portland.

45 *that was whipt...bedd*: Lady Frances Stuart, a cousin of King Charles, married Jerome Weston in 1632, after extended negotiations. It was widely believed that she did not initially agree to the marriage with a man socially inferior to her, and that the influence of the King was required to seal the match.

46 *my Lord her husband*: Jerome Weston, Earl of Portland.

47 *my Lady Wimbleton*: Sophia Cecil (née Zouch), Countess of Wimbleton.

48 *but eightheene years of age*: Sophia was seventeen years old at the date of her marriage, and her husband sixty-three.

49 *my Lord her husband*: Edward Cecil, Viscount Wimbleton.

50 *that's jealous of his page*: while the author might have had in mind a particular "page", it is perhaps just as likely that he was merely invoking the stereotype of the jealous husband married to a significantly younger, and sexually voracious, woman.

51 *my Lady Goring*: Mary (née Nevill), Lady Goring.

52 *in devotion shee's not cooling*: suggestion of puritanical religious fervour.

53 *my Lord her husband*: George Goring (Earl of Norwich from 1644), who served first as Henrietta Maria's Vice-Chamberlain, and subsequently as her Master of the Horse.

54 *that hath gott all by fooling*: this recalls allegations against Goring made in the Jacobean poem "Listen jolly gentlemen".
