



The Massacre of the Innocents

Giambattista Marino

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A finely crafted epic and literary monstrosity from the seventeenth-century "poet of the marvelous": the harrowing account, in four bloody cantos, of King Herod and his campaign to murder the male infants of his kingdom to prevent the loss of his throne to the prophesied King of the Jews. The book starts in the pits of Hell, where the Devil stokes the flames of Herod's paranoid bloodlust in his troubled sleep, and concludes in the heights of Heaven where the "unarmed champions" march on to eternal glory. In between is an account of physical and political brutality that unfortunately holds too clear a mirror to world events today. *The Massacre of the Innocents* describes unbelievable cruelty while championing the nobility of suffering, all brilliantly translated and presented in ottava rima.

Italian poet and adventurer **Giambattista Marino** (1569–1625) was deemed "the king of his age," and his very name came to define the style of an epoch: *marinismo*, a shorthand summation of the bizarre inventiveness and ornate excesses of Baroque poetry. In and out of jail, and escaping an assassination attempt by a rival, Marino spent a good part of his life in Northern Italy and France before returning to his birthplace of Naples. His most famous work, *L'Adone* (Adonis), stands as one of the longest Italian epics ever written, and for two centuries was deemed a monstrous epitome of Baroque bad taste.

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