

“Ode To Melancholy” by Elizabeth Carter

Text: taken from *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, with a New Edition of Her Poems*, by the Rev. Montagu Pennington, 4th edition, 2nd vol., London: James Cawthorn, 1825. 32-35

A LITERARY GOTHIC etext.

This text may not be copied, stored, or retransmitted in any form.

(epigram, translated, from Sophocles:
Alas! shades of night, my day,
O darkness, light to me,
Take, oh take me away to dwell with you,
Take me away. —)

COME Melancholy! silent Pow'r,
Companion of my lonely hour,
To sober thought confin'd;
Thou sweetly-sad ideal guest,
In all thy soothing charms confest, 5
Indulge my pensive mind.

No longer wildly hurried thro'
The tides of Mirth, that ebb and flow,
In Folly's noisy stream:
I from the busy croud retire, 10
To court the objects that inspire
Thy philosophic dream.

Thro' yon dark grove of mournful yews
With solitary steps I muse,
By thy direction led: 15
Here, cold to Pleasure's tempting forms,
Consociate with my sister-worms,
And mingle with the dead.

Ye midnight horrors! awful gloom!
Ye silent regions of the tomb, 20
My future peaceful bed:
Here shall my weary eyes be clos'd,
And ev'ry sorrow lie repos'd
In Death's refreshing shade.

Ye pale inhabitants of night, 25

Before my intellectual sight
In solemn pomp ascend:
O tell how trifling now appears
The train of idle hopes and fears
That varying life attend. 30

Ye faithless idols of our sense,
Here own how vain your fond pretence,
Ye empty names of joy!
Your transient forms like shadows pass,
Frail offspring of the magic glass, 35
Before the mental eye.

The dazzling colours, falsely bright,
Attract the gazing vulgar sight
With superficial state:
Thro' Reason's clearer optics view'd, 40
How stript of all its pomp, how rude
Appears the painted cheat.

Can wild ambition's tyrant pow'r,
Or ill-got Wealth's superfluous store,
The dread of death controul? 45
Can Pleasure's more bewitching charms
Avert, or sooth the dire alarms
That shake the parting soul?

Religion! e'er the hand of Fate
Shall make Reflection plead too late, 50
My erring senses teach,
Amidst the flatt'ring hopes of youth,
To meditate the solemn truth,
These awful relics preach.

Thy penetrating beams disperse 55
The mist of error, whence our fears
Derive their fatal spring:
'Tis thine the trembling heart to warm,
And soften to an angel form
The pale terrific King. 60

When sunk by guilt in sad despair,
Repentance breathes her humble pray'r,
And owns thy threat'nings just:
The voice the shudd'ring suppliant hears, 65
With Mercy calms her tort'ring fears,
And lifts her from the dust.

Sublim'd by thee, the soul aspires
Beyond the range of low desires,
 In nobler views elate:
Unmov'd her destin'd change surveys, 70
And, arm'd by Faith, intrepid pays
 The universal debt.

In Death's soft slumber lull'd to rest,
She sleeps, by smiling visions blest,
 That gently whisper peace: 75
'Till the last morn's fair op'ning ray
Unfolds the bright eternal day
 Of active life and bliss.

(1739)