

Ode to Fear

William Collins

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Thou, to whom the world unknown
With all its shadowy shapes is shown;
Who see'st appalled the unreal scene,
While Fancy lifts the veil between:
 Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear!
 I see, I see thee near.
I know thy hurried step, thy haggard eye!
Like thee I start, like thee disordered fly.
For lo, what monsters in thy train appear!
Danger, whose limbs of giant mould
What mortal eye can fixed behold?
Who stalks his round, an hideous form,
Howling amidst the midnight storm,
Or throws him on the ridgy steep
Of some loose hanging rock to sleep;
And with him thousand phantoms joined,
Who prompt to deeds accursed the mind;
And those, the fiends who, near allied,
O'er nature's wounds and wrecks preside;
Whilst Vengeance in the lurid air
Lifts her red arm, exposed and bare,
On whom that ravening brood of fate,
Who lap the blood of sorrow, wait;
Who, Fear, this ghastly train can see,
And look not madly wild like thee?

EPODE

In earliest Greece to thee with partial choice
The grief-full Muse addressed her infant tongue;
The maids and matrons on her awful voice,
 Silent and pale, in wild amazement hung.

Yet he, the bard who first invoked thy name,
Disdained in Marathon its power to feel:
For not alone he nursed the poet's flame,
But reached from Virtue's hand the patriot's steel.

But who is he whom later garlands grace,
Who left awhile o'er Hybla's dews to rove,

Ode to Fear

With trembling eyes thy dreary steps to trace,
Where thou and Furies shared the baleful grove?

Wrapped in thy cloudy veil the incestuous queen
Sighed the sad call her son and husband heard,
When once alone it broke the silent scene,
And he, the wretch of Thebes, no more appeared.

O Fear, I know thee by my throbbing heart,
Thy withering power inspired each mournful line,
Though gentle Pity claim her mingled part,
Yet all the thunders of the scene are thine!

ANTISTROPHE

Thou who such weary lengths hast passed,
Where wilt thou rest, mad nymph, at last?
Say, wilt thou shroud in haunted cell,
Where gloomy Rape and Murder dwell?
Or in some hollowed seat,
'Gainst which the big waves beat,
Hear drowning seamen's cries in tempests brought!
Dark power, with shuddering meek submitted thought
Be mine to read the visions old,
Which thy awakening bards have told:
And, lest thou meet my blasted view,
Hold each strange tale devoutly true;
Ne'er be I found, by thee o'erawed,
In that thrice-hallowed eve abroad,
When ghosts, as cottage-maids believe,
Their pebbled beds permitted leave,
And goblins haunt, from fire or fen
Or mine or flood, the walks of men!
O thou whose spirit most possessed
The sacred seat of Shakespeare's breast!
By all that from thy prophet broke,
In thy divine emotions spoke,
Hither again thy fury deal,
Teach me but once like him to feel:
His cypress wreath my meed decree,
And I, O Fear, will dwell with thee!