

Anonymous, "Sonnet, on the Inhabitants of London"

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ANONYMOUS

"Sonnet, on the Inhabitants of LONDON"

In London scarce a bird but may be found:
The sun-ey'd eagle borne on lofty wing,
Linnets that adulate the smile of Spring,
And ravens croaking with portentous sound:

Owls wrapt in dulness, crows tow'rd carrion bound, 5
Parrots whose squalling notes incessant ring,
Swallows that dare to chatter near a King,
And gabbling geese nice students wish were drown'd:

Mud-haunting ducks that dabble in the street,
Fine birds of paradise with little feet, 10
Peacocks that spread a gaudy-painted fan;
Grain-raking poultry, enemies to flow'rs,
The stork imperious that all things devours,
A phoenix there would be an honest man.

NOTES:

3 *Linnets* A type of finch known for its pleasant song with quick trills and tweets; *adulate* "To flatter in an obsequious or sycophantic manner, to fawn on" (*OED*).

4 *portentous* "Ominous, threatening" (*OED*).

10 *birds of paradise* A family of birds found throughout the islands of New Guinea which are recognizable by the males' highly elaborate plumage.

13 *imperious* "Exercising a commanding influence; ruling, sovereign, dominant" (*OED*).

14 *Phoenix* A bird in Greek mythology that was characteristically long lived and went through cycles of death and rebirth from its ashes. Also an early symbol of Christianity.

Source: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (July, 1777), p. 345.

Edited by Tyler Greer

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