

Anonymous, "Sonnet, on the Inhabitants of London"

Description

ANONYMOUS

"Sonnet, on the Inhabitants of LONDON"

In London scarce a bird but may be found:

The sun-eyed 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, 10  
Fine birds of paradise with little feet,  
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*