

DE AVE PHOENICE (THE PHOENIX)

text excerpted from

DE AVE PHOENICE

by

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I. (The Grove of the Sun)

Est locus in primo felix oriente remotus,
Qua patet aeterni maxima porta poli,

There is a spot in the Near East, lovely, secluded,
Where the mighty gate of the everlasting pole lies open.

Hic Solis nemus est et consitus arbore multa
Lucus, perpetuae frondis honore virens.

Here is the grove of the sun, and a wood planted with many
a tree, verdant with the splendor of perpetual leafage.

Luctus acerbus abest et egestas obsita pannis
Et curae insomnes et violenta fames.

Bitter grief is away from here, and need covered with rags,
And sleepless cares, and violent hunger.

II. (The Fountain and the Bird)

Sed fons in medio est, quem vivum nomine dicunt
Perspicuus, lenis, dulcibus uber aquis,

In the center of the place, there is a fountain which they call by
the name of 'Living'; it is clear, gentle, and rich with sweet waters.

Hoc nemus, hos locus auis incolit unica Phoenix,
Unica, sed vivit morte relecta sua.

This grove, these woods, are haunted by a unique bird, the Phoenix.
She is unique, inasmuch as she lives renewed by her own death.

III. Instrumental (Cello solo)

IV. (Her Indescribable Notes by Day and Night)

Atque ubi Sol pepulit fulgentis limina portae
Et primi emicuit luminis aura leuis,

And when the Sun has forced back the portals of the gleaming gate
And the fine mist of the first light has flashed,

Incipit illa sacri modulamina fundere cantus
Et mira lucem voce ciere nouam,

She begins to pour forth melodious strains of sacred song
And to greet the new day with wondrous voice,

Quam nec aedoniae voces nec tibia possit
Musica Cirrhaeis adsimulare modis,

Which neither the notes of the nightingale nor musical pipes
Can match with Cyrrean measures;

Atque eadem celeres etiam discriminat horas
Innarrabilibus nocte dieque sonis,

And the same bird also distinguishes the swift hours
By indescribable notes by day and by night;

Antistes luci nemorumque verenda sacerdos
Et sola arcanis conscia, Phoebe, tuis.

She is an over-seer of the grove and woods, a priestess to be venerated,
And the sole sharer, O Phoebus, of thy secrets.

V. (The Flight to this World where Death Holds Sway)

Quae postquam vitae iam mille peregerit annos
Ut reparet lapsum spatiis uergentibus aeuum,

Then after she has passed through a thousand years of life
In order to repair the age lapsed by declining periods,

Adsuetum nemoris dulce cubile fugit.
Tunc petit hunc orbem, mors ubi regna tenet.

She flees the familiar, sweet couch of the bower.
Then she seeks this world where death holds sway.

Secretosque petit deserta per auia lucos,
Sicubi per saltus silva remota latet.

Through pathless deserts she seeks secret groves
where a remote wood lies hidden through the glades.

Construit inde sibi seu nidum sive sepulchrum: Then she builds for herself either a nest or a sepulchre;

VI. (Building the Sepulchre and the Death of the Phoenix)

Cinnamon hinc auramque procul spirantis amomi
Congerit et mixto balsama cum folio: In this place she piles up cinnamon, and the scent of the
far-penetrating amomum, and balsam with mixed leafage,

Non casiae mitis nec olentis vimen acanthi
Nec turis lacrimae guttaque pinguis abest. Nor is there missing the twig of the mild cassia or that of aromatic
arcanthus,
Nor the tears and pungent drop of the frankincense.

His addit teneras nardi pubentis aristas
Et sociam myrrae vim, panacea, tuam. To these she adds tender ears of young spikenard, and thy
strength, Panacea, allied with myrrh.

Tunc inter varios animam commendat odores,
Depositanti tanti nec timet illa fidem. Then amid the varied odors she commends her spirit, and
she does not fear the trust involved in so great a laying-down.

Interea corpus genitali morte peremptum
Aestuat et flammam parturit ipse calor, In the meantime, her body, destroyed by a producing death,
grows warm, and the heat itself gives birth to a flame;

Aetherioque procul de lumine concipit ignem:
Flagrat et ambustum soluitur in cineres. and from the aetherial light afar off it conceives fire:
it blazes, and when scorched, it dissolves into ashes.

VII. (Rebirth)

Quos velut in massam cineres natura coactos
Conflat, et effectum seminis instar habet. These ashes, collected into a pile, as it were, nature stirs
up, and it has effect like to that of seed.

Crescit, at emenso sopitur tempore certo
Seque ovi teretis colligit in speciem. It grows, but for a certain measure of time it sleeps
and gathers itself into the shape of a smooth egg.

Ac velut agrestes, eum filo ad saxa tenentur,
Mutari tineae papilione solent,
Inde reformatur qualis fuit ante figura,
Et Phoenix ruptis pullulat exuuiis. And, just as field caterpillars, when they are held by a thread
to the rocks, are wont to change to butterflies, thence the
shape which it was before is formed again, and the phoenix
sprouts forth when the shell has broken.

VIII. (Instrumental Dance of Celebration)

IX. (She Sips the Ambrosial Dew and Hastens to the City of the Sun)

Non illi cibus est nostro concessus in orbe
Nec cuiquam inplumem pascere cura subest.
Ambrosios libat caelesti nectare rores,
Stellifero tenues qui cecidere polo. There is no food in our world granted to her, nor has
anyone the charge of feeding the yet unfledged bird.
She sips the fine ambrosial dews from heavenly nectar
which has fallen from the star-bearing pole.

Ast ubi primaeva coepit florere juventa,
Evolat ad patrias jam reditura domus. When she begins to flourish in primeval youth, she flies forth,
ready now to return to her native home.

Quam pedibus gestans contendit Solis ad urbem (Carrying this in her talons) she hastens to the city of the Sun;

Mirandam sese praestat praebetque verendam:
Tantus aui decor est, tantus abundat honor.

She shows herself to be admired, and she presents herself to be venerated:
so great is the beauty of the bird; such great honor attends her.

X. (Egypt Marvels)

Huc venit Aegyptus tanti ad miracula visus
Et raram volucrem turba salutat ovans.
Protinus exculpant sacrato in marmore formam
Et titulo signant remque diemque novo.

Egypt comes hither for the marvels of such a sight, and the
ovating crowd salutes the rare bird. Straightway they carve
out her form on holy marbles and mark the event and the
day with a new title.

Contrahit in coetum sese genus omne volantum
Nec praedae memor est ulla nec ulla metus.
Alituum stipata choro volat illa per altum
Turbaque prosequitur munere laeta pio.

Every kind of flying creature draws itself together in meeting,
nor is there any remembrance of prey nor any fear.
Thronged by a chorus of birds she flies through the heights,
and the crowd which attends her is happy in its sacred function.

XI. (She Returns to her Proper Habitat)

Sed postquam puri peruenit ad aetheris auras,
Mox redit: illa suis conditur inde locis.

But after they reach the regions of pure ether, the crowd
soon turns back; then she is concealed in her own proper habitat.

XII. (Bird of Happy Lot and Purpose)

At fortunatae sortis finisque volucrem,
Cui de se nasci praestitit ipse deus!
Ipsa quidem, sed non eadem est,
eademque nec ipsa est,
Aeternam vitam mortis adeptam bono.

Ah, thou bird of happy lot and purpose,
to whom God has granted the power of being born from herself!
She is herself indeed, but still not the same,
and neither is the same herself,
for she has acquired life eternal by the good of death.
