

## The Survivors

Those who have wrung the neck of rhetoric  
 May find the bird still twitches  
 And rings chameleon-changes on the ground,  
 Swan, bird of paradise, the phoenix,  
     in their ditches  
 Have a passion left, a mangled trick,  
 For the passerby repulsed by ordinary sound.

I cannot think that anyone could wish  
 All three would rise together in a flutter,  
 Two immortal and one like all the dreams  
     of flesh,  
 Having kept their force uncommon even  
     in the gutter.

No, they have a notion of the town  
 Which keeps them honking, always guarding fires,  
 As though they sense that it were falling down  
 Or just condemned for calculating buyers —  
 Better to hang in a butcher's stall,  
 Barely alive, than yield to over-kill.

I like birds and stroke their presence  
     when I can —  
 The town does fall — we do unearth,  
 Like scraps of bird-life for an injured man,  
 Purity, iridescence, and rebirth.

Charles Edward Eaton.