

The Phoenix and the Turtle (1601)

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)

Robert Chester, *Loues martyr: or, Rosalins complaint*. Now first translated out of the venerable Italian Torquato Cæliano [pseudonym of], by R. Chester. ([R. Field] for E. B., 1601.) STC 5119.

1 Let the bird of loudest lay
2 On the sole Arabian tree
3 Herald sad and trumpet be,
4 To whose sound chaste wings obey.

5 But thou shrieking harbinger,
6 Foul precurrer of the fiend,
7 Augur of the fever's end –
8 To this troop come thou not near.

9 From this session interdict
10 Every fowl of tyrant wing,
11 Save the eagle, feather'd king.
12 Keep the obsequy so strict.

13 Let the priest in surplice white,
14 That defunctive music can,
15 Be the death-divining swan,
16 Lest the requiem lack his right.

17 And thou treble-dated crow,
18 That thy sable gender mak'st
19 With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
20 'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

21 Here the anthem doth commence:
22 Love and constancy is dead,
23 Phoenix and the Turtle fled
24 In a mutual flame from hence.

25 So they lov'd, as love in twain
26 Had the essence but in one,
27 Two distincts, division none.
28 Number there in love was slain.

29 Hearts remote, yet not asunder,
30 Distance and no space was seen
31 'Twixt this Turtle and his queen.
32 But in them it were a wonder.

33 So between them love did shine

34 That the Turtle saw his right
35 Flaming in the Phoenix' sight.
36 Either was the other's mine.

37 Property was thus appalled
38 That the self was not the same.
39 Single nature's double name
40 Neither two nor one was called.

41 Reason, in itself confounded,
42 Saw division grow together
43 To themselves, yet either neither,
44 Simple were so well compounded

45 That it cried, "How true a twain
46 Seemeth this concordant one!
47 Love has reason, reason none,
48 If what parts can so remain."

49 Whereupon it made this threne
50 To the Phoenix and the Dove,
51 Co-supremes and stars of love,
52 As chorus to their tragic scene.

THRENOS

53 Beauty, truth, and rarity,
54 Grace in all simplicity,
55 Here enclos'd, in cinders lie.

56 Death is now the Phoenix' nest,
57 And the Turtle's loyal breast
58 To eternity doth rest.

59 Leaving no posterity
60 'Twas not their infirmity,
61 It was married chastity.

62 Truth may seem but cannot be,
63 Beauty brag, but 'tis not she.
64 Truth and beauty buried be.

65 To this urn let those repair
66 That are either true or fair.
67 For these dead birds sigh a prayer.