

Y.C. Murphy



## Parrot Music Box

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Lovebirds come in all colors, their bodies  
poised on strings knotted with beads, bells,  
mirrors and hoops. At the pet store, two perform  
inside an elaborate cage, unpredictable bobbles  
bring *oooohs* and *abbbbs* as spectators watch outside.  
Frontal red bands, yellow under-parts washed through  
with orange, ruby cheek patches, an olive-green rump,  
tail feathers patterned by pink, rich gold flecked with deep  
blue or black. We presume they must be cousins, no matter  
how many times removed. They coo, trilling excitably  
like flutes, feathers dazzled with song.  
We want Mozart or "Yankee Doodle Dandy"  
but from nowhere, they warble a working woman's lament:  
*María solo trabaja, solo trabaja, y su trabaja es ajeno . . .*  
The parrots pose with their beaks locked, skyward, in a kiss.  
Spinning sound into their own idiosyncratic riffs: *kwink*  
*quaw, kraar, caark, kweek, chissik-chissik, fweep-fweep.*  
We do not know how to make sense of it, this music  
mixed of melody and noise. Brio in one language comes  
out brash to another, untranslatable commotion.  
The little birds look out dead-eye through the cage—  
we want them to mimic us, sing: *Pretty girl, pretty girl.*

