

Y.C. Murphy



Parrot Music Box

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.*

