

Emergent Poet

Yvonne Murphy

Jefferson's Parrots

In this semi-circle of a room, half-moon off the parlor, Jefferson sits writing letters to his friends. It is late, the candles have dripped over

and dribbled beyond themselves, his reading wheel, strapped-new with four books, rocks anxious in the slight wind that trembles

through the door. Behind his desk, the day bed is rumped. All these hours of reading, writing, the moon gets full waiting for his muse

to come inside the door. Wedged between windows and bookcases, the door looks like it could be a window, that's the genius of the design

brought back from France, along with wine and countless *objets*: the hand-colored engravings and china plates with painted parrots that

line these walls. *Les Perroquets*, their scarlet and indigo wings so exotic. He fumbles with a quill, frustrated: *Will she ever come?*,

and looks out to his gardens. The night is encrusted with stars, fragrant lavender drifting up the hill through his curtains. He wants

to will her to come, but logic overrides feeling. He must occupy his mind—control this desire, coil it up, pack it tight in a snuff box for reserve.

His head falls exhausted on the desk. The country's policies and progress weave themselves into sleep. And the parrots bear witness while he dreams.