

Casa Vautrin/Vudafieri
via Melzo 5
20129 Milano

28 marzo – 3 aprile 2017
dalle ore 10.00 alle ore 19.30

opening
28 marzo 2017
dalle ore 18.00 alle ore 21.00



GABRIELE DE SANTIS

CASE CHIUSE #04
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TEXT COLLAGE by Ilaria Gianni

I never quite say as much as I know. I look at other parrots and I wonder if it's the same for them, if somebody is trapped in each of them, paying some kind of price for living their life in a certain way. For instance, "Hello," I say, and I'm sitting on a perch in a pet store in Houston and what I'm really thinking is Holy shit. It's you. And what's happened is I'm looking at my wife.

"Hello," she says, and she comes over to me, and I can't believe how beautiful she is. Those great brown eyes, almost as dark as the center of mine. And her nose—I don't remember her for her nose, but its beauty is clear to me now. Her nose is a little too long, but it's redeemed by the faint hook to it.

She scratches the back of my neck.

Her touch makes my tail flare. I feel the stretch and rustle of me back there. I bend my head to her and she whispers, "Pretty bird." (.....)

Robert Olen Butler, *Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot*

*Ecco qui l'uccellatore,
sempre lieto, oh oh, eh eh!
Come uccellatore sono conosciuto
in tutta la regione da vecchi e giovani.
So come si fa ad adescare
e sono esperto nello zufolare.
Per questo posso essere lieto ed allegro
poiché tutti gli uccelli sono miei. (Zufola)
Ecco qui l'uccellatore,
sempre allegro, oh oh, eh eh!
Come uccellatore sono conosciuto
in tutta la regione da vecchi e giovani.
Vorrei una rete per fanciulle,
ne acchiapperei per me a dozzine,
quindi me le metterei in gabbia,
e tutte le ragazze sarebbero mie. (Zufola)
Se tutte le ragazze fossero mie
allora le allieterei ben bene con uno zuccherino,*

*e colei che fosse la mia preferita
riceverebbe subito il confetto.
Allora lei mi bacerebbe soavemente,
lei sarebbe la mia donna ed io il suo uomo.
Si addormenterebbe al mio fianco
ed io la cullerei come una bimba.*

W.A. Mozart, *Il Flauto Magico*, “L’uccellatore sono io”, Atto primo

*Pa pa pa
Pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
Pa pa pa pa pa pa Papagena!
Pa pa pa pa pa Papageno!
Ah! tu sei la mia ricetta...
Il tuo balsamo son io...
Tu sarai la mia donnetta!
Tu sarai l'ometto mio!
L'ometto mio!
La mia donnetta!
Già d'intorno saltellar
Già d'intorno saltellar
Veggio bella figliolanza
Veggio bella figliolanza
L'impaziente mia speranza
L'impaziente mia speranza
Vieni, amor a consolar!
Consolar...
Consolar...
Consolar...
L'impaziente mia speranza!
Vieni, amor a consolar!
Là scherza un bel Papagenino
Là una sorella in guarnellino
Poi dopo quel, un altro ancora
Poi dopo quella, un'altra ancora
Papagena! Papageno!
Papagena! Papageno!
Papagena! Papageno!
Immensamente esulteremo
Immensamente esulteremo
Se molti, molti
Se molti
Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
Se molti
Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
Pa Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
Benediranno il genitor
Immensamente esulteremo
Immensamente esulteremo
Se molti, molti
Se molti
Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
Se molti
Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
Pa Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
Benediranno il genitor.
Papageno!*

Papagena!
 Papageno!
 Papagena!
 Papageno!
 Benediranno il genitor.
 Papagena!
 Papageno!
 Papagena!
 Papageno!
 Papagena!
 Benediranno il genitor.
 Benediranno il genitor.
 Benediranno il genitor.
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papagena!
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papageno!
 Pa Pa Pa Pa Papageno!

W.A. Mozart, *Il Flauto Magico*, Duetto “Pa pa pa pa (Papageno, Papagena)”, Atto secondo

....

*A parrot lately dwelt, (you ask me where,)
 At Nevers, with the Visitandines there,
 A famous bird, so well he play'd his part,
 Of manners easy, and of generous heart,
 And might have fill'd a station less severe,
 If lovely creatures always happy were.
 This noted bird from India's borders came,
 Transported thence, and Ver-vert was his name;
 Was very young, and little understood, —
 Shut up within this convent for his good.
 Fair, florid, neat, and very gay was he,
 Lovely and frank, as youth are wont to be;
 In short, a prating bird, yet meek and lowly,
 And well deserving of a place so holy*

....

T. S. Allen, *The Parrot: a poem in four Cantos*

AT Nevers once, some time ago,
The pet of certain sisters there,
Flourished a parrot, one so fair,
So trained in all a bird can know,
As to deserve a better fate—
Did happiness on merit wait.
Ver-Vert, such was the parrot's name,
Young yet, and innocent of wrong,
Transplanted from some Indian stream,
Was placed these cloistered nuns among.
Bright-hued was he, and gay, but sage;
Frank, as befitted childhood's age,
And free from evil thought or word:
In short he was the very bird
To choose for such a sacred cage.

Needs not to tell what love he won,
What cares received, from every nun;
How, next to the confessor, he
Reigned in each heart; and though it be

Sinful to weakness to succumb,
Ver-Vert, the bird, was first with some.
He shared in these serene retreats
The sirups, jellies, and the sweets
Made by the sisters to excite
The holy father's appetite.
For him 'twas free to do or say
Whate'er he pleased—'twas still his way.
No circle could be pleasant where
There was not in the midst Ver-Vert,
To whistle, chirrup, sing, and fly;
And all the while with modesty,
Just like a novice, timid yet,
And ever fearful to forget,
Never, unquestioned, silence broke,
Yet answered all, though twenty spoke;
Just as great Cæsar, between whiles,
Wrote all at once five different styles.

At night his pleasure was to roam
From one to other for a home;
Happy, too happy, was the nun
Whose cell his wayward choice had won.
He wandered here and wandered there,
But, truth to say, 'twas very rare
That fancy led him to the cell
Where any ancient dame might dwell.
No, rather would his choice be laid
Where some young sister's couch was made;
There would he sleep the long night through,
Till daylight broke and slumbers flew;
And then, so privileged and free,
The sister's first toilet might see.
Toilet I say, but whisper low,
Somewhere I've read, but do not know,
Nuns' mirrors must be quite as true
As, ladies, is required for you;
And, just as fashion in the world
Must here be fringed and there be curled,
So also in the simple part
Of veils and bands there lies an art;
For that light throng of frivolous imps
Who scale o'er walls and creep through bars,
Can give to stiffest veils and gimps
A grace that satin never wears.
Of course, you guess, at such a school,
Ver-Vert, by parrot's instinct-rule,
Endowed with speech, his ladies took
For pattern; and, except at meat,
When all the nuns in silence eat,
Talked fast and long, and like a book.
He was not, mark, one of these light
And worldly birds, corrupted quite
By secular concerns, and who
Know mundane follies through and through;
Ver-Vert was piously inclined;
A fair soul led by innocence,
Unsullied his intelligence,
No rude words lingered in his mind.
But then he knew each canticle,
Oremus, and the colloquies,
His Benedicite said well,
The litany, and charities.
Instructed still, he grows more wise,
The pupil with the teacher vies;
He imitates their very tones,

*The softened notes, the pious groans,
The long-drawn sighs, by which they prove
How they adore, and how they love;
And knows at length—a holy part—
The breviary all by heart.*

* * * *

*But fame is full of perils; well
In lowly lot obscure to dwell.
Success too great, without reverse,
Oft makes the moral nature worse.
Thy name, immortal parrot, spread
Still wider, till by sad fate led,
It reached as far as Nantes. Here stood
The chief house of the sisterhood.*

*Now not the last, as might be guessed,
Are nuns to hear of what goes on;
And chattering still, like all the rest,
Of what was said and what was done,
They heard of Ver-Vert, wondered much,
They talked and envied, talked and sighed
(Great though his powers, his virtues such,
Had been by rumor magnified),*

*Until a common longing fell
On all alike this miracle
Themselves to see. A girl's desire
Is like a flame that leaps and burns;*

*But ah! a fiercer, brighter fire,
Is when a nun with longing yearns.*

*To Nevers fly all hearts; of naught
But Ver-Vert can the convent think.*

*Could he—ah! could he here be brought!
The Loire is swift; ships do not sink.*

*Oh! bid him come, if but to show
For one day what a bird can know!*

* * * *

*On board the bark that on the wave
Bore Ver-Vert from his patrons' care
Were three fair nymphs, two soldiers brave,
A nurse, a monk, a Gascon pair:*

*Strange company and sad, I ween,
For Ver-Vert, best of pious birds.*

*Innocent quite of what might mean
Their strange garb and their stranger words,
He listened, 'mazed at first. The style
Was new, and yet the words were old.*

*It was not gospel, truly; while
The jokes they make, the tales they told,
Were marked by absence of those sweet
Ejaculations, vows, and prayers,
Which they would make and he repeat.*

*No Christian words are these he hears:
The bold dragoons with barrack slang
Confused his head and turned his brain;
To unknown deities they sang*

*In quite an unaccustomed strain.
The Gascons and the ladies three
Conversed in language odd but free;
The boatmen all in chorus swore
Oaths never heard by him before.*

*And, sad and glum, Ver-Vert sat still
In silence, though against his will.*

*But presently the bird they spy,
And for their own diversion try
To make him talk. The monk begins
With some light questions on his sins;*

Ver-Vert looks up, and with a sigh,
"Ave! my sister," makes reply:
And as they roar with laughter long,
Suspects, somehow, he's answered wrong.
Proud was his spirit, until then
Unchecked by scoff of vulgar men;
And so he could not brook to see
His words exposed to contumely.
Alas, with patience, Ver-Vert lost

The first bloom of his innocence.
That gone, how little did it cost
To curse the nuns and their pretence
To teach him French? Well might they laugh:
The nuns, he found, had left out half—
The half, too, most for beauty made,
The nervous tone, the dainty shade;
To learn this half—the better lore—
He speaks but little, thinks the more.

At first the parrot, so far wise,
Perceives that all he learned before,
The chants, the hymns, the languid sighs,
And all the language of the nuns,
Must be forgotten, and at once.
In two short days the task was done,
And soldier's wit 'gainst prayer of nun,
So fresh, so bright, so pleasant seemed,
That in less time than could be dreamed
(Too soon youth lends itself to evil)
He cursed and swore like any devil.

By steps, the proverb says, we go
From bad to worse, from sin to crime;

Ver-Vert reversed the rule, and so
Served no novitiate's tedious time.
Full-fledged professor of all sin,
Whate'er they said he marked within;
Ran their whole dictionary through,
And all the wicked language knew;
Till one day, at an oath suppressed,
He finished it, with swelling breast.

Loud was the praise, great the applause;
Poor Ver-Vert proudly looked around;
He, too, could speak by boatman's laws,
He, too, this glorious half had found.

Then to his genius giving play,
He cursed and swore the livelong day.
Fatal example this, how pride

Young hearts from heaven may turn aside.

* * * * *

The boat arrives, and at the stage
A sister waits, to take the cage.
Since the first letter sent, she sits
With eyes turned ever up the stream,
And watching every sail that flits
Across the wave, each, in her dream,
The bark that brings the saint Ver-Vert.
He knew—corrupted bird—aright,
By that half-opened eye, that bare
And scanty dress, those gloves so white,
The cross—by all these tokens good—
He knew, he knew the sisterhood.
Seeing her there, he trembled first,
And then in undertones he cursed,
For much he feared, and much he sighed,
Thinking that all the blasphemies
In which he took such joy and pride
Would change again to litanies.

And then he shrieked; she seized the cage,
In vain he pecked in useless rage;
 Bit the poor sister here and there,
For still she bore him to his fate,
Arrived within the convent gate,
 And told the advent of Ver-Vert.
The rumor ran. They ring the bells,
The sisters troop from choir and cells:
"Tis he, my sister, come at last!"
 They fly, they run, the old forget
The burden of the winters past;
 Some who were never known as yet
To haste their steps, came running now
 All joyous, eager all, and bright,
As happy as if Ver-Vert's sight
Released them all from convent vow.

How can they do aught but admire
That form so full of youth and fire?
For Ver-Vert, though now steeped in harm,
 Had not, therefore, become less fair;
 That warlike eye, that dandy air,
Lent him at least a novel charm.
Ah, Heaven! why on a traitor's face
Waste all this beauty, all this grace?
 The sisters, charmed with such a bird,
Press round him, chattering all at once,
As is the way, I'm told, with nuns,
 That even thunder fell unheard.
He during all the clatter sat,
Deigning no word, or this, or that.
Only with strange, libertine gaze,
 Rolling his eyes from nun to nun.
First scandal. Not without amaze,
 The holy ladies saw how one
So pious could so rudely stare.
Then came the prioress, and there
First questioned him. For answer all,
 Disdainfully he spread his wings,
Careless what horror might befall,
 And thus replied to these poor things,
"Gadzooks! Ods bodikins! What fools!"
At this infringement of the rules
Which mere politeness teaches, "Fie,
 My dearest brother," one began.
In jeering tones he made reply,
Till cold her very life-blood ran.

"Great Heaven! Is this a sorcerer?
 Is this the saintly praying bird
They boast so much of at Nevers,
 Ver-Vert, of whom so much is heard?
Is this—" Here Ver-Vert, sad to say,
Took up the tale in his new way.
He imitated first the young,
The novices, with chattering tongue;
Their babble and their little ways,
Their yawning fits at times of praise.
 Then turning to the ancient ones,
Whose virtues brought respect to Nantes,
He mocked at large their nasal chants,
 Their coughs, their grumbings, and their groans.
But worse did follow. Filled with rage,
He beat his wings and bit the cage;
He thundered sacrilegious words
Ne'er heard before from beak of birds;

All that he'd learned on board the ship
Flowed now from that corrupted lip;
Terms fraught with horrid blasphemy
(Mostly beginning with a d)
Hovered about his impious beak—
The young nuns thought him talking Greek,
Till with an oath so full, so round,
That even the youngest understood,
He ended. At the frightful sound
Multivious fled the sisterhood,
All smitten with terrific panic,
Ran pell-mell from the imp satanic;
'Twas by a fall that Mother Ruth
Then lost her last remaining tooth.

Ver-Vert, replaced his cage within,
The nuns resolved without delay
To purge the place of heinous sin
And send the peccant bird away.
The pilgrim asks for naught beside;
He is proscribed, pronounced accurst,
Guilty pronounced of having tried
The virtue of the nuns; called worst
Of parrots. All in order due
Attest the truth of this decree,
Yet weep that one so fair to view
So very black of heart should be.
He goes, by the same sister borne,
Whose feelings now are changed and sad.
Ver-Vert, of all his honors shorn,
Is yet resigned, and even glad.
So is brought back to Nevers. Here,
Alas! alas! new scandals come.
Untaught by shame, untouched by fear,
With wicked words he welcomes home,
To these kind ladies manifests,
Reading the dreadful letter through,
With boatmen's oaths and soldiers' jests,
That all their sisters' wrath was true.
What steps to take? Their cheeks are pale,
Their senses overwhelmed with grief;
With mantles long, with double veil,
In council high they seek relief.
Nine ancient nuns the conclave make—
Nine centuries assembled seem—
Here without hope, for old love's sake,
Far from the girls whose eyes would stream
At thought of hurting him, the bird,
Chained to his perch, is duly heard.
No good he has to say. They vote.
Two sibyls write the fatal word
Of death; and two, more kindly taught,
Propose to send him back again
To the profane place whence he came,
Brought by a Brahman—but in vain:
The rest resolve, with common sense,
Two months of total abstinence,
Three of retreat, of silence four;
Garden and biscuits, board and bed,
And play shall be prohibited.
Nor this the whole; in all the space
Should he not see a pretty face.
A gaoler harsh, a guardian grim,
With greatest care they chose for him,
The oldest, ugliest, sourest nun,
An ape in veils, a skeleton,

*Bent double with her eighty years;
She'd move the hardest sinner's tears.*

*So passed Ver-Vert his term; in spite
Of all his gaoler's jealous care,
The sisters gave him some delight,
And now and then improved his fare.
But chained and caged, in dungeon fast,
Bitter the sweetest almonds taste.
Taught by his sufferings to be wise,
Touched, maybe, by their tearful eyes,
The contrite parrot tries to turn
Repentant thoughts from things of ill;
Tries holiness again to learn,
Recovers soon his ancient skill,
And talks like any pious dean.
Sure the conversion is not feigned,
The ancient conclave meet again,
And to his prison put an end.
Oh! happy day, when Ver-Vert, free,
Returns his sisters' pet to be!
A festival, a day of joy,
With no vexation, no annoy,
Each moment given up to mirth,
And all by love together bound!
But ah! the fleeting joy of earth
Too soon is untrustworthy found:
The songs, and chants, and cheerful hours,
The dormitory wreathed with flowers,
Full liberty, a tumult sweet,
And nothing, nothing that could tell
Of sorrow hiding 'neath their feet,
Of death advancing to their cell.
Passing too quick from diet rude,
From plain dry bread to richer food,
With sugar tempted, crammed with sweets,
Tempted with almonds and such meats,
Poor Ver-Vert feels his roses change
Into the cypress dark and strange.
He droops, he sinks. In vain they try
By every art to stave off fate.
Their very love makes Ver-Vert worse;
Their cares his death accelerate.
Victim of love, of love he tires,
And with a few last words expires.
These last words, faint and hard to hear,
Vain consolation, pious were.*

Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset, *Ver-Vert*

...

"You're going with me," Mason told him, "and we're making a rush trip to San Molinas."

"What for?" Drake wanted to know.

"We're going to steal a parrot," Mason said.

"Steal a parrot?"

"That's what I said."

"You mean Casanova?"

"Yes."

"What the devil do you want with *him*?"

Mason said, "Get right down to brass tacks, Paul, and what do you have? You have a case which entirely revolves around a parrot. Casanova is the key clue to the whole affair. Notice that whoever killed Sabin was particularly solicitous about the welfare of the parrot."

"You mean that it was someone who loved the parrot, or was tender-hearted about birds in general?"

Mason said, "I don't know yet exactly *what* the reason was. However, I'm commencing to have an idea. Notice, moreover, Paul, that lately Casanova says, 'Put down that gun, Helen ... don't shoot ... My God, you've shot me.'"

"Meaning that Casanova must have been the parrot which was present when the shots were fired?" Drake asked. "And that whoever committed the murder took Casanova away, and subsequently substituted another parrot?"

"Why," Mason asked, "would a murderer do that?"

"To tell you the truth, Perry, I don't know. That parrot angle sounds goofy to me."

"Well," Mason said, "any explanation which has been offered to me so far sounds goofy; but my best hunch is that that parrot offers the key to the situation. Now, Helen Monteith isn't home. The sheriff and the district attorney of San Molinas County are wandering around here trying to chase down developments at this end, with the help of Sergeant Holcomb. It *should* be an excellent time to raid San Molinas."

"If they catch you cutting corners in that county, you're going to jail," Drake warned.

"I know it," Mason admitted, grinning, "and that's why I don't want to be caught cutting corners. If you have your car here, let's go."

"You going to lift cage and all?" Drake asked.

"Uh-huh," Mason said, "and I'm going to put another parrot in place of the one that's there."

He picked up his telephone, dialled a number, and after a moment said, "Hello, Helmold, this is Perry Mason, the lawyer. I'd like to get you to run down to your pet store and open the place up. I want to buy a parrot."

...