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A Parrot in Parallel Proposes, 2020

In 1995, a firefighter from Damascus, Maryland named Brian Wilson lost his ability to speak. Fourteen years later, two parrots taught him to speak again.

According to an article in the British Telegraph from 2009, the man reported "Two birds taught me to talk again...I had such a bad head injury I was never supposed to talk any more than a two-year-old.[But the two parrots] just kept talking to me and talking to me...Then all of a sudden, a word popped out, then two, then more."

"You wonder why I rescue birds? They helped me to talk again, so now I take care of them."

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There are two quaker parrots on the ground floor of this building. They live with the building's superintendent. One is in this room. The other is on the opposite side of the south east wall of this room.

Most of the time they live together. If you are here with one of them, they are now apart.

They exist in mirror formation, facing each other through the wall, reflecting and communicating what is on the other side.

The walls are thin. Parrots pay close attention to sound. Sometimes they mimic words, sometimes the sounds of the building. Visitors to this room hear the parrots on the other side of the wall, repeating the words of the visitors.

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Though parrots' hearing is neither as sensitive in volume nor frequency range as humans, their brains devote more attention to sound than humans.

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The process of selectively responding to stimuli or range of stimulus is called attention. Selective processing of received stimuli leads to perception. Perception and attention are also known as "being".

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Morphemes are the smallest meaningful elements of a language. Phonemes are the basic units of speech of a language that are used to create morphemes and words. The main difference between a morpheme and phoneme is that while a morpheme carries a concrete meaning, a phoneme itself does not carry any meaning at all.

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The species in this room is called the quaker parrot (*Myiopsitta monachus*) in the family Psittacidae, also known as the monk parakeet. The name of quaker parrots has only a loose association with the religious denomination known as Quakers. It is thought that the parrots' name actually came from the mid-18th century English offshoot of Quakerism called Shakers. The back-and-forth shaking or rocking of the head of quaker parrots is exclusive to this species.

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At the funeral of President Andrew Jackson, his parrot was swearing so much they had to be removed from the church at his funeral.

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William McKinley had a parrot named Washington Post.

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Washington Post columnist Dana Millbank wrote an entire article trying to understand the relationship between the parrot and our current times. Using the term parroting to describe people who tend to repeat the last thing they hear, Millbank wondered if parrots might just be chameleons of language, hiding under a camouflage skin in order to disappear aurally into their surroundings.

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One theory of parrots' tremendous capacity at mimicry is that it allows them to address sounds as if by name. Sounds are names. Names are greetings. Greetings are relays.

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The top twelve names for Quaker Parrots are Budgie, Charlie, Buddy, Malcolm, Angel, Sky, Mojo, Sunny, Tweety, Polly, Pea. These are in order.

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A relay is a group of people or animals engaged in a task or activity for a fixed period of time and then replaced by a similar group, i.e. "the wagons were pulled by relays of horses."

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Relays reinvent relevant relationships.

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A relay is a signal. A signal is a sign.

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In 1962, the art historian George Kubler wrote, "The nature of a signal is that its message is neither here nor now, but there and then. If it is a signal it is a past action, no longer embraced by the 'now' of present being. The perception of a signal happens 'now,' but its impulse and its transmission happened 'then'....the present instant is the plane upon which the signals of all being are projected."

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The words of and the have no internal structure capable of carrying meaning.

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The more complex a social structure, the greater the need for sophisticated communication.

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A defining element of the Quaker religious order is the formation of collective, non-hierarchical social communities.. As a central part of their practice, Quakers sit mutely in silence in a square or circle facing an empty center space. Quakers speak only when moved by the spirit even if what they say has no clear personal significance.

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To mute is to mutate. The converging paths of these wanderers alter the mover.

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Quaker parrots live in large social groups in the wild.

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The mover is the shaker.

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The most important function of attention is selectivity. Selectivity refers to a process by which attention is focused on stimuli of ongoing interest and other stimuli are ignored. Selective attention acts as a filter, allowing some information in and other (unwanted) information out. The best example of selective listening is the "cocktail-party effect", in which a person's attention, and therefore their ability to listen, is diverted away from their primary conversation towards the aural stimulus of adjacent conversations, even if those conversations are imperfectly audible.

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Bruce Thomas Boehrer wrote "From their earliest entry into western cultural awareness, parrots have been subject to conflicting representational impulses that seek to depict the parrot as exotic and miraculous while simultaneously exposing them to various kinds of ridicule and contempt."

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Research states that the evolutionarily advantageous benefit of parrot learning is that they are finely attuned to and capable of context-specific calls. Their ability to mimic may also show an attunement for hearing, memory, and muscle control. Parrots have a tremendous capacity to pick up new languages, yet they also react desirably to their local tongue.

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Quaker parrots are known as the “colony nesters” of the parrot species. Their community nests are often built to accommodate up to 40 birds. Often, with large nests, one sees other small species within.

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In the wild, quaker parrots often construct their nests on cliff sides or trees’ canopies. When living in cities, their favorite locations are those that give them warmth in winter and can withstand the weight of their giant homes. They often nest on - rooftops, lighting poles, power lines, floodlights, utility poles, and air-conditioning systems.

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Architecture connects while it separates.

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Quaker parrots create some of the most complex architectural arrangements of all birds’ nests. Each nesting unit is divided into three parts: the entrance, the bedroom, and the living area.. The entrance is a foyer, used for entry, exit, and keeping watch. The primary use of the bedroom is for mating, laying eggs, and hatching them. After a month the young ones are moved into the living area.

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The presumed origin of the quaker parrot is a small area on the 40th parallel in the southern hemisphere. New York City is on the 40th parallel in the northern hemisphere.

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In the late 1960s and early 1970s, tens of thousands of quaker parrots were imported to the United States as pets. Many birds have been released either deliberately or by accident by their owners, and some may have also escaped during transport. The quaker parrot is now found in at least 14 US states. In large urbanized areas such as New York City and Chicago, they form large, noisy flocks that can be heard from great distances away.

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The quaker parrot is one of the few species that are kept as pets in geographical areas where they are also found in the wild.

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The symbolic meanings of parrots have changed over time. In the middle ages the parrot was seen as a sentient, articulate, and miraculous.

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In other times, they have been compared to other various human traits and roles. Reiterative prattling. Inane repetition. Intellectual vacuousness. Idiot savant. Allowed fool. Unpredictable record keeper. Mindless.

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It has been remarked that symbolic animals, like real ones, "must adapt to their environment or die."

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It has been said that parrots are to birds as humans are to apes.

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Quaker worship is based on a silence of expectancy.

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Like parrots, we find each other in the sounds we utter.

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To play is to replay. To replay is to replicate.

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What mirrors also mocks. What replicates also reifies.

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No two Quaker meetings are the same.

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Walls between units are meant to separate sound, sight, and bodies. A room is a unit, a building is a unit, a city is a unit, a nation is a unit.

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The grammar of habitable space is called architecture. The grammatical structure of language is called morphology. A morpheme is a term used to describe the smallest unit of language that can be analyzed. The term was invented in the 19th century to describe the structure of animals and plants. Animal dwellings have been referred to as architecture only recently.

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Parrots' outer ears have been compared to thin walls. Humans' outer ears have been compared to tunnels.

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What might we learn from the parrot?

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Any of the previous text may be spoken to the parrot.

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This work is dedicated to Thomas Hutton's *The Garden*.

