

The Panther

In the Jardin des Plantes, Paris

His gaze is from the passing of bars
so exhausted, that it doesn't hold a thing anymore.
For him, it's as if there were thousands of bars
and behind the thousands of bars no world.

The sure stride of lithe, powerful steps,
that around the smallest of circles turns,
is like a dance of pure energy about a center,
in which a great will stands numbed.

Only occasionally, without a sound, do the covers
of the eyes slide open —. An image rushes in,
goes through the tensed silence of the frame—
only to vanish, forever, in the heart.

Rainer Maria Rilke (tr. Cliff Crego)