

## The Panther

by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Stephen Mitchell

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold  
anything else. It seems to him there are  
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,  
the movement of his powerful soft strides  
is like a ritual dance around a center  
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils  
lifts, quietly--. An image enters in,  
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,  
plunges into the heart and is gone.