

The Panther

From seeing the bars, his seeing is so exhausted
that it no longer holds anything anymore.
To him the world is bars, a hundred thousand
bars, and behind the bars, nothing.

The lithe swinging of that rhythmical easy stride
which circles down to the tiniest hub
is like a dance of energy around a point
in which a great will stands stunned and numb.

Only at times the curtains of the pupil rise
without a sound . . . then a shape enters,
slips though the tightened silence of the shoulders,
reaches the heart, and dies.

--Trans. Robert Bly

The Panther (4 Translations)

THE PANTHER

His tired gaze--from passing endless bars--
has turned into a vacant stare which nothing holds.
To him there seem to be a thousand bars,
and out beyond these bars exists no world.

His supple gait, the smoothness of strong strides
that gently turn in ever smaller circles
perform a dance of strength, centered deep within
a will, stunned, but untamed, indomitable.

But sometimes the curtains of his eyelids part,
the pupils of his eyes dilate as images
of past encounters enter while through his limbs
a tension strains in silence
only to cease to be, to die within his heart.

--Trans. Albert Ernest Flemming

The Panther

The pacing past the bars, the steady stare
A tiredness grown so nothing holds him here
Of a thousand iron bars he seems aware
A thousand bars, no world beyond this sphere.

With supple strength, with soft and gentle mode
He turns in smallest circles about his flank
It's like a dance of power around a node
His great volition standing stunned and blank.

Sometimes his eyelids rise so he can sense
A picture enter in the moment's part
Descend through limbs of sinew, silent, tense
And thinning, fading, cease within his heart.

--Trans. by Gerald Duffy

by Ranier Maria Rilke

THE PANTHER

His gaze, so worn with passing through the bars,
holds nothing now, not even its own stare.
There is, it seems to him, a thousand bars,
and past the thousand bars, no world out there.

The soft padding of his strong paws on the floor,
Revolving in the smallest ring of all,
is like a dance of power round a core
in which a mighty will stands stunned, in stall.

Sometimes the shutter of his pupil parts
without a sound – and then an image will
slip through the silent tension of the limbs
until, stopped in the heart, it's still.

--Trans. by Winslow Shea

The Panther

This poem by Rilke is given to you in four different translations from the original German. For this exercise I want you to create a google doc in this assignment and answer the following three questions about your reading. The next part of the assignment involves you working with re-creating the poem.

The Questions

Q1: What is the apparent focus , think tone and the emotion/reaction created within you the reader, of each of the four translations? What is your reason for suggesting this focus for each?

Q2: In which poem do you as a reader feel them greatest empathy for the panther? How can this panther's situation be related to in human terms (offer a story)?

Q3: Which of the four translations do you prefer and why?

The Reconstruction

1. Compare each individual line of each of the four translations. Select the strongest line 1 and retype it below. Do the same for line 2, line 3, etc.
2. Now, bold the individual word in each of the lines which you feel is the most emphatic or necessary word in the line.
3. Create a new poem using just these single lines from each of the poems.
4. Revise if needed.
5. Publish with a graphic and/or fancy scripting or formatting.