

poetry

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At Work

Gentle Locke sits down to write his famous treatise
He sees tiny titmice alighting outside his window
Each day he hangs a piece of suet for them
Each day two scarlet cardinals appear
And each day they fly away at his first movement
Though he'd never chase them away they are so beautiful

When they return a moment later Locke holds his breath
In front of him extends the landscape of England
He looks at the snow cheerfully sparkling on the hills
He hears from behind the reassuring crackle of flames in the fireplace
He feels a blissful peace circulating inside

Suddenly his features harden and fury shoots from his eyes
He remembers the Stuarts

Dying Boxer

In the corridor from the locker room the slain boxers are coming toward me
They march solemnly in their brilliant robes
With their crushed ears plaster on their eyebrows hematomas on their brains
bandages on their hands
They are led by the world champions Kid Paret the splendid Cuban and
Davey Moore the glorious American
There is also the little Japanese Voshimi Kubo the superb technician and the
lefthanded Englishman Lyn Jones famous for his ability to take a punch
And the popular favorites from all countries with two Polish boys Lesniak
and Kierula blond and frightened

They stop next to me when the referee raises his hands to the sky
And when the angels of agony put their black trumpets to their lips
In order to proclaim my fifty-fourth win
Before my seconds notice I am dying

Penguins

The protective instinct among the emperor penguins
(Adolf Remane, *Das sozial Leben der Tiere*)

Attains monstrous dimensions:
It reaches a point where one nestling
Is looked after by dozens of parents

The drive to hatch the eggs
And to warm and feed the nestlings
(Observed and described by Adolf Portmann and Sapin-Jaloustre)
Is all-powerful for the emperor penguins
The impulse for possession and care of the nestling
Is so strong among these birds
That the natural historian Wilson calls it most pathetic:

. . . As soon as the nestling leaves the brood-fold on the abdomen of the adult bird or is abandoned by it, a compact throng of excited penguins appears . . . These are birds without progeny who want to appropriate the nestling . . . Converging on the nestling, and furiously pecking away at each other, each adult bird attempts to set it on its feet, to keep it from being exposed on the ice . . .

Their love is touching
And relentless
During this violent adoption
The young are wounded
Some of them fall
Others try to escape
They squeeze into cracks in the ice
And prefer to freeze or starve to death