

Ned Balbo

Blue Panther

Fancier than the fanciest Gloucester Fancy,
canaries not of a feather flocked, flashed past,
and, parrot-sized, kept changing as they flew,
caged multicolored singing specimens
jailed under bars so widely spaced apart
each fluttered through and fled away to danger,
beauty beyond control, ill-suited cage
vanishing as they left. I was so angry
I might have woken then....But one remained,
more Rilkean than avian, transformed—
blue panther padding toward me, whiskered muzzle
turned up, eyes aglint in recognition,
as if fixed to choose, above all others,
one who'd known him in some other guise.