

Birds and Beasts

Eve Fisher

I've heard that birds, when put into a cage,
will beat themselves against the bars
until they're half-dead and senseless.
I've never seen it.
I've seen some quiet birds-
stunned, perhaps, by efforts to escape-
but most hop and chirp and sing with seeming joy.

The great cats don't.
They wear out their hearts and paws in endless pacing,
a steady sodden growling rasping their throats
as wetly raw as their shoulders and their flanks.

They should win my pity, but they don't.
While birds practice art in deprivation,
feigning joy until they find it or create it
or half-mad half-believe it,
the great cats walk their sorry treadmill
making dust.