

1976

# Dying Boxer

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# poetry

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ARTUR MIEDZYRZECKI / POLAND

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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 ap-  
propriate the nestling . . . Converging on the nest-  
ling, 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