

CAPTURING THE CAT OF ONE COLOR
(Felis concolor)

Cougar, puma, panther (old timers say painter),
by any name, he's hard to find. She's harder.
But if your backpack is light, and your step--
if westering luck is just so, and the wind,
your six senses stropped on its wake-- you may
see him. You won't forget a mountain lion's eyes.
Nothing in those eyes spells trust
but no malice either, despite men's lies.

Now I'm the painter-- searching my film, hunting
my palette for his only color--alloy of gold idols
and summer lightning-- eyes burning easy cool
in tanned grass or rocks matching cat shade
and shape, cat stillness.
Cat designed for quiet and quick and gone.

Human tongues rhyme cougar with vermin. Anathema
in cow country, dogs and bullets
the exclamation points of rationale. Human ears
close on all but myth and maligning epithets
for one wanting nothing but unseen solitude.
The fluent feline glance encodes the sum--
a shrug of fact, a lazy blink.

Caught now

leaping the kindred sun between high boulders,
framed free on my sprocketed strip of truth,
the glory repeats across my screen
while I stroke and gild him to canvas

and pray it's not the only place he's saved.