

The Lion at Franklin Park

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In 1975, it was estimated there were about 250,000 lions in Africa. Today there are a mere 25- to 30,000, representing an 80- to 90% decline. This fact combined with the "fragmentation and isolation of those remaining sub-populations" indicate little long-term viability. www.worldlionday.com

We observe you in sunlight, golden offering
on a sculptured mound, blinking, throwing back your head
to shake off annoyances. Do you avert your eyes
to ignore us?

What has memory imprinted on you
in cages you pace in ever maddening circles?
Games of life and death in Rome's coliseum, a circus tent?
How cavalierly we have used you.

Loyal companion, marrying for life, symbol of bravery,
your image decorates ancient palaces, family crests.
You are prized in statuary. With your seated twin
your noble presence guards our library.

Seeing you stare beyond us and the dizzying moat
how can we not wonder of your dreams—
forest fern, monkey hoot, bird screech.
In such confines, what would we dream?