

Lion

“The face of a... patient has been clinically described as the ‘lion face’... neither tragic nor comic... (which)... indicates only an absence. It is a mask in the most literal sense.”

—John Bayley, *Elegy for Iris*

Not that grand, not that mask-like
muzzle and stone eyes

yet.

But the nobility. And the
occasional roar.

Tossing his heavy,
proud head

as one bothered by
gnats.

So he ambles, on careful
large feet, unsteadily

through his days.

“Let him,” as he used to say,
“not be nibbled to death

by ducks.”

I say, who have
never known him.