

2011 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Cynthia Li

The kitten's war

She prowls behind her favorite spot
unseen behind the swivel chair
she hulks, the small black shadow waits
until the favorite creak is heard

At once she's coiled around those legs
His or Hers, it matters little
her whiskers quiver, small mouth parts
to let loose string of grievances

"I have not eaten since last night
"the kibble's stale, do you expect
"a feline of my pedigree
"to stomach this excuse for food?"

Pats on the head deter her not
sharp words can't even hope to stop
her venture up the counter-top
to argue her case earnestly

"Don't you detect my whiskers droop?
"My fur has quite now lost its shine
"my eyes are dull--I am so starved!
"Cannot one scrap be spared for me?"

She pleads and purrs convincingly
plays at their weakness like a pro
until at last, the breaking point,
she sees her honest work's reward

A sigh, part of a sandwich torn
descends from plate onto the floor
and she drags it 'round and 'round
on her triumphant vict'ry tour

Then when she's scarfed it end to end
with no more trophies to be scored
she washes her small face and yawns
the fight for ham: a kitten's war

First rain

I sometimes feel our space defines us
gives me my lines/my skin/my limits
what I can't do holds my can do together
if I could do anything, I think
I would become anything
sparks rising from the crackling fire
disappearing into smoke and dark
there is not anything safe enough to be

I sometimes feel our space has done poorly
for itself I find my skin/your skin blending
into this hodgepodge gasoline rainbow
I'm not sure I like it, this
mix of two people isn't how it should be
I dance alone, I step on toes that aren't
mine and sometimes mine
are stepped on too and then they bleed

I sometimes feel too close to you and
in a panic I can only push and push until
I think I can breathe again only to find
you so far away, and then
I feel too cold and hold out my hands
so you can pull me back into your flesh
like we're one big bowl of human
glop of something more than one, but one

I sometimes feel I'm losing me
and I know it's because your thoughts
are creeping into my head and I can't stop
mine from invading yours, it's
like two attics sharing marbles
I start craving junk food and smokes, while
you insist shoes not be left on in the house
and the lines become so hard to see

I sometimes feel there's no other way
to love you, and this is how it must always
be for us--stripped of our surface tensions like
two skinned raindrops adhering, clinging
for dear life; it's not enough
to hold, I find I mold to your strange shape
like putty and wait for our hearts, apart, to match

no dance

I have danced no dance that could
have been seen by anyone
as "art"

no one will take the shape my body carves
into the space surrounding
it and say
"this is profound."

there are some songs I hear when I
am inside a friend's car, songs
that make me say
"I could dance to that."

and every time I know I'm lying
because no song on this earth can make me
move with grace

yet I still move
whether I get credit for it
or not

I still move.