

## The Cat Seeing Through The Wall At Us

Kristen Gallagher

In the cozy polyester cup  
of a blue flower-shaped pod  
from Ikea, far, far away  
from the nineteenth century  
science of animals that denied  
them language and experience  
Poppy the cat cleans the  
calico head of the new rescue  
kitten, who hisses and spits  
but, allows it, and sits.  
That's cat language for  
this is scary and strange  
but I think I'm enjoying it,  
being licked by an elder  
in a soft bed. *Poppy has  
magical powers*, says  
Matty to her dad, when the  
rescue, named Sriracha,  
closes her eyes and crumbles  
sideways under the solicitude of  
Poppy's sandpaper tongue.  
*No*, says dad  
and then something vaguely  
scientific sounding  
*it's not magic*, somewhat  
sardonically, as a former  
humanities major who doesn't  
understand science but loves  
to invoke it.

I dwell  
in a secret  
middle just the  
eavesdropping neighbor  
outside their window, who  
knows a cat's critical flicker  
fusion frequency, ie, the rate  
they see, in frames per  
second, is slower than  
humans, so they perceive  
slow-moving situations  
better than we do  
stacked alongside the  
pre-colonial spiritualists  
who say spirits move

in two styles – very very fast  
or very very slow, perhaps  
they slow down just for the  
cats? like the rational and the  
irrational, moving sideways  
apart in mid air, eventually  
we are left with a secret  
third thing submerged  
some shaking  
uncertainty of wind  
long haunting human minds  
with certainty that seemed  
inevitable and real.  
who knows?  
I like not to know  
until I do. *But*  
*I saw it on the internet!*  
*cats see things*  
*we can't!* shrieks Matty.  
Dad frowns and  
rolls his eyes from his  
Victorian wing-backed chair.  
The dog comes to the window  
and looks at me with  
sad puppy eyes, of course,  
a puppy language that says  
*I've been here this whole time,*  
*and no one has rubbed me*  
*in a minute.* Then just as I  
stand up, Sriracha startles,  
and stares intently  
at the far wall — *okay, so*  
*what's she looking at,* asks  
dad. *Maybe,* says Matty,  
*she hears something,*  
*where is it coming from?*  
an old language  
we've forgotten  
imperfect but closer to earth  
but even in Eden there  
can be misunderstanding  
and boss dads, and buzzkill  
gods, and probably even  
Real Ghosts, as Sririacha,  
it seems, may see  
here on Earth, a heaven  
already for her, once more.