**Lady Feeding the Cats**

Douglas Stewart

1

Shuffling along in her broken shoes from the slums,

A blue-eyed lady showing the weather’s stain,

Her long dress green and black like a pine in the rain,

Her bonnet much bedraggled, daily she comes

Uphill past the Moreton Bays and the smoky gums

With a sack of bones on her back and a song in her brain

To feed those outlaws prowling about the Domain,

Those furtive she-cats and those villainous toms.

Proudly they step to meet her, they march together

With an arching of backs and a waving of plumy tails

And smiles that swear they never would harm a feather.

They rub at her legs for the bounty that never fails,

They think she is a princess out of a tower,

And so she is, she is trembling with love and power.

2

Meat, it is true, is meat, and demands attention

But this is the sweetest moment that they know

Whose courtship even is a hiss, a howl and a blow.

At so much kindness passing their comprehension

– Beggars and rogues who never deserved this pension –

Some recollection of old punctilio

Dawns in their eyes, and as she moves to go

They turn their battered heads in condescension.

She smiles and walks back lightly to the slums.

If she has fed their bodies, they have fed

More than the body in her; they purr like drums,

Their tails are banners and fountains inside her head.

The times are hard for exiled aristocrats,

But gracious and sweet it is to be queen of the cats.

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4

* This scene would normally be seen with distaste or discomfort by an observer- objective viewpoint BUT the poet is conveying a much more sympathetic view of the lady for the viewer
* Both cats and woman are presented with **dignity** by the poet. We are moved to appreciate the ritual. The reader changes their view and is encouraged to respect the uniqueness of the scene.