

## THE CAT'S MEOW

Luzma Umpierre

Back home, our cats were not for show.

They did not receive Meow, Meow meals  
or gourmet cans of excess tuna.

Cats were weapons in our war on need.

A professional cat would rid us of mice,  
a dreaded fear,

while she savored a rich protein meal for the labor gained.

"Disgusting!" you might say.

But have you ever detected roaches walking on your body at night?

Have you endured rats biting your children in their cribs?

Have you ever required your alleged "bare necessities?"

Bare necessities in this land were not the bare essentials at home.

A bar of Dove-soap was not a wanton need;

lucky if we had Octagon.

A cat at home was always at risk.

She did not doze on comfortable couches;

or plush pillows bought at the Petty Pity Pet Shop.

Tile or concrete floors were the frills while worrying . . .

That a car might kill her in her catnap,

that someone might hunt her in the night for sport,

or the neighbor poison a ball of meat, tired of her cat's meow.

Cats further banqueted on our rice and beans  
or any non-aesthete delicacy leftover from our meals.  
A cat back then was a true protection in our brawl with paucities.  
Yes, a cat, *sata, callejera*, non-pedigreed,  
just Lucy.