**My Rival's House**

is peopled with many surfaces.

Ormolu and gilt, slipper satin,

lush velvet couches,

cushions so stiff you cant sink in.

Tables polished clear enough to see distortions in.

We take our shoes off at her door,

shuffle stocking-soled, tiptoe – the parquet floor

is beautiful and its surface must

be protected. Dust-

cover, drawn shade,

won’t let the surface colour fade.

Silver sugar-tongs and silver salver,

my rival serves us tea.

She glosses over him and me.

I am all edges, a surface, a shell

and yet my rival thinks she means me well.

But what squirms beneath her surface I can tell.

Soon, my rival

capped tooth, polished nail

will fight, fight foul for her survival.

Deferential, daughterly, I sip

and thank her nicely for each bitter cup.

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And I have much to thank her for.

This son she bore –

first blood to her –

never, never can escape scot free

the sour potluck of family.

And oh how close

this family that furnishes my rival’s place.

Lady of the house.

Queen bee.

She is far more unconscious,

far more dangerous than me.

Listen, I was always my own worst enemy.

She has taken even this from me.

She dishes up her dreams for breakfast.

Dinner, and her salt tears pepper our soup.

She won’t

give up.