

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

*Monica McAlpine*  
**Double Portrait**

If I peer deeply into those slanted eyes  
slotted in below your tufted ears,  
will I be able to look back out of them  
into the eyes of the cameraman?  
I know he's there. You're the proof.  
Only the top half of your tiger-striped torso  
is visible above the chair back  
over which you have casually draped  
one many-toed paw. If I didn't know better,  
I'd say you were sitting in that chair  
softly furred legs crossed, a cigarette  
dangling from your other paw.  
Your gaze, not quite meeting my own,  
calls to me and rebuffs me,  
establishing the distance required  
by the aloofness of your species,  
your pride, your pain, our secretiveness  
that left so much unsaid, that left me here  
talking to a shadow neither cat nor man.