

NEIGHBORS

I.

The stained glass window under the narrow gable
flooding the golden oak with rainbow light
cheers the frail scions of the family
who seldom venture from their sanctuary
now times are no longer right.

But often peering from the close-drawn louvers
beyond the hedge to where the lawn once was,
their sad eyes see the vanished summer house,
lacy as a candy box or valentine
and the old trellis where the wisteria vine
shed opalescent tears upon the grass,

and then they sigh, perhaps remembering
croquet and coquetry, the firefly evenings,
cream-white flannels, embroidered muslin dresses,
gay striped blazer, beribboned pompadour,
the paper lanterns, the tinkling mandolins
of a world that seemed so sure.

II.

The picture window of the brick-faced ranch-type,
lidless and bold, a wide Cyclopean eye,
stares at the sun and at each fierce barrage
of wind-swept rain as if it meant to gauge
the motives of the sky.

It gazes out across the concrete terrace
and a modern altar, the backyard barbecue,
where in the day's transparent gold and blue
lithe youthful figures, bright-clad acolytes
with tinkling glasses, king-size cigarettes
together do just as their comrades do,

leaning upon the easy formula.
the handy phrase or recent oracle,
following a fad, a ready ritual,
seeming quite certain of the way to go,
yet in the glimmering starlight well aware
of all there is to know.

Mildred Cousens