

D'ARCY RANDALL

SLIDES

We do not own a proper screen and so,
We shine our slides up on a sheet,
 pinned to the curtain in the dining room.
Many things we do not own — how pious
To sleek through our experience like neat jets.
But this carousel, crown of an old winter,
Shows us ourselves in mountains, 1968 —
 blue white and bright parkas,
Children frosted pink and Ted, just thirteen,
 not knowing how to hold his frame.

The scene behind us could have been another slide
 thrown on a perfect space,
But here the wrinkled sheet faults
 a poised winter's day;
The curtain underneath makes shadows
 where I remember none;
And then behind the window quiet night
 hurls herself around the traps of time.

CHRISTINE STEWART

EVENING WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

Only the old woman crouches
on the couch, at six p.m. precise
for her daily feast of shootings, hangings
and global holocausts; these are the items
which alone can touch a smirk of triumph
to her solitary mouth; or perhaps
if it is rich enough, a sorry tale
of politics and traitors.

 Mum is in the kitchen.
Sufficiently removed from the psychedelic gleam
of the mandatory seven hundred dollar colour set
she grapples with the peas, the spuds, the pumpkin
dares to try again the brand new microwave

a silver anniversary gift from all her children
some of whom are left, uneasy, poised to follow
older brother on the restless road
to the dusty borders of experience.

Evening

is a time for steaming showers and tales
of where the day went in the marketplace of souls
we call employment. Dad is in his chair
already, his beer beside him, his small dog
curled contented in his lap.

The meal is so
predictable, and must be finished on the nose
of seven, in time for quiz shows and some more
desultory talk that tears apart today
and shapes tomorrow. This will cease
when the high point of the evening glows
in technicolour slabs of rationed soapies
their counterpoint of glamour and disaster
repeated and repeated, convincing us
that what we have here is not life at all: for how
can life be lived, unless appropriately garbed
in thousand dollar gowns and business mergers?

The letdown comes with washing up. We are here
real, but not alive, so we believe
with soapsud hands and plastic buckets full of scraps.

But still, at evening's end
when granny has been put to bed with pills
the goodnight smiles we all wear for each other
are absolutely bare of make-up.