

John Kinsella
from *Purgatorio: Up Close*

Canto Of Declamatory Players

Who describes where we are without thinking
of when we'll leave it? Declamatory players,
wasps rebuilding, mosquitoes emerging

where there's no oil upon waters: bite on bite
driving you back in behind flywire, night sky
anathema, star wheel locked in its carded sleeve.

Events, you force to order: unbalanced wheel
that wears heavily on inmost orbit of tyre,
a tremor in steerage, constant correcting

to keep it going towards the mountain.
A double flight of tawny frogmouths:
cryptic colouration so still on a day-lit branch,

they transfigure, overlooked to await the negative:
and yet, in sharply diffused paradox of high beam,
they are bright angels driving off a snake

that sleeps at night, coiled about the core.
What takes the ants from their bare empire
out on trails of trade and exploration,

to spend months scouring one eucalypt
and to leave it just as suddenly, pathway
smooth through stubble neglected,

closing over, others to younger eucalypts
opened up and polished through travel in no time?
So, we watch the ants. Trace minute heat signatures

in a realm of heat. So, double-struck by lightning,
I wait half anxious and half inviting the next strike,
clouds cloistering, grinding to draw static

out of rocks and dirt, illuminate water.
And Stephen, planting trees to close us in,
all others out; or, looking past hills, inland,

thinking of oceans, waves that keep him under,
under-currents that churn him over and over.
And Katherine, surrounding the house,

rapping at the shutters crying through the locks.
And John, building, building, building,
keeping the elements out, making shelter.

And Wendy, negotiating with neighbours,
wondering why here is no better than anywhere else.
And Tracy, wondering in other languages,

writing elegies, reliving her births. And Timmy,
counting, singing, tapping out a tune to the full moon,
the “beautiful mountain” covered in cloud.

Before long grass is cut, you can follow
swirls and counter-swirls of willy-willy paths:
different and collusive narratives, often

moving counter-clockwise, against the clock.
In that small tornado’s time, Katherine and her
friend Zoë make up, and sell their hand-crafted

jewellery at York’s once-a-month Saturday markets,
a five-dollar stall that contributes to a fund
for the starving in Africa: here, donations are generic

to many, but they don't mind making one.
Hearing music – the drums from Stephen's room –
I leave the car, headlights off, to glower under stars,

here music that's heaven, hell, and purgatory
rolled into one: what other way is there here
where all "kingdoms" are one and none.



Canto Apostrophes

You, mouse in the atrium, runner
of wall cavities, traverser of steel frame
between brick and gyprock,

immiscible singer of endless nightmare,
as right as rain, as up and Adam,
as trawling the depths;

asserting additive territory,
who skip in from outside
broad field in moonlight

laden with seed? Composing
mateship and courtship rituals
not yet tested for? You, subdivisions,

to draft clean air bills
in roof cavity, or knock down
chicken-wire inflection

where fowl are no longer,
common fence with unmade
roadway, terrace shifting tense?

Or driving out, past crow
and blazon feather of Port Lincoln,
wing feather attributing wobble

in solar exposition: going back
down the hill, about-facing
the long trek to estuarine water,

boats lever-arching out
of each wake, to clatter
mast against means and agent.

Stray dogs, pack sheep,
ponies, alpacas, against the fence,
and pink and greys

conserving interests: intense
on mowed green tint,
hooking seeds that won't sprout.



Dream Canto 8 – Recurring: Doodenanning Golf Course

Swear it has been dreamt before? Same steps
out on the golf course, the layers of oil and dirt,
jam trees and deformed wandoos with termite-

hollowed limbs like ventricles of the heart?
The second nine stretched out through salt scald?
But there's vegetation missing: grasses, acacia

saplings... more than lost to the *second driest Autumn*
on record. Records. Every year, more records.
You dream of it as Timmy dreams orange juice,

orange sky, orange soil, orange trees, the mountain
as orange. Here, it's a thin carpet of ash and char,
a burning off to keep the fairways and rough

“manageable”... the roos up against the fences
with no feed where feed was already thin,
and families down by the tennis courts

chopping deadwood with a chainsaw,
something religious about them, something
like a church group out for the long weekend,

playing tennis, indifferent to golf: calling
out to us as we step out: *strangers strangers strangers*,
out here beyond the shire's circulatory system:

what business do they have here? Why do they
walk the course, looking at pink and greys
and analysing the droppings of marsupials:
outside the game, outside the discourse?