

JOHN KINSELLA

*Love Sonnets: Taking the First Two Lines of  
Zora Cross's Love Sonnets and . . .*

XI.

Your brows are like a vale in Thessaly,  
Where tall brown pines reach a turquoise sky;  
As jarrah doesn't reach anything now, chopped out  
Along the highway; Main Roads, being Main Roads, can knock  
Down anything they want to knock down; racist attacks  
In Perth and the Australian Nationalists saying no not we,  
But we know their signature, the silent majority; the girl with "nice  
tits"  
Covered in biro script: "The face of the yellow peril . . .", her heritage  
Not from Anthologies of The Best White Australian Males; three small  
yachts  
On the Swan River indifferent to the trashing of the Jewish  
Bakery. Or are they? We buy bread there: vegan; Donner's  
*Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, the anatomy of pleasures:  
A lovely mid-winter's day, mini-skirts and tank-tops; this application  
For certificate that lesser conviction is spent; hearsay, say-so.

XII.

I find it in your lips and in your eyes;  
I find it in the footfalls that you leave;  
I find it in the mud stirred up on the torn gravel driveway;  
I find it in your clothing on its way to the wash;  
I find it in the blood rising to your face at times of stress;  
I find it in the relief of let down as our son draws at your breast;  
I find it in your touch to see if I'm awake after the 5 am feed;  
I find it in your-better-than-Morticia-Adams French: *ma chérie*;  
I find it in your grammatical correctness, lexical exactitude;  
I find it in your letting your hair go and wearing "something easy";  
I find it in the affection you put into the food you prepare;  
I find it in your loathing the Prime Minister and his party of stooges;  
I find it in your belief that all poetry is vanity;  
I find it in your dislike of gossip and love of sunsets.

XIII.

I was beguiled by dreams for many years  
List'ning to those who came in your sweet name—  
But I recognised the disinformation; caught  
A reality show, slow to pick nuances  
Of speech writers, slash and burn editors  
Tantalised by Britney Spears' drinking habits;  
From Ed Hirsch's Guggenheim office  
You look out over Manhattan; the light  
Critical as Wambyn wandoo woodlands,  
As critically receptive, as under threat  
Though a quirky calm preserved, rapid  
To a still point, rapid as fence-lines  
Wiring distance, like lying in the sun  
Just too long, wattle bloom erupting from skin.

xx.

Love . . . Love! It dies . . . The fragile petals droop;  
But deep within me dips the dying scent,  
And I surface brightly thinking the Shire Council  
Will reconcile . . . the goat and olive growers,  
Who encourage sports car clubs to swoop  
Over weekends, will shindig with wheat and sheep farmers  
Who despise those who covet their lifestyle.  
Both lots keep their title deeds safely in the bank.  
Both lots in good years know they only have themselves to thank.  
The town's rekindled love charges a square metre  
Of cleared land—some termite-ridden York gum, jam tree, spent  
Granite working its way out like kidney stones. The flowers  
Of introduced weeds—daisies, wild oats—crank  
Up insect activity . . . fly eaters tear at the air . . .

XXI.

If there should be a moon above the hill  
To-night, dip down with me into the sea,  
Then let's open the old sea chest by the sill,  
The locked box with the lost key.  
Three generations before us  
My relative spoke quietly to yours,  
Three generations before us  
They locked away the secret behind closed doors.  
If there should be a moon above the hill  
To-night, dip down with me into the sea,  
For though we've been told by all  
Never to open a chest with a lost key,  
These sea-painted walls say "what's the fuss,"  
What's within will drown in us . . .

XL.

Dearest, if you who are my all should die,  
Vanish away from me and not return,  
Leave with the utes and commodores  
Racing to the annual Bachelors' and Spinsters' Ball.  
A lost slipper, mirror to a steel-capped boot,  
Collars and cuffs, cock-rings in the scrub;  
Flies open and members out; a chick with her skirts up,  
Curving her lily-white arse to the road: pissing a fountain  
That's a physics lesson, her social standing  
Vanishing with a laugh, small deaths on the asphalt  
Where later they'll drive home, flat-lining. Here, a spring day  
Is the wattle effervescent, beer kegs speared along heritage trails:  
Twenty years older and they're leaning against the chemicals,  
Admiring the economics of a crop duster "pissed as a cunt."

XLIII.

Thus do our minds unto our bodies bring  
Alluring attributes of all desire,  
The next-door neighbour is singing  
Around his paddocks: a Kafkaesque  
Killing machine, cybernetic tractor spray-pod contraption:  
Stomach pods full of adrenaline . . . we escape . . . spray drifts in our  
wake . . .  
We contemplate: what desire is post-the B&S ball?  
On the road's edge, in the day after the bacchanalia,  
The country sucked out as by a stomach pump, we count:  
Six pairs of women's knickers, a tux jacket,  
A skirt, three jumpers, a shoe, a shirt,  
Two bundles of clothes melded with beer cans . . .  
A windmill toppled and lashed to the ground . . .  
Alluring attributes of all desire.

XLIV.

Love is the sepulchre of all my sin,  
If it be sin to let the body sink,  
But not into a whirlpool of herbicides,  
Pesticides and fungicides; I know it's not worthy  
To hate, and hate's a pacifist's loose thread,  
But loathe is on the generous side: I deeply  
Loathe these ignoramuses who fuck  
People up like asbestos, making their Shire  
(Importers of raw sewerage) declared firebreaks.  
What's wrong with the plough disk turning over  
The soil along the fence-line? Caught in their cycle  
Of manipulating crops, introducing pests to feed on pests  
To feed on pests; they poison our kids, us, themselves, the air,  
Water, and land: sepulchres of sin and hate, worse than fire.



XLV.

When my imagination swiftly stains  
The perplexed pinions of my busy mind,  
I try to work out why, the skydive racket  
Of nearby can fly the day after a fatal accident;  
Driving in today, the coloured chutes  
Swung in against the blue, and I felt before we knew:  
That a swaggering nonchalance fills the local airspace.  
As I write for you our stomachs churn, the spray planes  
Buzzing the mountain, cutting arcs across the house  
In their runs out over paddocks; and as if to make  
The convolutions romantic, paragliders charge the updrafts,  
Airline flight-paths the next stage up, the other day  
A helicopter to whip it up; perverse this pleasure principle  
Working its magic: the slow tragedy, instant disaster.

XLVII.

Oh, let us not too deeply think of Life,  
Lest thinking should bring Knowledge; Knowledge, pain:  
But either way, we can feel at home in York,  
Land of clearing, spraying, slaughtering,  
Salinity, massive number of ADD cases:  
Is there a connection? Some are beginning  
To think this might be the case. Stunning  
Logic, troops. The raspberry jam trees  
Smell sweet, cut by the slasher, getting  
All pioneer on us . . . those who feed us: knowledge is power  
And power is the number of acres sprayed,  
Ah Spring riotous with the joys of spray, spray O spray,  
Callooh callay! If there weren't things to kill  
They'd have to invent them! Knowledge is life, not pain!