

JOHN KINSELLA

A Journey Prayer

for Tracy

I pray for a lowering of toxicity levels
and ebullient sunsets without other agendas;
I pray for rain during drought, and heat
when I'm cold—I pray that it works
like this for you as well, but I pray
equally against paternalism;
I pray for the colours of the ring-necked parrot,
that they might continue as bright;
I pray that I will always love my partner
as I love her now, that we won't grow apart,
caught unawares on opposite sides of the world;
I pray the ice of the polar regions retains its solidity;
I pray that my brother continues to make unique
art and music and doesn't get crushed by the headlines;
I pray that my daughter manages her evenings
without the changing light undoing her day;
I pray that baby Timothy retains his ability to laugh
at the slightest difference in our appearances—
there's a lot to be laughed over as time rolls on;
I pray that my estranged elder son knows
that I pray for him, despite the distance
that has no name, that I read in the sharp and industrious
flight of the wood swallow;
I pray my mother's broken shoulder heals
with the precision but originality of a Rodin sculpture,
and I pray that she excuses my indulgence in this prayer;
I pray that somebody appreciates the wisdom
of John's olive trees out near Quairading,
out on the edge of the salt-lands,
out where neighbours' kids
thrash the unlicensed wreck
along all firebreaks, as if they're a super highway

of communal ownership and creative abandon—
and I pray for their safety doing burn-outs,
kicking up the salty dust . . . I pray they miss fence-posts
and don't roll it on the corners;
I pray I don't stop enjoying reading the work of others,
even after my own voice has become jaded or faded
from excess—I pray I read a new poet
most days, and remember all poets I've read
every day; I pray sound and colour remain inseparable;
I pray when the lion lies down with the lamb
it's a new beginning and not an end;
I pray for reconciliation—the land to get its old names back,
with all signs being bilingual, at least—I always
think of Ireland when praying for this,
though that's an abstraction of sorts;
I pray for dead friends and all those I've never known
who are dead or want to be dead or are at risk of dying—
I pray for health and the preservation of forests;
I pray for cross-dressers and same-sex lovers,
I pray for heterosexual lovers as well;
I pray for brush-tail possums, quolls, sugar gliders, mulga parrots,
elegant parrots, galahs, and mosquitoes as representatives
of all creatures, including humans;
I pray that the neighbours not only don't spray
over our fence but that they abandon spray
altogether; I pray not to be so wilful and judgemental,
not to seek to use the power of prayer to push my own barrow,
and I pray to say thanks for those lines of Walt Whitman's:
“Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself,”
and that I learn to deny them as often as I claim empathy,
and I pray from the fringes of sleep
that you travel well, wherever it is you travel.