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Canto 5

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JOHN KINSELLA

Canto 5

As when they discover that the collective
for a gathering of crows dragging their caws
across each other's abrasive beginnings

and whittled endings is the verbally
lush and conceptually shocking "murder
of crows," growing excited with poetic

possibilities, looking for reactions
on their neighbors' faces when a line
drops like a lamb's eye or a morsel

of Poe into the workshop, emery cloth
on flywheel of grinder cutting sweetly
into the stainless steel of the cutters,

swinging on the pendulum like an entire schema
of crows and the effect is musical, rhythmical,
ear-muffs cutting out brutal tearing,

goggles thwarting showers of sparks
as angry as language used to describe them.
Outside, in a pall of smoke come up

from forest fires south, the wrathful
choke and splutter, and damn barbed wire
they set to keep theirs in, others' out...

catching skin like timing-chains
of truck motors, guiding their selves
into a brighter light, sun suffused
on the horizon like conjunctivitis.
And so, it's the 175th anniversary
of York: oldest inland town

in the state of development,
and an abattoir is on the cards
with a sky where a celebratory

zodiac is hung out to dry; it is 4 a.m.
where we begin. New York, in the main,
sleeps...in wiry upper branches

of York gums, night birds
remain calm in gleaming leaf clusters,
the slightest of breezes singing

*happy are the merciful, for they will see mercy,*
as if skin will grow back in places of skinning,
and the angel will cast its own system.