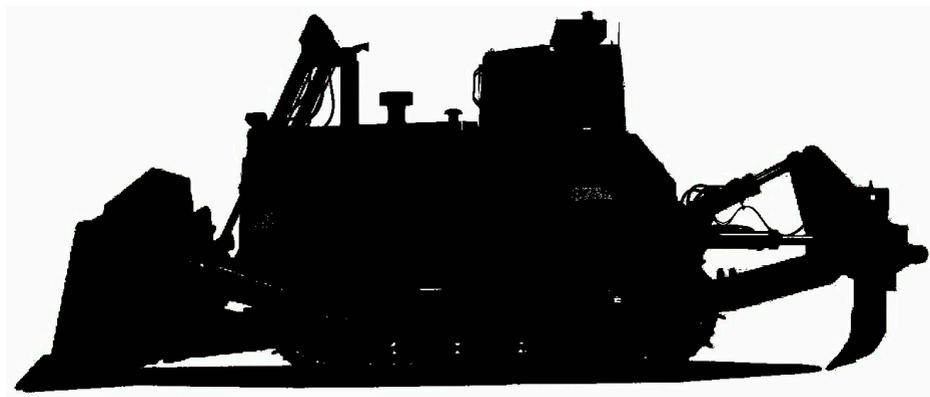


**The Other Report:
Poems Against the Destruction of the Beeliam Wetlands**



**JOHN KINSELLA
J. P. QUINTON**

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Poems by J. P. Quinton

Environment Minister Haiku

Offset properties
are always available —
after bulldozing.

Notes From My First Protest

You may have never protested before.
To stand in the way of Roe 8 feels wrong.
To take a day off work to hold a banner feels wrong.
You'll be called a bum. They'll say you're unemployed,
have nothing better to do. The 'mainstream'
will tell you the 'development' is going ahead, the 'plans'
have been in the 'works' for years,
that clearing native bushland is necessary for 'progress',
that the 'proper' environmental protection measures
have been taken, don't worry friend.

But the government doesn't follow their own guidelines,
they say the native animals will be trapped,
moved to other areas, yet we know few animals survive.

On North Lake Road the fencing contractors are asked
to turn their music off, the police can't hear their intercom.
The police apply suncream and help the fencing contractors
move traffic cones. The police ask one another
if they are right for water, and say *we could be here all summer*.
How does a woman, shifting from one foot to another, become a police force?
How do a few scribbles on a napkin become a highway in a wetland?

In the shade of a flame tree the protesters hold banners
and car horns beep and a pair of pink and grey galahs fly overhead.
When my parents were my age if a 'development' was taking place,
there was no temporary fencing, no security guards.
When my parents were my age protesting was not illegal
and developers need not chop down trees in the dead of night.

I grew up where the damage had already been done;
the river dredged, three-billion-year-old wetlands filled with yellow sand.
In Tonkin Business park, giant ziggurats were built to cover toxic waste,
the destruction was older than me — the river poisoned before my birth.

Where there is no bush the bush cannot regenerate. When I was three...

Zulu

At about 10:30 p.m. our eyes can hardly make out the black cockatoo sitting on her head, as she plays a guitar. His name is Zulu and he hates camera flash, her ears still ring as Zulu walks from shoulder to shoulder ducking the lens. As a baby Zulu was hit by a car on Progress Drive rescued and nursed in intensive care for three days and nights. Nursed back to the living and now he screams and lets you know when he's not happy, *he's got attitude*, he'll bite your hand and your neck. When he turns you catch a glimpse of his red tail feathers while his friend Archie is quiet. Archie is more of an observer, and he likes Jason's shoulder — Jason, the nurse at Native Arc, says the bushland should not be cleared, these corridors are needed for the wild birds, the wild birds that Zulu and Archie

can never rejoin — having been touched by humans, they'll be rejected. Zulu loves sucking on banksia flowers. Zulu is traumatised and goes crazy from time to time and Jason has to try to settle him, massaging the back of his neck, ruffling his tiered pinions, but Zulu will have none of this, he runs around the protest camp biting people's feet, he will live longer than the man who saved him, longer than two carers. Zulu will become the embodiment of memory, when you spend enough time with him you can sense the dead returning, through his grip on your shoulder the dead return and the tiny cut his claws make, the same claws that grip the top rung of the fence, the same fence the government put up to trap bandicoots and dugites and quendas, the same fence to keep people out, to stop them stopping the bulldozers.

Malvolio Road

In Marginata shade, with the depleted ozone
at Malvolio Road, the sandy verge is compacted
by sandals and sneakers, citizens sing
get up stand up, stand up for your rights
and a mum tells her son off for breaking grass tree fronds,
and the patrolling police ask us to stay off the street
and the Federal Member for Fremantle stands with us,
getting grey sand in his shoes
with his Ray-Bans in his back pocket.

Meanwhile, Kings Park Road architects and planners present
to Barnett government ministers their most important work,
The Perth Freight Link. The images projected on the screen
are so realistic you might think the project is already built,
the families in the photos appear so happy,
the cockatoos in the sky plentiful, the cars few
and freewheeling and the diagrams so convincing:
arrows show traffic flow and hydrology flow
and mitigation movements and meanwhile in Coolbellup
Janet works at the IGA to pay her rent, cutting open
cardboard boxes and stacking shelves. Janet knows
where every single item in the entire store goes.
On the eighth of December 2016 the temporary fence
went up across the road from her house,
and on that day, for the first time in twenty years
the family of bandicoots Janet has fed and watered and loved
stopped visiting. Two years earlier, on Kings Park Road
The Premier Colin Barnett had an idea, at the meeting table
The Premier Colin Barnett had an idea,
his idea and his alone, out of his own head Colin had an idea
where the idea came from no one present knew,
but they heard him out. Colin was so moved by his idea
he had to borrow the architects' notebook and make sketches;
*if the people of East Fremantle don't want Roe Highway
straight through their suburb, we'll build a tunnel,
a five-kilometre tunnel underneath White Gum Valley,
that'll show 'em*, said Colin. The Premier himself was so impressed
with his ingenuity he had a sip of water from the small tumbler
in front of him. The idea was so spontaneous that those present
at the polished jarrah table didn't know what to say.
A junior engineer was sent to draw up some plans.
That day, at Coolbellup IGA, Janet helped her neighbour
Kate find some polenta in aisle three and got a special
treat for the bandicoots' breakfast.

Bandicoot Burial

after Slessor

On the red North Lake Road foot path
Convoys of protectors come
At night they sing and chat by fire light
But by morning the fight goes on.

Inside the metal fence trappers catch bandicoots
And birds, lizards, and snakes,
When the heat cooks them in their prisons,
Or a wheel masses their spine

Someone, it seems, has time for this.
To shoo off the flies, to examine the cadaver
To show the body to the drivers,
And turn a spade to open the sepulchre.

This mulch cross, the flame tree drip line
The fence strung with heart-shaped notes
Written with such perplexity, with such bewildered pity,
The words choke as they begin –

Protect this place – the rainy texta
Droops and fades, the purple drips,
The breath of the bandicoot rises
As quiet as gravediggers' lips.

Hope Road

after Garcia Lorca

In grey sand on Hope Road is where she lay, she was not asleep,
the earth was no longer flat.
A dragonfly sniffed the truck fumes, she was not asleep.
And a comb-eared skink bit through the bedsheets
of the men who do not dream.
Inside the red festoon, trespassing was a kind of parallel.
Here the surveyors' spirit was broken
and the unbelievable turtle was quiet beneath the tender mud of protest.

Nobody is asleep under the truck on Hope Road, nobody.
Barbara's thin fingers play piano on the steel diff,
wrists locked, her biceps burn above the fractured skeletons
that still moan because of that first ship,
not even the dogs could out-howl the wailing.

In grey sand on Hope Road is where she lay, she was not asleep.
She looked me in the eye and looked me in the eye,
after she ran from the beating cajon
breadcrumbs flew from her shoe entrails
and the dry husks filled her hair
and she was given a thicket of reeds for a pillow.

Careful! Careful! There are phone apps for that secrecy,
there are sentries, listening blockers and white ibis wading.
There is a young woman testing her soul against the monitor,
her heart thuds over the electric pulse,
her flesh hydraulic in the dark, as dark as a raven.
We traded smiles after the engine was disabled.
Uniforms arrived with trousers creased.
The man in blue rubbed against axle grease.

Under the truck on Hope Road, metres from Bibra Lake
Barbara finds that her fears become dreams
and her forgetfulness does not exist.
A water gulp eases the machine heat
and the geo-readout shows vector veins
in the chlorophyll of gum nuts. Careful!

In grey sand on Hope Road is where she lay, she was not asleep.
Nobody could have slept through the protest,

those who stood in front of the bulldozers kept everyone awake
and those who closed their eyes
allowed the landscape of cameras.
It was there the bitter wounds began.
I have said this before,
but this time I will listen.

The Battle of North Lake Road

“If we don’t take action now, we’ll settle for nothing later” Zack de la Rocha

Your mum swims with polar bears before heading to Beeliar
she has a square blue patch pinned to her blouse
as she joins us watching an evil empire collapse
our leaders with their misfiring synapse.
Nothing makes sense, their actions don’t add up,
this bulldozer inside bush in Coolbellup.
The protectors are more compliant, more attentive
to the rules than the State is,
good luck keeping them to their word, kid.

But this is the Premier’s hamartia
after the E.P.A. failed us in the boardroom
the frontline is now the courtroom
the camera pans, a human dolly
as locals clang the fence in rage at this folly
and colonial cogs churn out arrests,
after you’ve lost patience to peacefully protest
the cops will knee-cap you, threaten violence
as the bulldozer rips apart animal silence.
Dust correlates to root depth, the drive-belt gravity,
the trunk incision, upper management depravity,
with each frame the forty-metre tree falls —
Slow. Gargantuan. De-metabolic.
Who knew Barnett’s buddies were this shambolic?
A thousand media views to each frame,
hundreds of shares, likes and vitriolic blame
into the night you truncheon nasty trolls
while on Malvolio dried blue tongue lizard skin rolls.
The now empty vision your friends see on their computer screen
Oh echo chamber, Oh deaf ear collective, listen to this:

your xmas presents won’t capture the war
the trees have with the bulldozers,
blades score the soil until the top is too light,
the musician’s play,
you pause the video, Earth-Shattering,
cockatoo scattering, drowning in mounds of dead balga trees,
the smell of lost oxygen, the fronds that no longer flap
these fallen stakeholders, you call this democracy,
the precondition to being human is hypocrisy
they say ‘the road will be built, you’re wasting your time’,

but I've seen the monk doused in petrol
so we're here to document the fall
and after the machines have left we'll go in with stitches,
every surgery a lesson to future witches
you don't need gas to have tears in your eyes
when your friend John is too shocked to cry
too confused to take notes or offer sacrifice,
too bewildered to even think, we know we're born
of a broken Environmental Protection Authority
who can't even follow their own policy.

Poems by John Kinsella

The Bulldozer Poem

Bulldozers rend flesh. Bulldozers make devils
of good people. Bulldozers are compelled to do
as they are told. Bulldozers grimace when they

tear the earth's skin — from earth they came.
Bulldozers are made by people who *also* want new
mobile phones to play games on, *and* to feed families.

Bulldozers are observers of phenomena — decisions
are taken out of their hands. They are full of perceptions.
They will hear our pleas and struggle against their masters.

Bulldozers slice & dice, bulldozers tenderise, bulldozers
reshape the sandpit, make *grrriing* noises, kids' motorskills.
Bulldozers slice the snake in half so it chases its own tail,

writing in front of its face. Bulldozers are vigorous
percussionists, sounding the snap and boom of hollows
caving in, feathers of the cockatoos a whisper in the roar.

Bulldozers deny the existence of Aether, though they know
deep down in their pistons, deep in their levers, that all
is spheres and heavens and voices of ancestors worry

at their peace. Bulldozers recognise final causes, and embrace
outcomes that put them out of work. There's always more
scrub to delete, surely... surely? O *continuous tracked tractor*,

O *S* and *U* blades, each to his orders, his skillset. Communal
as D9 Dozers (whose buckets uplift to asteroids waiting
to be quarried). O bulldozer! your history! O those Holt tractors

working the paddocks, O the first slow tanks crushing
the battlefield. The interconnectedness of Being. Philosopher!
O your Makers — Cummings and Caterpillar — O great *Cat*

we grew up in their thrall whether we knew it or not — playing
sports where the woodlands grew, where you rode in after
the great trees had been removed. You innovate and flatten.

We must know your worldliness — working with companies
to make a world of endless horizons. It's a team effort, excoriating
an eco-system. Not even you can tackle an old-growth tall tree alone.

But we know your power, your pedigree, your sheer bloody mindedness. Sorry, forgive us, we should keep this civil, O dozer! In you is a cosmology — we have yelled the names of bandicoots

and possums, of kangaroos and echidnas, of honeyeaters and the day-sleeping tawny frogmouth you kill in its silence. And now we stand before you, supplicant and yet resistant,

asking you to hear us over your war-cry, over your work ethic being played for all it's worth. Hear us, hear *me* — don't laugh at our bathos, take us seriously, forgive

our inarticulateness, our scrabbling for words as you crush us, the world as we know it, the hands that fed you, that made you. Listen not to those officials who have taken advantage

of their position, who have turned their offices to hate the world and smile, kissing the tiny hands of babies that you can barely hear as your engines roar with power.

But you don't see the exquisite colour of the world, bulldozer — green is your irritant. We understand, bulldozer, we do — it is fear that compels you, rippling through eternity, embracing the inorganics of modernity.

Beeliar Protest Verbs

Killing jar, these wetlands
for government gameplay:
ventricle, atrium, white-tailed
black cockatoo. Jarrah resonance.
Imaging reptiles, marsupials. Boodjar.
Fence up to cull otherworldly.
Clean house.

*

Bulldozer. Catch-all.
Taxonomy overload.
Aesthetes shrink before
what's to come. Non-
art. Tasteless. How many
words did Milton offer
the English language?
How many words
did the English language
steal from the Noongar people?

*

We saw light and blood seep
from the guttered banksia candle:
like premonition, we shrive
in this belief the worshippers
encased in buildings won't
listen to. But some do,
their houses on the edge
of another way of living,
persisting.

*

James sends us a photo
from the Beeliar bushland —
a killed bandicoot shovelled up
and shown to motorists passing,
motorists who might soon
be taking the piece of highway

about to be inserted where
the bandicoot's habitat
once lay, where the bandicoot
lived against the odds,
respite from the suburbs.

*

Management plan profiteering to CEO permission
open slather surface tension to glint a growth ring
absorption to freight blind snake unto pobblebonk
to delete quenda and value-add quality of life sink
bores to test the overlay presence of sealant while
rainbow bee-eaters ploy in dugouts to tip into refuse
removed from site as security only does its job in a pay
packet survivalist way forgive and forget and implement
bonfire and hope for camaraderie in this global singularity
this one season of consuming what's left lest we miss out
lest we're deprived in comparison deft dressing vanities
while recountings get relegated to books and stories
work overtime to lift the lost to deny the extermination
as it will be forgotten what was before the rapid transit
voting patterns as free as Trump Tower as free as bums
on seats in proliferating stadia to keep gladiators on
project and whose ancestors push against the blades
of the machines — have you ever seen the z-grade
movie *Killdozer*? Dozer which comes to life mind
of its own all hyped up with agency and sugar
in its tank, in its belly, in its brutal table manners,
subtexts colonial unawareness the roadmap of Southern
Cross and sky on the ground and magpies waking to loss
as democracy makes tarmac ↔ plain song, *progrēdi*, headway.

Sweeney Contemplates a Display of Force by the Police State

Distant now, and working out how to make a return, how to embrace the wetlands and detrack the machines, Sweeney flew low through the rain of grasshoppers rising up from the denuded plains, late crops shaking their seed onto the scorched earth. I will return to the coastal plain,

said Sweeney loud to the parrots, loud to the crows, loud to the mulga snakes, loud to the grasshoppers. I will stand with the protectors against the troops of the dictator, against the builder of stadia and his wealthy, uncouth mates. I will stand against their class pretensions, against their

sporting codes which read a little like the bishop leading an army against the heathen. I *am* a heathen, Sweeney told the blue sky stretched to breaking point; I am old as the earth but can't even perch on the outstretched branch of a York gum without feeling guilt. But I will fly

down to the marri, to the blackbutt, to the banksia, to the zamias and grass trees and ask if I might perch temporarily, temporarily to watch over the souls of those who dwell there, who know the stories, who connect constellations with earth itself, who can unpick the codes, the fever

of growth, schematics of belonging. Red-tailed black cockatoos will guide me in, give me strength. I will ask to join the lines, speaking my ancient tongue of respect. I will tell the police they must listen to the ground through their feet, must listen to the whispering

coming out of the bush where there are as many worlds as night reveals, spreading its sheet, a future unfurled.

A Failure of Empathy

In the tragi-comedy of streets,
the Shakespearean momentum
of anniversary, police approach
a child carrying a sign that asks
what's to become of his future.

In silence, he stands, facing
contractors and police,
and all is in *that* moment,
the bush falling to the blade,
the police ready to counter
any threat.

Accounts — to the Premier of Western Australia

I hold you accountable for the trauma our thirteen-year-old
is going through as habitat for the birds he loves is destroyed.

I hold you accountable for the emphysema of the biosphere,
that gasp you add to our last gasps, deoxygenated, stranded by the road.

I hold you accountable for the zoo of death, for the ark scuttled
and going down with all hands on board, for survivors shot on the surface.

I hold you accountable for helping boil the planet in its own oil,
for encasing it in bitumen dredged from the pits of hell.

I hold you accountable for making science a convenience store
in which well-fed bullies stuff their baskets without paying.

I hold you accountable for cruelty and torture, for casualties
you don't acknowledge, for ignoring alternatives to feed your vanity.

I hold you accountable for treating life as a game in which winner
takes all, a psychology of childhood instilled by abusive adults.

Horror

Failure in-situ — what can be written
as butcher birds clarify the rise and fall
and fall and fall? The Coolbellup woodlands
where zamia palms spike your conscience
on the path — those trees would be good
to inhabit, to ward off the bulldozers,
the employees of the contractors,
prepped to counter protests
shallow in their psyches — jobs to do.

Failure in-situ — what can be written
as the police encircle, ring the wagons,
protect the destroyers? Chat with them,
find the flaws, or treat them as alien.
Either way, either way. As organisation
fragments in the empty shadows, in the vast
cavity of drill and scour, the root canal
of hate. Glib as the wattlebird scurrying
into the dusty air, the fun-fair tree falling away.

Failure in-situ — what can be written
as wound widens, as lexical fluctuations
upset even the certainties of horror? New
inflections in the oldest concept, the oldest
truth of all. The horror spreads and on the outer
we wonder at the silence, to circumnavigate
and find the organs of the body stripped out,
this cannibalism which is celebrated as 'progress.'
The realm of apocalyptic literature grows.

Fire-ban and the Continued Clearing of Coolbellup Bushland

Special exemption — the bush must fall
and what does it matter if it burns, if we burn?
The dictator and his henchmen — and they *are* men —
watch on from air-conditioned offices, constructing
the will of the people in their own image.
And so in extreme heat, the last trees
will fall and then, they think, this will be
an end to it. But it won't, bullies, it won't.
You may bend the rules to suit your desires
but you will be found out and held accountable.
This is thin-on in metaphors — you don't deserve them,
you don't deserve ambiguity. You are what you are:
ruthless, vainglorious, smug, brutal and thick-witted.
History is full of you. For too long you've held sway.
Now you won't — no more special exemptions for you.
It is a fire-ban day. I come from a place that has burned
and burned again. Your gall is an example to *you* all.

Sweeney Inside the Wound, the Graveyard, the Deathzone

Accompanying the red-tailed black cockatoos,
Sweeney wavered in the brittle air and plummeted
deep into the wound, the graveyard, the deathzone.

Gasping, he knew immediately that he'd be violently ill,
that The One who had been going *to & fro, up & down*
across the damaged earth, would smite him also,

mark him with the indelible blood of the wound.
The mountain of uprooted grass trees, their name — *balga* —
resonating through future epochs of pitch and sulphur,

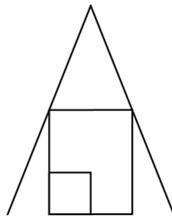
and marri trees that won't ever blossom again,
the torn capillaries and veins of time, all wondering
if they be dead or undead, sap retreating with syntax,

photosynthesis in slow shutdown. Sweeney spoke
loud to the man-becoming-cockatoo — James — to whom
the policeman had said, 'Get away or I will kneecap you',

who beheld the betrayers and documented The Fall —
cockatoo with clipped wings, disorientated inside
the wound the graveyard, the deathzone.

If Céline Were Not a Far Rightwing Bigot Haiku

The machinery used
for death's instalment plan
has a history.



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