

**TWELVES FOR THE TWELFTH NIGHT:  
POEMS IN SUPPORT OF THE BEELIAR WETLANDS**



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SHED UNDER THE MOUNTAIN PRESS  
YORK  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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SERIES EDITOR: JOHN KINSELLA  
ISBN: 978-0-9804770-5-4

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— for those resisting the destruction of the Beeliam wetlands

Traditionally, the twelfth night of Christmas falls on the fifth or sixth of January and signals the eve of Epiphany, or Epiphany itself. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and ours were written in the spirit of twelfth night entertainments, and Malvolio figures large, whether as an antagonist come to grief through greed, delusion and crazy ambition, or a here-to-now quiet road in Coolbellup that woke to find a major highway mapped across its vitals.

Our *Twelfth Night* was triggered by the wonderful and occasionally bizarre use of Shakespearean characters as street names in Coolbellup, including Cordelia Avenue, Romeo and Juliet streets (which never meet) and Malvolio, poor Malvolio, which only ever wanted to be left in peace, adjoining the best bush block there is.

Each of the twelve poems in our *Twelfth Night* contains a four-line stanza by each of us.

**'Good fool, help me to some light and some paper...'**  
**Malvolio, *Twelfth Night*.**

## Twelfth Night

The Premier's flatterers intimate  
that all creatures — living or dead —  
love him. In a world of bitumen and trucks,  
good feelings can always traverse his body.

The Premier's flatterers gift him jarrah  
presents for Xmas. A Tawny Frogmouth family  
— barely perceptible — know not what bitumen,  
or love, means. In Perth, Forrest has two r's.

And the Premier's Alpha bet is  
on himself. Feigning sanity he swans  
down the Terrace, black heart of  
trespass on sacred waters.

## **Romeo and Juliet**

O Premier, thy character is flawed! Such  
unseemly haste to sheath thy sword deep in the forest's  
breast. Art thou a secret lover of wild things,  
thy only love sprung from thy only hate?

Trauma is not limited to human experience,  
as the top layer of leached grey sand shifts  
north-east, unhinged, like a dread-locked hippy  
who'll never marry his Dalkeith sweetheart.

No star-cross'd lovers will tryst under these trees  
once the generic of tarmac has become destiny —  
no kiss on the lips of death will make eternity  
out of the device of history. With your kiss we die.

## Macbeth

See, the stain of red gum is removed so easily —  
just a dash of machinery and solvent, just a touch  
of marsupial, flushed through with cash. But now the  
Coolbellup bush has come to the Premier's office.

The Premier, sunning on his pleasure launch  
the *Dalkeith Sweetheart*, finds she is swamped with sand and  
sinking. A threesome of drum-lined sharks, risen  
from the dead, carves slow circles... bubble, bubble, bub —

Carols by Candlelight, red flames in bung right eye —  
half open, like our borders, The Minister for Tourism  
knows not what it means to belong, he's choppered,  
observing from on high, 20,000 foot decision maker.



## Midsummer's Night Dream: A Tragedy

Puck, *environment minister*, has his rude mechanicals perform their play of devastation, a 'most lamentable comedy' for the sake of his Premier, and 'most cruel death' for the bush which the government fears is haunted. Such divine revelry!

The T-Square architect joins the speculators, a client of his own making, unaware he's hermeneutic; mouthpiece for a future utopia. He's young, see, too young to be haunted by pathetic fallacy.

But there's this fella, see, and his people keep the dreaming here, and there's fairies from a fairy shop, blowing bubbles, and a pirate, and a poet in a cocky suit, and they're real, all of them, just ask the kids, *just ask the kids*.

## A Comedy Of Errors

Anatomy of habitation — his mates are profiteers  
twinned with government. Damned those birds of deep  
ancestry or migratory intensity, the supreme commander  
threatens the right of protest, charging all unruly girls and boys!

For what is it to trip in any case? Hiccup. *How*  
*Embarrassment*; tomato sauce slopped on his shirt  
seconds before the presser, will the people notice?  
Can the cameras crop that? ... heads will roll.

Boys will be girls and girls will be boys,  
knights will be knaves and plots may be ploys,  
Stars blaze like Ziggy Stardust yet are such brief candles too —  
Happy New Year Mr Premier (breath), Happy New Year to you.

## Hamlet

The curate's egg a planet, a ball of asphalt,  
*O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!*  
Such antics at the Christmas office party,  
Spiked with quills from the fretful echidna.

Gah! This power that follows me around,  
Makes me give speeches, cuts short conversations.  
To win by default is to be internally corruptible,  
To not win at all is to stray from the playbook.

What a piece of work is this?  
How ignoble in reason; and in harm — how infinite.  
Sleep now sweet forest creatures lost so far.  
Flights of Carnabys circle as you pass.

## **Richard II**

That garden of noisome weeds which suck  
away the profits of the city? Let us instead  
rise to the occasion like the Bell Tower  
or that monument to taming, Elizabeth Quay.

Oh, that wasn't your white flag? It's hard to see,  
the smog thick, we'll have to use some other trick,  
our lines are busy, please leave a message  
there's a stadium to build and you're blocking the passage.

This sacred place of Whadjuk, this demi-paradise, this fortress  
built by Nature for quenda, tawny frogmouth, maali.  
This place of families and generations, of coming together,  
this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, these irreplaceable wetlands.

## King Lear

Look, all this is mine for the taking — who says  
nothing can come of nothing? Watch the conversion  
of these bushland *wastes* into a road to nowhere.  
Who says the branches have serpent's teeth!

The forest gods will not stand up for bastards  
nor lie or lay with business-suited whores.  
Cordelia Avenue steels the spine of Cooby.  
Above North Lake the wingbeat of applause.

Ad hominem, the opponents protest. Man! Not ball!  
But neither parties have plums, as seen by this wetland mess.  
Something that was never there can not disappear, sure  
Especially when all the King's horses and all the King's men, demur.

## **The Winter's Tale**

Locked onto the gates of the limestone company  
the women tell us they've decided to make an ethical call.  
Cutting their quarry away, the Militia seeks to prove itself stonier  
than the psychological drama of the conservative pastoral.

Earth-moving machinery embody one teleology  
and as each new model is more efficient, evolved  
their apocalyptic purpose is realised, honed, and hence  
*non sequitur*; now garden secateurs round on saplings.

Spitting chips, the women collapse the categories,  
Tragedy? Comedy? Farce? Romance? Shakespeare smiles  
and dips his pen. The Oracle declares the forest is innocent.  
Exit the Militia, chased by a cockatoo.

## **Othello**

Iago watches the lead shipments leave the aching port,  
    assuring the locals that it's all safe as their houses.  
    He damps down the load with a handkerchief,  
knowing his constituency, sure of his hold over the doldrums.

At North Fremantle bowling club,  
    the shandies flow, jacks roll gutterward  
    and the once great soldier, the man's man,  
spots his mates' wife behind the mower shed.

So much, so many, at risk on the high seas,  
    yet one pale life imperilled by the artful placement  
    of a piece of rag! Watch as the moor Othello is swept away  
on the desperate leaking vessel of himself.

## Taming of the Shrew

Why sir, I trust I may have leave to speak, and speak I will.  
I am no child, no babe. Your betters have endured me speak my mind.  
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart or else  
my heart, concealing it, will break.

And as my veins protrude, what's left of my skin  
appears to cling tighter to my skeleton.  
Diaphanous at first, then transparent, freed from ambition  
my tongue will de-fork before my bones disappear.

I know it's all for *me*, this performance anxiety —  
scenery collapsed so *forcefully* between acts — deep  
'construction footprint', our susceptibility. You would have us  
say, *We do we do!* in stratigraphic obsequiousness, Sir! Sir!



## **Julius Caesar**

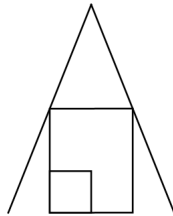
*Hence! Home you idle creatures. Get you home,*  
with your hippy trappings and your beating drums!  
Hear me well — These useless trees shall be as dust  
Ere the ides of March are come!

Antipodean March, warming, not cooling  
as if willing The Red Dwarf to fade sooner  
from Earth, deep in mud, marsh flies fly  
to the bird tune, and as such, is the bird.

And as dampland turns to dryland,  
I see the empire crumble into its component  
parts — the regime's water tables its parliamentary  
privilege and soft twig sedge pierces our lambent chambers.







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