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Nine o’clock sun, Dwellingup by Josephine Clarke

a bush track in the spotlight
of a nine o’clock sun -
a new green re leaf of early autumn
tree trunks a grey palisade
this bush a monitored garden:
gentle restraint in an order Darwin named

unexpected
a swastika - black smear on a tree trunk slaps me
like a branding
black paint on the trunk that grains up to a silver flaying of branches
scraping at sky

the tree has wept its bark to the ground
like skin scratched and shed
after rape by a white master

in a nine o’clock sun a swastika screams black on the trunk of a dead jarrah
which has pared away its bark
and in its protest the tree is shining like armour
in this war against the empowered twisting of love into torture

I step away
and am returned to the profusion of restraint
everything growing in its place

colours falling like a fountain on the air

Josephine Clarke lives and writes in Fremantle. Her short stories and poetry have been published in indigo, Blue Giraffe, Thirst, Creatrix and Eureka Street. Jo Clarke was President of Out of the Asylum (OOTA) writers’ group from 2006-2009.