

The breeze stirred again so Mrs Hamilton pressed her hand palm down on the newspaper to rest its convulsions. She kept it there, decisive and sure, until the disturbance subsided. Then she noticed the smudge staining her skirt, just above the knee. She looked across the verandah, past the open bedroom door, where the mango tree was burdened, quietly now, with another full season's load of fruit.

Soon they'll all be too ripe and falling rotten underfoot, she thought, and I'll have to clear them away again.



michelle dicinoski

FLAME TREES

Those nights of drinking in the bush
they swapped stories of fights
bikes, close brushes with the law.
To light it all, they set fire to
paperbarks, which
burned like the first shot
in a medieval war.

Forty years on
those who are left
don't recall harm
or risk. Just
casual arson's hiss and thrill
and the borrowed majesty of flame.

