

ARIF BAGUS PRASETYO

Trembesi

Pitch-black and towering
Birds making nests on the strength of her arms.

Grand castle for red ants and lizards
An architecture growing from its own shadow.

The day is about to collapse. Her weather-beaten joints
Grow weaker and twisted.

With bitter seeds of karma hanging
She learns to love all unworthy of love.

Conversing with ghosts all night
Underworld dwellers, eyes awash with milk

Whose breasts were once full of January rain
And whose nipples erect skyward licked by the sun

She used to roam abhorring stars
Only walking to kill distance, forgetting directions

Not thinking of arriving anywhere
Not entering anyone's paradise

And shouting to those who linger, falling
In God:

"Eternal life beheads monuments
or buries itself into underground extinction!"

They're angry and curse her to vanish
Absorbed into the black tree's cambium:

The king crowned with a kite-frame
Tree rings and their prophecies.

Tower of prayer-call in the distance. Birds arrive
Pecking the dusk's last light with their golden warbles.

The peasants hurry home to prepare fire and pray.
A visage, a pattern from a simple surah

I scratch the body that groans in the trunk.

NOTES

Trembesi is the name of a tree (*Pipturus nicanus*).

Surah is a division of the Koran.