

## And My Father Wants Me to Marry Her

*Ismim Putera*

My father wants me to marry her;  
somewhere in March  
but it's already June or July;  
and it flowers triumphantly  
in Betanak

The girl is part moon, part sun  
that clouds my eyes  
in that windy afternoon  
when I roll on the prayer mat  
like a buffalo bathing in a muddy puddle  
taking a sweaty cat nap;  
and my father wants me to marry her

as if, the monsoon is of no  
astrological importance;  
she is a sky goddess in my mother's dream  
that blows rains at my house at dusk  
I must say; it does sound like a swarm of  
locusts—ravaging the grasses;  
and my father wants me to marry her

while the grasses are still lush and green  
in Pendam,  
the river curves into many straight lines;  
I am the fish that feeds

on the exfoliating feathery  
seagrasses on her neck;  
she is a mermaid  
that sings myths from Batang Sadong at night—  
and my father wants me to marry her

hoping I can feed her  
with ferns and foliage  
sprouting from the soil  
that also buries both my hands and feet;  
I squirm like a worm  
drilling tunnels for my starry  
tears to flow through

## Semangka

*Ismim Putera*

the orchard is blooming with semangka  
smooth oval orbs ballooned out from the sandy soil  
all night I pick them up amongst the  
frizzy vines  
and roll them one by one into my shirt  
the orchard a garden, the canal runs steadily  
in a loop, from the sky to the earth  
and back to the sky  
like a tall four-walled rectangular mirror  
I stand in front of it  
with a semangka in my shirt  
like a pregnant lady  
carrying my own seeds  
the canal reflects my bamboo-like body  
and the vines entangling on my hair  
I drop the semangka into the canal  
and watch it buoy upwards  
while bobbing in the mirror  
I see a third of my face  
is as red as the fleshy pulp