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## **At Chairil's Grave**

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i

You knew this was where  
your end was to be, in this dark and windy place,  
the journey late, amidst this red earth  
and green grass. Now only loneliness  
persuades the roots of your verse  
that once were pristine and proud.

Twenty-seven years was too short for art,  
for a language a thousand years old.  
You lived as if you had counted the minutes,  
forcing time to open up its vocabulary.  
You pursued women and God all at once,  
and all at once you were a sinner  
who received his fate.

I can only imagine your red eyes  
peering at this dusty land,  
not wanting to blink.  
You lived so much for death,  
so it's too easy today to lie here like this.

ii

I cannot pray  
for prayers don't come easy anymore,  
but I know that, as you lived,  
you died a human being  
within the palings of this existence.

iii

Integrity of the mind is more difficult  
than physical bravery: you saw and perceived,  
standing amidst such meaning  
which your age avoided.  
With a soul all afire you seared  
the old and dug out the new  
from a language almost strangled by banality.

iv

For twenty-seven years  
you chose a prodigal life, with originality  
and influences moving to and fro —  
from East to West, from Amir Hamzah to Marsman.  
You did not choose women or life heretofore  
to live a thousand years more.

\*A translation from the Malay of “Di Kubur Chairil” by Muhammad Haji Salleh.