The Drowning Tree

Ngoi Hui Chien1
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

At the end of the path
stands a tree immersed in dusk
when November is parted from the branches
the nearby ground is flecked
with yellowish auburn eyes
that blink wistfully amidst the bleakness
for the sun is pulling up its drawbridge
while waves of grey roll into the sky

My sight is exploring in the dimness
trying to touch the intricate lattice of grooves
veins of impulses hardened in time on the tree trunk
and my shoes are munching on the thick silt underneath
as how hopes get crunched and dismay squelched
O the imposing despair in late autumn
such a sturdy torso with rumpled tops
those are its bare sinewy arms that extend upwards
bearing clouds of grief over its withered green
questioning the darkness revived from a tomb
that surges and tumbles towards the unreachable
horizon wavering in weary flames

The emaciated winds wave their brushes
drawing the low-rise buildings
and the sparse trees around them
drawing the grim park in wait for winter
just then a man wearing a parka walks past me
someone drifting onto this cold foreign place
under the gaze of the solitary tree
its posture slightly leaning to the left is a stub
of impassive being anchored in stillness

1 Malaysian poet Ngoi Hui Chien is an English Literature PhD candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He holds an MA from the University of Leeds. His research interests include trauma literature, postcolonialism, psychanalysis, philosophy, and ecocriticism. He is highly passionate about both Anglophone and Sinophile literatures, which are the two spheres of cultures that inspire him in his creative and critical work. Email: ngoihui@myvw.ac.nz
but I know its boiling blood is swirling like a vortex
as the growth rings spin turbulently
layer after layer fossilising the memories
streaked with pain creaking in deadened desires
circle after circle of fervour and yells
stifled in years

The drowning tree is flailing its many arms
with invisible arcs under the dome of the ocean
its lungs are seared by grievances bubbling in the air
while it gasps and struggles under the doleful billows
at the moment I hear stronger tides of loss
dashing against this desolate space
where the sinking tree is constantly drawn
by the present gravity
and bound with the land of anguish