

A PLEA FOR DOUBT

Jakarta, 5th July 2006

A tree is a tree.

A drop is liquid.

A mountain is made of stone.

Or maybe not?

Some days stone is transparent.

In faraway countries the waves speak.

I've seen it, I've heard it,

since then all has changed, since then

I don't know whether I'm not also an insect

I don't know if death is the end

I don't know if the sun's back is really green.

Yet I do know that knowing

starts with not knowing, with looking

at the light in the eyes

of a stranger, with not knowing

how I will live my tomorrow.

I might sing, I might remain silent

I might be a bougainville

flourishing in a garden in Jakarta

I might be a thief

stealing from who has even less

I might be just me.

Nobody knows
Nobody could know
Nobody to turn to and ask.

Or maybe?

The bird who hops from branch
to branch, as if he's waiting?
The flower growing fiercely
on what bit by bit dies?
Or the man right in front of me
his hair gray, his skin smooth?

I know I don't know
what lives in his heart
I know I don't know
why his one eye burns
the other one freezes.

When I ask him: *Siapakah kamu?*
he laughs and says
- his lips not moving -
'There is no difference
the question is the answer
there is no difference, look
I am you.'

Peter Swanborn, 2006

Translated by the author and Linde Voûte