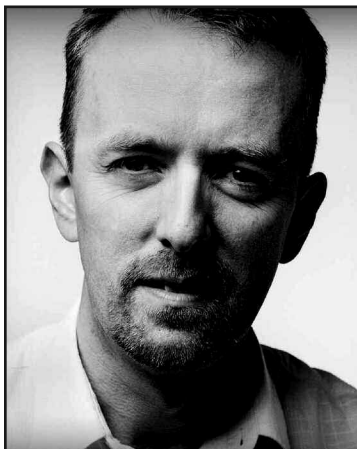


> POETRY

I THINK, I MISS, I DREAM



By **PETER SWANBORN**

Translated from the Dutch by John Irons

Peter lives and works in Holland as an editor, journalist, literary critic, and opera librettist. His poetry debut,

At the Sight of His Body (2007), was nominated for the Buddingh Prize for best poetry debut of the year.

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NUMBERS AND INITIALS FORGOTTEN

A café in Berlin, a Paris street,
the gaze locked onto prey, casual,
intense. An empty cinema in Rotterdam,
the back of my hand tenderly along his cheek,

With but one goal intended, to see
how he would overcome his doubt.
A terrace by a canal, a Spanish station,
not losing attention for a moment,

Until I hear what I hear, one just a whisper,
the other full of passion: Come with me. And I grin,
my hunger briefly satisfied. And I don't say

That all of it was hunting. First hooked,
then dangling. That no one was to stay.
That I was already gone. That I never was.

**B. AND NUMBERS UNCOUNTABLE,
INITIALS UNKNOWN**

A mountain stream in Norway,
late seventies, binoculars for
birds and neighbours, but suddenly
there was my father splashing around.

His nakedness new, so too his
pleasure. Unaware of being spied on
he enjoyed sun and water, not being
a chauffeur or breadwinner for a moment.

I was shocked at my shock, not being able
to avert my eyes, the glasses
from shame like a rifle at the ready.

Now he's mouldering in his best suit, I
spy each day for prey splashing around.
Nobody sees me. They're enjoying themselves.

NUMBER 36, A.

At the absence of his body, his
consoling temple of skin and hair,
his gleaming palisade of muscles,
stiff wrists and cold fingers,

I take pleasure in his mind.
I think, I miss, I dream, long for
his resistance, his core of fear
of losing a lonely kingdom.

Why hold on to one who refuses?
Why choose a heart that does
not want to be chosen? Or

Am I scared, not of an old
no, painful and familiar, but
of the most harrowing yes?