

Emha Ainunn Nadjib · *Indonesia*

BUKAN*

I prefer the shining darkness
To the dark shine.

As I truly remember my life,
I know I was born in the island of bukan,
becoming a citizen of the country of bukan,
raised by Mom and Dad of bukan.
At last I left,
running from bukan to bukan;
arriving painfully in the forest,
I pressed my soul for bukan
and stepped on countless roads for bukan.
I guessed yes, but bukan,
I guessed bukan, but bukan,
I jumped away— avoiding bukan,
caught by the mouth of bukan.
Then I prayed to my bukan,
for finally cursed by bukan,
I found pieces of my body scattered in the mud
when I tried to love.
So just me and bukan, bukan and
bukan, a blue union of sky and ocean.
Anxiously, in the center of bukan I pray:

I don't want to want
I know I long for bukan
I don't want to govern
To govern is to be governed
I don't want to own
To own is to be owned

I long for the One. I surrender in His grasp,
hated or maimed or destroyed.

translated by the poet and Harriet Levin

*In Indonesian *bukan* is a particle, used to express no, not, not ever.