

TWO POEMS



Martin Earl

SUMMER

The daily paper thins, as though the day
Lacked cruelty, was short of murder, its speeches
More precise. The rich and poor on reaches
Of the nearest coast graze

The strand undressed, ankle-deep
In dirty water, in contemplation
Of each other's wives. As though the motion
Of the sea awakened what is cheap

In each of us. Summer is a time of rest
And long conversations about fish.
Of reading, and grapes in a dish,
Set upon the table, and reaching fingers blessed.

AUTUMN

We speak her language, selecting dishes,
Discussing war, the new house, or dinner.
You should drink less: the injunction's thinner
Than in English, part of the landscape
Or a counterweight, of tulips and trees.
Autumn too is softer in Portuguese,
The meanings of things, their intended shape
Altered in the saying, match my wishes.

The music of the proximate: what's next,
What's done, what's slated for the future,
Belong not so much to volition as to posture:
How we are amidst what is, the way it tastes
To speak beneath the arbour, or how to say

The things we think. The grass is green, the day
Is fine, I miss the turning leaves, the marshy wastes.
Driving south the light was hexed.

And too there is the comfort of imprecision,
Of not hitting the nail on the head, impact
Displaced. The others skirt the slip with tact
As though conversation were a kind of soil
In which everything could grow: the sweet glister
Of lettuce rows, beneath a rose tree, odder
Than grammar, hidden, a coil,
Of breath and dirt, a hurt religion.

By late September the deep violet reminder
Heavy on the vine, reminding us of fire.
But in the city, bound by what we own, we tire
Of such fecundity, learn how to pause,
Resist what is precipitous, heavy clusters
Sprawling. There is something obscene, impure
In this ripening. But this is perhaps because
It happens privately, and that at least is kinder.