

## Two Poems

### “Confession”

Lately I've caught myself  
admiring. A habit  
sweeter than rage  
and more dangerous than smoking.  
That man who lives off two eggs  
one soft-boiled in the morning  
in the evening one scrambled  
and more than that - he says - he does not need;  
the Chinaman all alone in the world  
on the Bohemian border  
opening his Lotus Garden ;  
the editor, day in, day out,  
hopelessly correcting sentences;  
that wife with her six face-lifts;  
the bankrobber, the disc jockey,  
the politician in his prison  
and the dosser in his kraal of plastic bags:  
they are indefatigable, without why and wherefore  
devoted like the diligent mole  
and the humble ant  
to their mysterious work.  
Harder and harder for me  
are hatred, envy, contempt  
the youthful feelings.  
A sign of weakness.  
I like my secret vice.  
Yes, I admire them, almost all of them,  
losers, unstopably  
feeling their way and burrowing.

### “Plenty Going On”

The ocean is hard at work,  
the sun, old plasma physicist,  
is devouring itself, volcanoes  
are hastening to erupt  
and hormones getting up steam always.  
Sleeper, you toss and turn,  
you babble, you sweat, you dream.  
The economy grows  
so do cats and the universe.  
Idler, we can hear you  
drawing breath, we hear  
it rattle in your lungs. Admit  
you are busy. You twitch  
and unstopably your hair  
and fingernails thrive.  
And not even the functionary  
high on his stool  
can let things be. Even the dead  
work. Oh yes  
they pester God who does

not hear, and us.  
They visit, they haunt us.  
There is no rest. There is,  
there is no rest.  
There is no rest.

*From Lighter Than Air*  
*Translated from the German by David Constantine*