

The Lovers

You sit in your kitchen;
I wait on a park bench cast up on a shoal of the river.

Dusk pours through
leaves bruised with maroons and purples.

A window open above the sink frames the externals
for you: the sky flares;
dark fragrances from your garden
billow in through the screen,
insistent as herbs from the soup
your motherless son blurs with a spoon.

On a far bank a man and his lover run their dog,
its coat the shaggy red
of the first leaves shaken from branches overhanging
the man, the dog, the riverbank —
the woman suddenly caught on a sandbar,
describing geese pausing among reeds.

Your son shares an off-color joke; his laughter
signals a family in the making,
on the mend,
the script of your bottled griefs for now set drifting.

Breezes push the river's surface
stillness backward to the source.

Phone out of reach where I wait,
all that separates us
is nature, night's laconics, and the blocks of the city.

John Barton