

Reference Range

Category: Poems

written by Veneta Masson | June 21, 2008

Veneta Masson

Your tests show
the numbers 73, 90, 119 and 2.5,
the letter A,
the color yellow,
a straight line interrupted by a repeating pattern
of steeples and languid waves,
a gray asymmetrical oval
filled with fine white tracery,
35 seconds,
100 millimeters,
II.

I'm not sure what to make of these.
With the possible exception of II,
which like all Roman numerals
is subject to misinterpretation,
I see no cause for alarm.
I admit to a preference for low numbers,
the apothecary system over the metric
(my age, perhaps, and distrust of pure logic)
and the letter W,
though most of my colleagues favor
M.

I think you can be happy with yellow
and, based on my experience,
the fact that the straight line is punctuated.
Seconds, millimeters—I marvel at their finitude,
but this oval, so intricate, so light,
might well contain a universe.
Is it normal, you ask.
Normal's a shell game you seldom win.
Take my advice. Enjoy good health
not as your due but the blessing it is
like Spring, laughter,
death.

About the poet:

Veneta Masson RN is a nurse and poet living in Washington, DC. She has written three books of essays and poems, drawing on her experiences over twenty years as a family nurse practitioner and director of an inner-city clinic. Information about her poetry collection *Clinician's Guide to the Soul* is available at sagefemmepress.com.

About the poem:

“Sometimes my muse takes the form of a curmudgeonly old physician who’s weary of gold standards and unrealistic expectations about what medicine can offer. But he’s also got a wry sense of humor and a useful perspective on health and illness. It’s his voice you hear in this poem.”