

Three Poems by Stephen Massimilla

DAY OWL

Pinching asterisks of bread from a paper cone,
you look into a basin in the park
and scribble back injuries

ringed in rust. You float a full face
from before this life, reflect
as a woman regaining her footing.

From a birdbath locked in hexagonal stones,
sparrows arrow in the air, greened
like the slate-colored rock dove

which loiters in the shade of your umbrella.
It's time to recover your crosshatch of nerves
from the cloud-textured

crack in the pad. Find lines
to redesign a basin in the park, the quill a squirt
of birdbath, the pen shaft as curvaceous

as Sargeant's *Madame X*. And what if you made out a letter
for this rustle of plume in the woods?
One for the sibilant business tie, yellow slash

under six-faceted lamp? What of the squirrely questions
on benches, and the face between lamplight
and lamplight, its sharp-nosed

rapacity winged
to be captured
with one bitch stroke of your nib?

PALE GRASP OF MIST

I.

Silence is gliding through
vastness, a faint summer bay
with no aim, until oblivion opens up to us.

Loss is what we can make of not one
thing entirely missing. These words are
as good as the way we make use

of them—to get, to know, avow—make
effort and fatality
more tolerable.

All that is technically not true, not that
it matters. To wake and crack the dark
green shutters:

A giant white yacht
stares back at me, the sea
a million incandescent caterpillars...

II.

Forgetting myself for yet another second,
I thought of how I met you once.
Accepting nothing less

than that improbable glimpse
was the raw material
of metamorphosis. I took the fact as light.

Other apprehensions had perhaps
been arrived at earlier,
though I might not have agreed.

You said we'd keep diving
until dawn, and we worked
through other issues unawares

being blamed by ourselves
for what we were. The fire in all
the shudder cracks was already the day.

LOOK LIKE WATER

Without intent, the tiniest
waves are hummingbirds

and kisses soft as new-
spun moths are light

re-entering the body, stars
of some thousand million

blue sequins on all
that ocean that gasps

in the spaces between
the leaves, the garden

begun in a breath
with the night, a dream

of never nearing cold,
letting us enter, leaving

all thought of the weather,
asking all the more time

than we are ready to wait for,
needing neither this doubt

nor any other, the hour
of your affection each hour

an hour closer, I love you
so much that I don't

(continued)

(Look Like Water, page 2, new stanza)

say “you” going
over inlets under

bridges on stilts, don’t
say I will

never have been
mistaken. Soon I’ll be

before you, your final
look like water

to my face
reflected in it.