

W.M. Rivera

### Song bubbles in the universe

*"You said: 'I'll go to some other place, some other sea,'" C.P. Caváfy*

Yes, Caváfy, I'm indebted to you;  
you say the ruined life in one place stays  
ruined elsewhere. It's true. I've gone  
other places and this morning's silence  
gnaws no different... other seas, other  
indefinites, lemniscate wanderings;  
in the scratch of blackboard sentences  
much is erased, forgotten, ruined.

But the dictum's limited. Life's beyond  
I or me or any other wastrel. Life wastes life...  
place after place, greed, hate. Meanwhile Sun sings;  
song bubbles in the universe; slow sounds

explode. Space filters down; even now dust  
settles pound by soft accumulating pound.

## **Triolet**

Men call it mystery the origin's opening:  
Courbet conceives the face as covered

All else nude. For Rodin Iris goes flying  
Headless, the messenger spread-eagle, daring

to show all, the thing itself, gaping,  
hairless, no deception; nothing covered.

Known, yet unknown, desire's opening.  
Men call it mystery even uncovered.

## Sweat for tears

I am tired of nature. Not the one outside,  
the one in poem after poem, Sun, rain.

Seems emotions run to meet seasonal  
recyclings after rot, buds and hungry deer  
observed, poet-roads untraveled yet  
happy if images fit to catch the eye,  
seeing waters flow and earth spins on  
until the well runs dry and crickets sing.

Who knows the truth of time's next step?  
Where is that crystal-gaze, that sage  
who turns the truth into a wisp of wind  
or into storms to make word-makers weep.

But must it be nature's note again?—wet  
outdoors to replicate the sweat for tears.

## Preparing

There was a beginning I remember  
vaguely, the mouth moving demanding  
drops of liquid bliss

and then the standing, on my own  
the broomstick a stud rider, wind  
for sails, the moment's miracle.

And now habitually I prepare for the next  
minute, problem, day, event, month,  
next-to-nothing-left is the feeling.

The future floats face down, a dead world  
peaceful, puffy. I prepare to follow  
who's next in time, who is no longer waiting,

who lined up dutifully, now done performing  
the mature thing, next in time  
whose vanishment is the end for each

who walks from anteroom into the final next.  
Where were we then, some ask, before this  
present, before that birth: before dirt, flame

and water's depth? Prepared or not, the only hope  
dear Lucretius, as you counseled, is no dread.

## Only that

Let's be clear; nobody cares; your struggle,  
gloom, glory, once written down what matters  
is only that it should be beautiful.

Trumpeter, truth teller, music minstrel,  
the best-dressed mogul, the man in tatters  
hardly differ in depicting struggle.

Whether at hand are history and form,  
allegories that launch ancient answers,  
the clue is that it should be beautiful.

The work's value, its radical alarm,  
its fight to right wrongs, spread joy, tell terrors,  
depends on how one sees the struggle.

Or maybe craft is paramount, the charm  
the author radiates, clever features--  
just as long as it should be beautiful.

The trick is to strike deep, avoid lukewarm  
keep uppermost sage words of teachers,  
the issue is not to end the struggle,  
only that it should be beautiful.

*Incorporates the idea of the various ways of looking at a poem: as a historical entity,  
as declaration of purpose, and as method and theory.*