

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.