

Trigons

Also by John Matthias

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JOHN MATTHIAS

Trigons

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TRIGON

(1) Latin: both a ball to play with and a game played by ancient Romans involving three players standing in a triangle. Players caught with the right hand and threw with the left. Cf. Petronius, *Satyricon*, where the *pilecripus*, or score-keeper, does not count the number of times the players successfully pass the ball, but instead the number of balls that drop on the ground. A joke? Or the actual method of scoring? (2) Astrology: three member signs of triplicity and third harmonic, 120 degrees, the most influential major essay aspect; blends planetary energies, harmoniously indicating the ease of expression; a group of three signs belonging to the same element: *Fire* (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius); *Earth* (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn); *Water* (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). (3) D.C. Comics: all-powerful ruler of an alternate dimension who wishes to extend his influence to the Earth. Cf. Mephisto. (4) Music: A three-sided ancient Greek or Roman lyre. A neume of obscure interpretation used in the notation of manuscripts from the Abbey of St. Gall. A German based fusion band characterized by many changes in its line-up and by jamming as a source for their music. (5) Gemology: triangular etch pits seen on natural surfaces of a diamond. (6) Poetics: A set of three poems each in seven sections of varying length. May involve many changes in their line-up and jamming as a source of music. (7) Plural: Logic puzzles published by Dell Magazines and others; title of a book by John Matthias.

(Google dictionaries; OED; Fanciful)

**Trigon for an Old War:
Three Drafts**

I

Islands, Inlands

1.

Ionian to Middle Sea by caique . . .
Crete, then Cairo . . . A long telling of it and
a tilling in a short red boat—

And Corcyra,
which may have been the island where *The Tempest*
tossed a crew, may have been before the home of Phaeacians
who to foreigners were kind.
Scheira, Corfu—
where shadow-play Karaghiosis is the hero, Spiridion the saint.
In Paris the pornographer receives a Zero letter in
heraldic hand: *I fear a war is coming on. I love your work.*
So did the diplomat from Smyrna. Love and fear.
Fear the war and love the work.
When consul in Albania.
While following the kingdom come
by caique on to Crete. . .

2.

. . . or Corfu first
before they all began to enter one another's tales.
While Karaghiosis raised the dead in shadow-play
to thrill an island's children torches lit
the carbide lamps for men with tridents waiting
in their circles of illumination for the dog's-head eel
and squid. On cat's-back streets they'd cast out Judas
on their Fridays good & bad &
spit black ink or red and yellow feathers
firing pistols in the air and banging pans all bottoms up
and lids with wooden spoons—

Cacophonous

and fearful as the lights at sea
becoming lights in air
the flare and tracer flash-lit wing and tail of aircraft
that Apollo's maker cast in upward
parabolic fall all down and downward pilot splayed
and child's work his wreck
while in their boats the patient fishermen all night

4.

but more a little Latin like the
General Kreipe's kidnapped from his car by Childe Patrick
and his band Paddy fresh from walks half round
the world Kreipe'd spit black ink like dog's-head squid
himself or songbirds like the Corfu cats
unless a dawn broke over Ida, then
instead his

Vides ut alte stet

nive candidum soracte

stopped the action for a moment
though a supposition even after mishaps on the road from
military quarters to his villa at Knossos
that he dealt with cretins
Stratis Mitso Nikko and the others helping him
to hurry just a little Horace into
that back seat even if you do lose your Iron Cross
had made his name-in-jest Theophilis
his *Wagan* O an Opal and his captor Paddy's answer to him
nec jam sustineant onus chap I know it well

5.

enough as consul in Albania thirty-six to thirty-eight
becomes a pal of Corfu's brothers in the art that
winter's Indian summer from before the war
Les Anges Sont Blancs he wrote for Brooklyn's Capricornian
and then in Greek about *a sailor in the shrouds*
as island shores begin to look like fish bones
on the sand . . .

To all eight points
his blood is scattered in the wind when Mr S. Thalassinos
describes a man—who will till the story of his life?
a bell tolls a traitor equally with patriot may tell—
Seferis's *logos dekapentasyllavos* all given up
for Doric clarity
and eros in demotic and the crotch like half
the Brits he washes up eventually in
Alexandria to fiction faction fornication where the god
abandoned Antony the Yank abandoning
the marriage feast of Harmony & Cadmus for Big Sur
for such is fate Señor and yet
the alphabet was left us when alas ambrosia
turned to *vin ordinaire* and Icor
just to poor plain red & human blood spilled & spilling
in the deserts mountains seas

6.

and islands too, fit for Eucharist in world conflagration
civil war religious strife or song
in the Sixties when they did their torturing in Leros
you would find
not a single Turk among those Greeks who'd
cut the right hand off each other's arm
even as it plucked the instrument
bouzouki or guitar
we listened to in London dancing with the women we
would wed and heard that Lena's father
was arrested by the Junta colonels leaders of the coup &
Theodorakis grim behind glad honor's
dog & cat both buried in the torch-light late at night.
A year before we'd visited the isolato
in a black spring and heavy fog rolling down the hills
above Carmel he said he missed those islands
missed those friends but he was old and even sometimes
weary with a bad back and stiff knee
Britain too an island but as inlanders we danced
a foreign dance in 6/8 time and tried to sing in *laiki phoni*
when we could
the *rembetika* drawing on but stood entirely
still and listened to the *Romancero Gitan*, Lorca Greeked
by Heraklian for descending minor thirds to tonic
clattering beyond Falangist Spain flamenco pistol on the hip
but not complicit with the ringing phone and
Lena weeping so they've taken him to Leros oh my God
her gentle father who
would read to her Elytis and Seferis when she cried

7.

inland from the skull

another island where we live
and which we cannot reach
but still it will love it will death networked
by rivers of our blood the self's fish
swimming in the circles of illumination made by neural lamps
for trident-fisher's epileptic wish to fly & just
a snip of *corpus callosum* ::

two hemispheres their
two singers two wedding feasts two hallucinated histories
with dances all their own
how Hellenic
Paraclete to come a comforter
from *parakalein* with parables that come
a cropper when the skies
fill with parachutes again at night
and mind's all complicit with the migraine ringing
uncanny the occult of Lesbos
or of Leros

whose parabiosis then in this our isle?
what saint or hero in the mind Spiridion
Karaghiosis *which* pornographer will leer through Zero
in the fear of love & work when
kingdom comes between us probes like god's
goad electric stimulates *thalassa and thalassa* oceanic
and unhealed washed over
under some tsunami of the mind a thought
thinking selfsame island inland
from the skull a Crete Corfu Leros Lesbos
on by caique where you will