Also by John Matthias

Poetry
Bucyrus (1970)
Turns (1975)
Crossing (1979)
Bathory & Lermontov (1980)
Northern Summer (1984)
A Gathering of Ways (1991)
Swimming at Midnight (1995)
Beltane at Aphelion (1995)
Working Progress, Working Title (2002)
Swell & Variations on the Song of Songs (2003)
Kedging (2007)

Translations
Contemporary Swedish Poetry (1980)
(with Göran Printz-Påhlson)
Jan Östergren: Rainmaker (1983)
(with Göran Printz-Påhlson)
The Battle of Kosovo (1987)
(with Vladeta Vučković)
(With Lars-Håkan Svensson)

Editions
23 Modern British Poets (1971)
Introducing David Jones (1980)
David Jones: Man and Poet (1989)
Selected Works of David Jones (1992)
Notre Dame Review: The First Ten Years (2009)
(with William O'Rourke)

Criticism
Reading Old Friends (1992)
JOHN MATTHIAS

Trigons

Shearsman Books
Exeter
Acknowledgements
Although the various sections of this poem are not fully free-standing or independent of context in *Trigons* as a book, the following editors and journals have been generous in committing space to what might have seemed to their readers merely excerpts from an unidentified extended work in progress. I want, therefore, to be specific in saying thanks to the individuals who have been generous to this project during the years of its composition: To Christina Thompson and Don Share at *Harvard Review* (Number 33, 2007) for printing ‘Islands, Inlands’; to Herbert Leibowitz and Ben Downing at *Parnassus* (Volume 31, No. 1 & No. 2) for ‘Hess / Hess’; to Boris Jardine and Lydia Wilson at *Cambridge Literary Review* (Vol. 1, No.1, Michelmas 2009) for ‘Café Des Westens’; to Brian Henry and Andrew Zawacki at *Verse* (Vol. 25, No. 1-3) for ‘Roadex Reflex’; and to Carlo Parcelli at *Flashpoint* (Web Issue 12) for ‘Aruski Rehab’ and ‘Chez Harvey Goldberg’.
CONTENTS

Trigon

Trigon for an Old War: Three Drafts
   I Islands, Inlands 11
   II Hess / Hess 21
   III Café des Westens Kurfürstendamm 31

Trigon Two: I – III
   Sonnet: Author Note, Revised 43
   Sonnet: Trigon Note, Revised 43
   I Roadex Reflex 45
   II Aruski Rehab 61
   III Chez Harvey Goldberg 77

Coda 93

Sonnet: Send 109
Sonnet: Delete 110
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 caïque . . .
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 caïque 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
awaited Paraclete! . . . or parachutes that flower from the bellies of eviscerated Icari their airman’s progeny disgorging over Crete a sum of all the fathers’ fear of suns.

Spiridion might yet achieve a miracle collect his dues upon his saint’s day might yet disemboby don’ts by prodding open mouths with long dildoic finger plucked in shadow-play’s echt Deutsch nicht wahr yon exiled Müller from New York but only happy in the sun a swim a walk a milling in exaggeration of colossi talks and talks a Yank to outflank all Hellenophiles among the Brits . . .

he’d lived in Montparnasse without a thought of what the mountain meant. And all the better For I love your work come hither cousin even if you know less Greek
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

\[ \text{Vides ut alte stet} \]
\[ \text{nive candidum soracte} \]

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 \text{Wagan O an Opal} and his captor Paddy’s answer to him \[ \text{nec jam sustineant onus chap I know it well} \]
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
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
inland from the skull

another island where we live

and which we cannot reach

but still it wills love it wills 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 Spiridon

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 caïque where you will