

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

John Tripoulas: Three Poems

John Tripoulas · Tuesday, July 25th, 2023

The Chemotherapy Ladies Ride the 909 Bus

They board at the street corner,
the onset and terminus of the 909 route.
It's not far from the hospital
and next to St. Basil's church
where there's a funeral today.
Heading home, after their doctors' visit,
the lady friends queue up waiting,
bald headed, scarf headed,
wig wearing, hat wearing,
for the bus doors to swing open,
and sit near each other and talk.
They talk about drug regimens
and side effects,
complications and hospital stays
and who has the nicest doctor.
They inquire about other patient friends,
asking first if they're still alive.
The bus slows in heavy traffic.
There's plenty of time to talk
on this overcast day.
One by one they press the bus-bell
that signals for a stop,
then step on to the street
to share their life with the cancer
on its route inside them.
There's silence then,
except for traffic noise.
None of the other riders speak
after the ladies are gone.

*

See Naples and Die

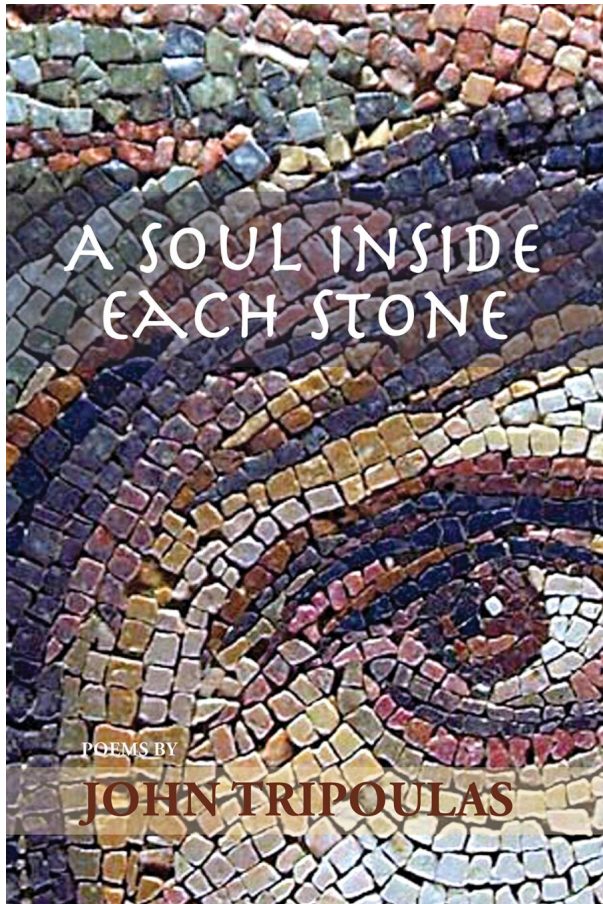
Driving past the umbrella pines
 that line the A3 Autostrada, Naples to Pompeii,
 skirting the Bay of Naples,
 a light rain is falling—
 enough to open an umbrella
 if you're walking on the shore,
 enough to bring to mind
 the murderous umbrella cloud
 that Pliny describes in a letter
 reporting on the eruption of Vesuvius:
 that presence looming in the distance
 sends the mind back to AD 79
 —the pyroclastic surge,
 the deafening *boato*.

Goethe loved Naples and its surroundings:
 in his journal he quoted the saying
Vedi Napoli e poi muori.
 He visited Vesuvius three times
 and called it the “peak of Hell.”
 Naples and all about it is exquisite,
 but across the arc of the bay
 the volcano has its say
 it whispers “death”—
 even if you're the great Goethe,
 even if you're driving on the A3 Autostrada.

*

Fish Hooks

Hidden in a small nook
 behind museum glass,
 a set of bronze fish hooks
 from the 4th century B.C.
 They're corroded to a turquoise green
 after centuries beneath the sea
 but with an anatomy
 that's the same
 as those in tackle shops today;
 J-hooks with barbs and bends
 and throats and shanks
 and an eye at the end,
 yet they still seduce
 someone drawn to timeworn gear—
 these small implements of deceit,
 to fool a famished fish
 or lure a soul adrift.



A Soul Inside Each Stone by John Tripoulas

Purchase *A Soul Inside Each Stone* by John Tripoulas

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