



The Land of Matta: A philosophical, quantum-mechanical phantasy

Michael Eldred

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The Land of Matta: A philosophical, quantum-mechanical phantasy

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A fantasy in the sense of *Alice in Wonderland*, but not for children. It's cock-and-bull like *Tristram Shandy*, but without the digressions. It's satire in the tradition of *Gulliver's Travels*, but the satire is on modern science. The humour is British, like the Goons or Monty Python. The protagonists are two young students, Phi and Psi, finding their way in life. In Book I, *In Quest of Mu*, they go in search, in search of the ancient Mu, a philosophical refugee from Athens to Upper Matta. Mu himself is on a philosophical quest to answer his guiding question, Why is there movement at all, rather than standstill? In Book II, *The Way Back to Anaxaton*, the main character turns out to be the mysterious Willy P., the power behind the scenes. Matta stands for 'mathematics', but there are no formulae, only a more or less playful, historical treatment of maths along with a couple of Greek symbols. The quantum mechanics is accurate, but blown up to fantastic proportions with fun-loving, unbridled literary licence. This makes it look superficially like sci-fi, but it's subtler. The philosophical strand is substantial, but presented narratively and playfully camouflaged. The presentation is tongue-in-cheek, so the reader constantly has to decide at each point whether it's serious sense or straight-faced nonsense. Usually it's both. It has some quasi-Platonic dialogue, and the whole is borne by philosophical questions subversively at work in the background. Its companion philosophical volume is *A Question of Time: An Alternative Cast of Mind* (2015).

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