Eratosthenes Measures the World

Staring into his little sphere,
contemplating a visible heaven—its movements—

he thought

there is a path
to map the boundaries of this planet,
some secret

which the gods, in their terrestrial limitation,
cannot know,

being bound by the minds of men,
being tasked to our ritual.

If a seafarer takes his ship from Spain
into the vast ocean with the Occident on the horizon,
India, inevitably, is in his reach—

all creation swaying in the longitude and latitude
of land and liquid,

a cradle lulling some greatness

like that basket sailing the Nile in Hebrew
lore, bearing a deliverer to shore.

In the library, no book contained a clue,
nor chats over wine with Archimedes.

Observations from Pharos did not do—
the revelry in the Eastern Harbor,
the noise of drunken madness, broke his concentration.

But in the clear heat of a summer’s longest day,
the one whom they called Beta looked down a well
and shaped the earth with shadows and angles.

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