

DANTE MICHEAUX

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.

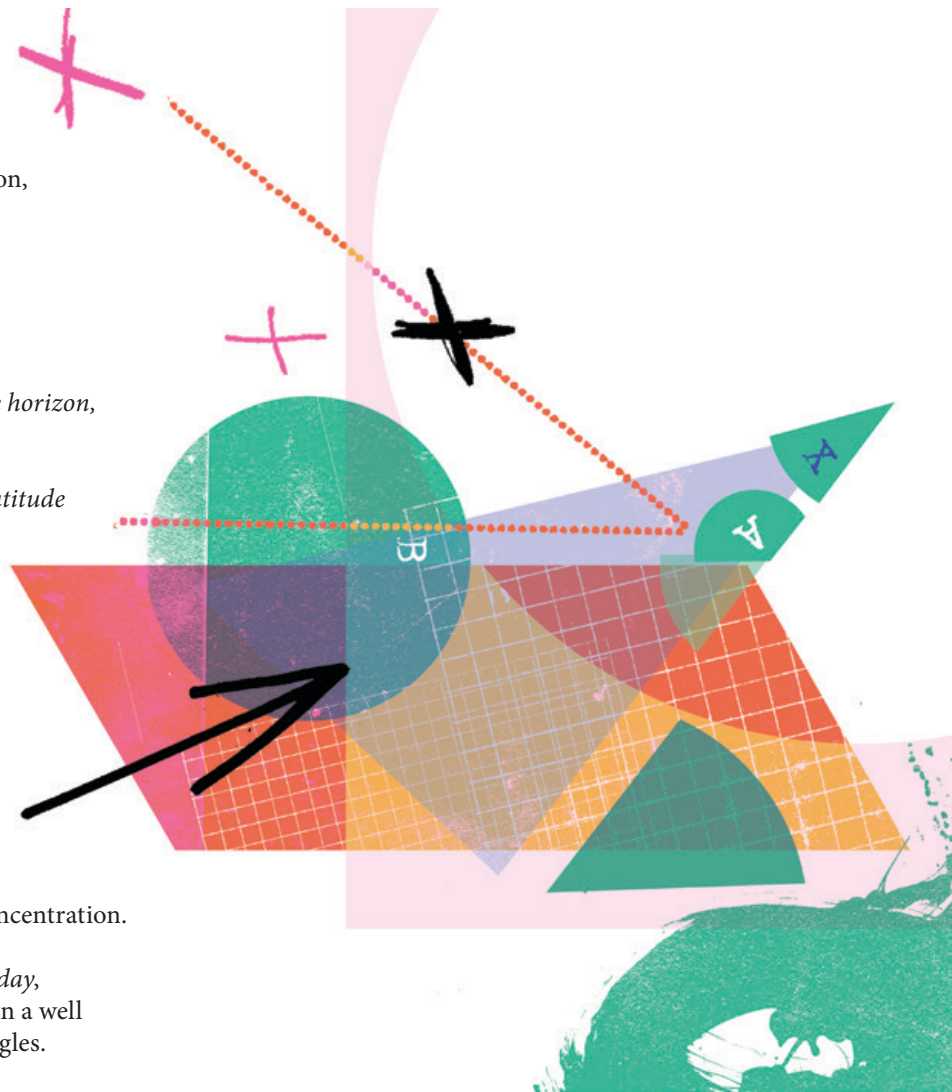


Illustration by Shonagh Rae

Dante Michaux is author of *Circus* (Indolent Books, 2018), which won the Four Quartets Prize from the Poetry Society of America and the T. S. Eliot Foundation. His other honors include the 2020 *Ambit Poetry Prize* and fellowships from *Cave Canem Foundation* and *The New York Times Foundation*.