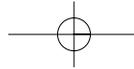


Piero's Daydream *Robert Kirkbride*





*Through the window, a shaft of light enters the studio, splintering among phials of lapis lazuli, red madder, verdigris and gold leaf. It is early summer in the Marches, with alternating showers and bursts of sunlight. Piero della Francesca, elder draftsman of a new mathesis, nods into a daydream.*

*His sight failing, porcupine quill in hand, Piero patiently herds tails of carbon dust through the pin-pricks in one parchment onto another below, forming a constellation of points for a future drawing. He pauses to study the first, from a whisker above its edge.*

*His proximity offers a glimpse of a micro-world, glowing with captured light, illuminating flows of blue, silver and red ink. The punctures transform into enormous funnels, channeling light and matter from the world of lines above, to its future manifestation below, where Piero imagines forests, rivers, reflected sky and the premonition of a city, with its quilt of tiled roofs and tilled gardens.*

*A cloud passes.*

*The miniature universe darkens, then rekindles. Dust spirals blaze and settle back into the worlds poised amid Piero's fingertips. His gaze enters the outlines, pivoting at the intersections, radiating out and back from center to perimeter, perimeter to center, among points that are not points but vortices of evanescence.*

*A universe of shavings.*

*Piero envisions himself an accountant of dust, cleverly charting the universal flow of particles with instruments and stratagems, tracing their transparent bodies in delicate geometries; colliding, dispersing, coalescing, vanishing.*

*Abruptly, the play of light, dust and shadow is torn by a gust of wind, rain, and the slam of a window. Piero shivers from his reverie, wreathed in a cloud-burst of numbers.*

