



Image from Dusty Old Thing

Matthew DeLuca

Phineas, the Artist

Phineas, the artist, was not concerned by the colors that rushed past his window, the sounds, mesmerizing, calm and perplexing, and while he could go weeks without

the arrival of his work—years, at some points—  
he would dutifully complete his daily line, and,  
from time to time, the Muse would visit,  
the colors coalesce, the notes harmonize.

There are a number of questions I would like  
to ask Phineas, but this morning, when  
the clear sky and the city feel easy to me,  
I am curious what those years of struggle  
between inspirations gain him. And I wonder  
if the artist, in this mode, best shows us  
how eager we can be for a private oblivion.

### Blue Parrots

Awake in the morning, I thought  
of the island of fresh. Night by day.

Night by day there were two thoughts  
that came to me: Coming and going.

Coming and going, I float from dream  
to dream, while the skies soft sigh.

The soft-eyed birds of the island,  
unbothered by this absence of ease.

### Abd al-Rahman's Almanac

The silver ashes of the night,  
the golden embers of the day,  
the peacocks taunt the vibrant flesh—  
I'm quarrying my glories here.

This should work—my birth of course.  
Or was that where the shades began?  
My daughter, or my third wife, then?  
Or were those also strutting doubts?

Mercury pools englaze my eyes;  
enameled gestures greet my form.  
Politely we decline all honors;  
genially we accept all pains.

Fourteen days, perhaps, I count,  
that I was happy in this life.  
These hopes and fears that I accrued  
the world employed as children's games.

### Rex Mundi

None of the histories record it, but  
early in his retirement, Napoleon  
briefly took up contract bridge,  
before quickly growing disgusted with it.

He was undoubtedly following the example  
of Alexander, who, if he had lived,  
would have crocheted with the old maids  
of Macedon—for an afternoon, or so.

The idle observer might suppose that  
minds that bound masses of men  
together in the gleeful rush and slaughter  
would of course loathe such distractions.

What one forgets is that, having dined  
with gymnosophists and surveyed the pyramids,  
the insubordinate deck and thumb-pricking needle  
would represent worlds too honest to conquer.

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