

André Spears

## XIV - THE ARTS

[Note: “XIV - The Arts” is taken from a Tarot-based work in progress, previous chapters of which have been published in *XIII: Ship of State* (Dispatches Editions, 2019) and *From the Lost Land: I - XII* (BlazeVOX, 2020).]

My love,

I knew  
that I had  
been here before.

Ceramic vulvas  
line the locked gate;  
the gate bars the way  
to a light on the left.

The mat on which I sit  
would have been a carpet  
with dark stripes lengthwise;  
replacing the entrance to  
a corridor—higher on the wall—  
stands a White window, that hums.

No stone floor; instead, dirt  
and faded mosaic; Dead moss;  
no Metal; no vents or drain;  
no broken glass or portrait  
of (“Dice”) D’ Cartz.

Outside, below, I hear  
the phantom Sounds  
of festivity in the street.

I picture Lord Chesterfield  
cheered by the crowds;  
his Chariot is a picnic table  
floating upside-down,  
drawn by empty wheelchairs.

He is the Spirit of Shell  
incarnate, as foretold by  
*The Book of Death and Triumph!*

He goes to meet his Cerebella.

“here is / where there / is”  
Robert Creeley, “Here is.”

“We use language not to destroy,  
but to undercut pinnings of there.”  
Richard Foreman,  
“Ontological-Hysteric Manifesto I.”

“What man is at ease in his Inn?”  
Aleister Crowley,  
*The Book of Lies*.

“Nine in the fourth place means: /  
Wavering flight over the depths. /  
No blame.”  
*I Ching*.

“There are five windows.  
Each has two leaves divided  
into three panes. But these panes  
are only visible when the window  
is wide open, because the inside  
is covered with dark paper, barely  
translucent, glued exactly to  
the entire surface of the glass.”  
Alain Robbe-Grillet,  
*In the Labyrinth*.

“It will be a great relief  
when a window opens. /  
But the windows are not there  
to be found— / or at least  
I cannot find them. And perhaps /  
it is better that I don’t find them. /  
Perhaps the light will prove  
another tyranny. / Who knows  
what new things it will expose?”  
C. P. Cavafy, “The Windows.”

Soon I will be released.

The veiled figure  
behind the gate  
with Colored robes  
and a big hat  
is *The Philosopher*;  
the bald Youth  
with the tattooed scalp  
is *The Skeleton*.

I try to speak, but either  
speech is failing me and  
I say nothing, or my language  
is foreign to them.

Lady Die breaks in  
(I recognize her Voice),  
asking: “Is Die *The Star*  
or *The Sun*?”

Instantly, from the Lost Land  
of Lâ-Konx in White Water  
Province comes Voice Mail  
counting Dollars:  
“Press The Star key now!”

Now, however, “Monocle”  
the Noh Comedian does not stand  
by a corridor beating her head  
against the wall.

Someone different—  
KNOCK!  
KNOCK!  
KNOCK!  
KNOCK!  
KNOCK!—  
is at the window.

The First Law of E-motion,

“a voice from the nondead past  
started talking, / she closed  
her ears and it spelled out  
in her hand / ‘you might as well  
answer the door, my child, /  
the truth is furiously knocking.’”

Lucille Clifton,  
“the light that came to lucille clifton.”

“I have lived on the lip / of insanity,  
wanting to know reasons, /  
knocking on a door. It opens.  
I've been knocking from the inside!”  
Rumi (tr. C. Barks).

“Know amazedly how / often  
one takes his madness /  
into his own hands / and keeps it.”  
Lorine Niedecker,  
“When Ecstasy is Inconvenient.”

“I keep this stylus in my hand...  
The healer came after I wrote  
last, and I asked him where I had  
been hurt. He said it was near  
the shrine of the Earth Mother,  
where the Great King's army fought  
the army of Thought and the Rope  
Makers... The army of the Great  
King blackens the road for many  
miles, and I, having seen it,  
do not understand how  
it could have been vanquished—  
or why I joined it, since there are so  
many men no one could count them,  
one more or less is nothing.”  
Gene Wolfe,  
*Soldier of the Mist*.

“Unleashing of passions is of  
the order of ‘contagion,’ another  
name for ‘communication’...  
What is unleashed, communicated,  
etc. is the passion of singularity  
as such. The singular being,  
because it is singular, is in

as theorized by D. J. Com  
at *Faux Pas*  
in the Greenspan Age,  
transports me beyond a Firewall  
kindled by the Rapping  
on the window.

The Star key is the same  
small patch of dirt  
on the floor in the corner.

My face hugs the ground,  
as I push the dirt  
into the corner with my finger.

I am Klutz, beyond  
*The Scales // reversed*,  
by a White window that is  
*The Wheel of Chance*;  
out of a corridor from  
the past, the Fate I reject  
and the Fate I embrace  
hang in the balance.

Two large thumbs turned up,  
like hooks in the wall,  
confirm these Revelations.

The thumbs point the way  
toward the window:  
left hand on the upper thumb,  
right foot on the lower one,  
and, stretching, right hand  
onto the latch...

The White window  
offers me a second chance  
at the other path—  
the so-called French Leave  
left open by Tricks 1 and 101.

Nor is “Monocle” pounding  
her head, as sign.

There are different signs;  
but this time the Inner Rave

the passion—the passivity,  
the suffering, and the excess—  
of sharing its singularity.”  
Jean-Luc Nancy,  
*The Inoperative Community*.

“Action and speech are so closely  
related because the primordial  
and specifically human act must  
at the same time contain an answer  
to the question asked of every  
newcomer: ‘Who are you?’”  
Hannah Arendt,  
*The Human Condition*.

“Some time then there will be every  
kind of a history of every one who ever  
can or is or was or will be living.”  
Gertrude Stein,  
*The Making of Americans*.

“In the informational state  
the panopticon has been  
replaced with the panspectron,  
in which information is gathered  
about everything, all the time,  
and particular subjects become  
visible only in response  
to the asking of a question.”  
Sandra Berman,  
*Change of State*.

“This was indeed a godlike  
science, and I ardently desired  
to become acquainted with it...  
I cannot describe the delight  
I felt when I learned the ideas  
appropriated to each of these sounds,  
and was able to pronounce them.  
I distinguished several other words,  
without being able as yet  
to understand or apply them;  
such as good, dearest, unhappy.”  
Mary Shelley,  
*Frankenstein*.

urges me to fall back,  
loop around and push on.

I start climbing.

As I lift myself up,  
I spot graffiti before me  
that says “README,”  
while behind me the Firewall  
falls, leaving an Abstrakt  
Pillar of smoke in its place.

I peer over my shoulders  
dialectically, deferring  
the Eternal Rerun  
with a left-brain wedge.

The lock turns in the gate:  
the ceramic vulvas  
that line the entrance  
morph into Lotuses...  
seaweed... Rhizomes...  
moss... Flashbulbs—  
*pop!pop!pop!pop!pop!*

Through the gate,  
from the far corner  
on my left, enters the fourfold  
(Beatific) manifestation of  
my opponent: a smiling woman  
half-remembered, her legs  
crossed, her feet arched, who  
is Shiva of the Weak Force,  
Champion of the Tootsies,  
reborn as Startrip th'Irenic,  
in the guise of Mr. Clean,  
the Genie of Meta Forest.

The Genie, oiled and naked  
with pointed Nails—  
as in Viagra's vision  
of Cirrus and Nyce—  
starts to stroke the Abstrakt  
smoke with Magick gestures,

“We are in a generalized crisis  
in relation to all the environments  
of enclosure—prison, hospital,  
factory, school... These are  
the *societies of control*, which  
are in the process of replacing  
the disciplinary societies.  
‘Control’ is the name Burroughs  
proposes as a term for the new  
monster, one Foucault recognizes  
as our immediate future.”  
Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript  
on the Societies of Control.”

“We are living through  
a movement from an organic,  
industrial society to a polymorphous,  
information system—from all work  
to all play, a deadly game.”  
Donna Haraway,  
*The Cyborg Manifesto*.

“The art of losing  
isn't hard to master...”  
Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art.”

“You do not wait for fulfillment,  
but brace yourself for failure.”  
Eugen Herrigel,  
*Zen and the Art of Archery*.

“We lose – because we win – /  
Gamblers – recollecting which – /  
Toss their dice again!”  
Emily Dickinson (28).

“There is no way out of the spiritual  
battle / the war is the war against  
the imagination / you can't sign up  
as a conscientious objector //  
the war of the worlds hangs here,  
right now, in the balance /  
it is a war for this world, to keep it /  
a vale of soul-making”  
Diane di Prima, “Rant.”

and gazes at me, grinning.

“Slave of Regret!  
Behold the Map of Things Past!”

I recognize Chapter M  
Verse MM from the PlayStation  
Manual, and hold my position—  
peering over my shoulder,  
like Headsman Hertz  
before the Hale Bop Lights  
in the Latter Days.

Rubbing thumb against fingertips,  
the Genie draws strands  
from the smoke, and weaves  
filaments into long thin rods  
that break in two and dissolve.

Old scenes begin  
to play themselves over.

I try to picture  
the Grand Trine deconstructed  
at *Le Je Ne Sais Quoi*  
and what the New School  
might have been  
without the Leap of Faith—  
but my foot slips  
(or the toehold gives way)...

At *Le Savoir Vivre*  
I find the WaitRoom  
in time, where Conman  
the Barbarian and Lego  
the Gentile trade places,  
like Nehmen and Nim  
at the Empire Room, and  
the ghost of Hakuna Matata  
is your Uncle Feng Shui—  
but I think I glimpse  
a Marble rolling by,  
and then another  
(did the room tilt?)...

I try to break

“In English the poetics became  
meubles—furniture— / thereafter  
(after 1630 / & Descartes was  
the value / until Whitehead, who  
cleared out the gunk / by getting  
the universe in (as against man  
alone / & that concept of history  
(not Herodotus’s, / which was  
a verb, to find out for oneself:  
‘istorin, which makes any one’s acts  
a finding out for him or her / self”

Charles Olson,  
“A Later Note on Letter #15,”  
*Maximus IV, V, VI.*

“The communion of saints  
is a great and inspiring assemblage...  
but it has only one possible hall  
of meeting, and that is, the present.”  
Alfred North Whitehead,  
“The Aims of Education.”

“The gods themselves seemed to  
summon me, though of course I am not  
admitted to the sacred precincts.”  
Murasaki Shikibu,  
*The Tale of Genji.*

“Let M be predicated of no N,  
but of all O. Since, then,  
the negative relation is convertible,  
N will belong to no M:  
but M was assumed to belong  
to all O: consequently N will  
belong to no O. This has already  
been proved. Again if M belongs  
to all N, but to no O, then N  
will belong to no O. For if M  
belongs to no O, O belongs  
to no M: but M (as was said)  
belongs to all N: O then will belong  
to no N: for the first figure has  
again been formed. But since  
the negative relation is convertible,  
N will belong to no O. Thus  
it will be the same syllogism

the Genie's Web  
and make another grab  
for the window,  
then I find myself  
back at *Le Savoir Faire*,  
and this time, rather than  
cash in on MoMa's Rapture  
and play Voodoo Child  
to Mr. Bond's Finest Torture,  
I check the warning tag  
on my helmet,  
return it to the "box" marked  
*I SWEAR THEREFORE I AM*—  
when I think I hear  
the Sound of dripping water,  
an electronic beat  
or a ball bouncing,  
and the Sound of singing,  
or a Voice shouting, calling  
(am I under the Ocean  
of Happy Days?)...

I try again for the window's  
handle, the Genie's play  
with the smoke seduces me,  
I am back in the past  
at *Le Laisser Faire*,  
what I do differently now  
is follow the music and  
keep up the Double Talk,  
on my way from the stage  
of "MUST SEE"  
to the "NOTHING YET"  
and "NOT AGAIN" dioramas—  
and suddenly the ground  
starts to tremble, the smell  
of pine fills the room,  
the hooks and the wall  
feel like warm flesh...

Still looking over  
my shoulder, I tighten  
my grip and reach  
for the window  
with my right hand,  
yet the spell persists,

that proves both conclusions."  
Aristotle,  
*Prior Analytics*.

"On. Say on.  
Be said on. Somehow on.  
Till nohow on. Said nohow on."  
Samuel Becket,  
*Worstward Ho*.

"There's no mere word  
sufficient to say NO."  
Flannery O'Connor,  
*The Violent Bear It Away*.

"*Nana-korobi, ya-oki.*"  
("Fall down seven times,  
stand up eight.")  
Daruma Daishi.

"History... is a nightmare from  
which I am trying to awake."  
James Joyce,  
*Ulysses*.

"History... is the emergence  
of a language of power  
out of a language of cognition."  
Paul de Man,  
*Aesthetic Ideology*.

"Historiographical disputes  
will tend to turn, not only  
upon the matter of what are  
the facts, but also upon that  
of their meaning...  
If we take the dominant tropes  
as four: metaphor, metonymy,  
synecdoche, and irony,  
it is obvious that in language itself,  
in its generative or prepoetic  
aspect, we might possibly have  
the basis for the generation  
of those types of explanation  
that inevitably arise in any field  
of study not yet disciplined

I slip into the time  
at *Le Laisser Passer*,  
three Guardians  
by the Slo Mode Portal...  
rather than greet them  
as in the past  
I keep silent, let  
the third one usher me  
past the other two,  
past the clutter and  
the piles of paper pictured  
in Maestro's Background(s)  
of the Complex, toward  
the Sunken Bottleneck  
and Therapeutical Exit,  
that draw near—and  
with a turn of the head,  
breaking away...  
UP I GO!

I reach for the window's handle  
and seize it.

I pull down, as hard  
as I can, then I pull  
with all my weight,  
releasing my foothold,  
hanging in mid-air.

Swinging, back and forth.

Behind me, the Genie  
of Meta Forest has disappeared...

Gripping the handle  
and hanging off the wall,  
I start to wonder  
whether trying to force  
this threshold open  
is a Methodical error.

Does my predicament represent  
a Factoidal Counter-Archaic  
translation of the Apokalyptic

in the sense of being liberated  
from the conceptual anarchy that  
seems to signal their distinctively  
prescientific phases."

Hayden White,  
"Interpretation in History."

"Think we must."  
Virginia Woolf,  
*Three Guineas*.

"(T)hought is... for me  
a perfectly neutral name,  
the blank part of the text."  
Jacques Derrida,  
"Of Grammatology as  
A Positive Science."

"Between one instant and the next,  
between the past and the future,  
the white uncertainty of an interval."  
Clarice Lispector, "The Man."

"What is this whiteness and silence  
but the absence of pain?"  
Catherine Anne Porter,  
*Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

"I lie to myself all the time.  
But I never believe me."  
S. E. Hinton,  
*The Outsiders*.

"This is not just literary  
deconstruction, but liminal  
transformation. Every story that  
begins with original innocence and  
privileges the return to wholeness,  
imagines the drama of life to be  
individuation, separation, the birth  
of the self, the tragedy of autonomy,  
the fall into writing, alienation:  
that is, war, tempered by imaginary  
respite in the bosom of the other."

Donna Haraway,  
*The Cyborg Manifesto*.



Paradox... or a Techno-Hysterical  
variant of the Deep Blue Trap...  
a Scientological-Ontological twist  
on the Mysterium Insolubilis  
of Werther & Erhardt?

The latch starts to give.

I tug on the handle,  
pulling myself up;  
I can feel it loosening,  
about to disengage  
from its E.W. axis  
under the full weight  
of my body.

Like the Mania described  
by the Unknown Poets  
of Goodyear, a strange  
excitement overtakes me  
at the thought of crossing over,  
connecting beyond the threshold  
with one or the other Visibility  
Site, identifying the Toggle  
Switch in the Control Room,  
communing with the Grail  
of the Next Generation,  
exercising Complete Control  
over Central Space,  
over Food for Thought...

Then—Vision of Visions!—  
as if guided by the Spirit  
of Racing Thoughts,  
Enlightenment comes from P-C's  
*2001 Tales of the Tribe*:  
I am overwhelmed by the Mystic  
power of Dick-Head, Tricky  
and the Forty Masters of Wisdom  
in "Story of the Skull"—  
about the Game played  
across the Lost Continent  
of Temporality, until the Fatal Toss  
from Private Benjamin to Becks.

The mounting sensation

"In the guise of a post-Marxist  
description of the scene of power,  
we thus encounter a much older  
debate: between representation  
or rhetoric as tropology and  
as persuasion... They are related,  
but running them together, especially  
in order to say that beyond both is  
where oppressed subjects speak, act,  
and know for themselves, leads to  
an essentialist, Utopian politics..."

Gayatri Spivak,  
"Can the Subaltern Speak?"

"It was long years—I should say  
centuries—before the influence  
of the coarser nature of men was  
eliminated from the present race."

Mary E. Bradley,  
*Mizora: A Prophecy*.

"The Recorder of Self-inflicted  
Miseries states, that after a time  
a new variety of the small-pox  
made its appearance,  
which was called varioloid...  
—Well, you live in an age so much  
in advance of mine, and so many  
facts and curious phenomena came  
to light during the nineteenth  
century, that you can tell me what  
the settled opinion is now respecting  
small-pox, kine-pox, and varioloid."

Mary Griffith,  
*Three Hundred Years Hence*.

"...Those who lived gave way to  
the almost universal negativism,  
what the French named *l'ennui  
universel*. It came upon us like  
an insidious disease; indeed, it was  
a disease, with its soon-familiar  
symptoms of lassitude, depression,  
ill-defined malaise, a readiness  
to give way to minor infections,

that the handle, from which  
I now hang suspended  
by both hands, will shift  
at any moment to N.S., and  
release, brings the Game to  
life, as if I were witness  
to the Energy in every  
throw and every catch, and  
to the speed of the skull  
whirling across the landscape.

I feel new Neural Circuits  
awakening, I am powerful  
and free, like a Master  
of Wisdom myself,  
certain of my path,  
poised for a clearing  
of the way—I hear  
the Voice that cries out  
with every throw,  
from Master to Master,  
over mountains and valleys,  
back and forth across  
the Molecular Field...  
then another Voice...  
recalling how the skull  
finally dropped to the ground.

And a moment arrives  
when, failing to open,  
the latch breaks,  
the handle snaps off:  
I fall and land on my back,  
hitting my head.

I get up and look  
at the handle:  
the Metal shows patterns  
of spirals and fylfots,  
triskelions and arrobas;  
the stone is White,  
like the glass.

The signs that I should

a perpetual disabling headache.”

P. D. James,  
*Children of Men.*

“The fourteenth card has been  
called The Alchemist. The theory of  
alchemy was that all matter could be  
reduced to one substance out of which,  
by devious processes, the base and  
corruptible could be distilled away,  
so that ultimately only the pure and  
incorruptible, the philosophers’ gold,  
could be bodied forth... The Angel who  
performs this subtle alchemy is rightly  
called Temperance. To temper means  
‘to bring to a suitable or desirable state  
by blending or admixture.’ We temper  
steel to make it strong yet resilient.  
Ideally, we temper justice with mercy  
for the same reason.”

Sallie Nichols,  
*Jung and Tarot.*

“If to beauty you add temperance,  
and if in other respects you are what  
Critias declares you to be, then,  
dear Charmides, blessed art thou,  
in being the son of thy mother.  
And here lies the point; for if,  
as he declares, you have this gift  
of temperance already, and are  
temperate enough... I may as well  
let you have the cure of the head  
at once; but if you have not yet  
acquired this quality, I must use  
the charm before I give you  
the medicine. Please, therefore,  
to inform me whether you admit  
the truth of what Critias has been  
saying—have you or have you not  
this quality of temperance?”

Plato,  
*Dialogues: Charmides.*

“Plato, they tell us, found a system  
in the sand / around a wall, though

throw the handle  
and Smash the glass  
are ambiguous,  
because the entire room  
is the handle's Context;  
I know from the way  
that it feels in my hand,  
from its weight, its shape  
and size, its markings.

If I take the Broken Circle  
of Qa for reference,  
then the glass stands  
for Incompleteness  
to begin with, and breaking it  
proves my undoing;  
by contrast, transgressing  
the threshold recalls Tantra's  
"Sex-in-the-Breeze,"  
according to ART-O-TARO  
VOLUME X:  
the BLOOD on the BUSH,  
"...trembling in the Night Wind."

I face the glass, tossing  
the handle in my fingers,  
up and down, for Momentum.

The realization sets in  
that my opponent is  
on the offensive, and  
has changed his name from  
"Bird-Dog" to "BioRom"  
—after the Guardian Angel  
of Stress Traps.

His Payback is greater than  
I imagined, and represents  
a twofold threat: a Trump  
with *The Universe // reversed*,  
that puts the Signifying Chain  
of Face Values at risk, and  
a Trick with *The Fool // reversed*,  
that seals off *The Fool's*

every constituent / occasion recalled  
an absent measure, constraint  
he could not abide or recall,  
the self-restraint / and melodic  
conversions he refused to hear."  
Jay Wright, "Speak of the property  
of matter, the bright hand."

"Looking for words to say /  
Searching but not finding /  
Understanding anywhere /  
We're lost in this masquerade."  
Leon Russell, "This Masquerade."

"In great awe I understood that  
I was near the ultimate mysteries  
from which there is no return."  
P. D. Ouspensky,  
*The Symbolism of the Tarot.*

"...And at the thought that it was  
perhaps this, a circle and a centre  
not its centre in search of a centre  
and its circle respectively,  
in boundless space, in endless time,  
then Watt's eyes filled with tears  
that he could not stem, and  
they flowed down his fluted tears  
unchecked, in a steady flow,  
refreshing him greatly."  
Samuel Beckett,  
*Watt.*

"We may now contemplate  
the shadow of a Doric pillar."  
H. D.  
*Majic Ring.*

"When the visions became more  
frequent, one of those who had  
helped me before... began to say  
that clearly I was being deceived  
by the devil. He ordered me...  
to snap my fingers at it, in the firm  
conviction that this was the devil's  
work. Then it would not come again

alternative to the Abyss.

I can beat the trap and  
play it against him, or  
I can wait, and let him  
be Sovereign for now.

Either way, my path  
will lead back to you.

Your lover,

A.

...The duty of snapping my fingers  
when I had this vision of the Lord  
deeply distressed me. For when I saw  
Him before me, I would willingly have  
been hacked to death rather than  
believe that this was of the devil.”

Teresa of Avila,  
*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila*  
by *Herself*.