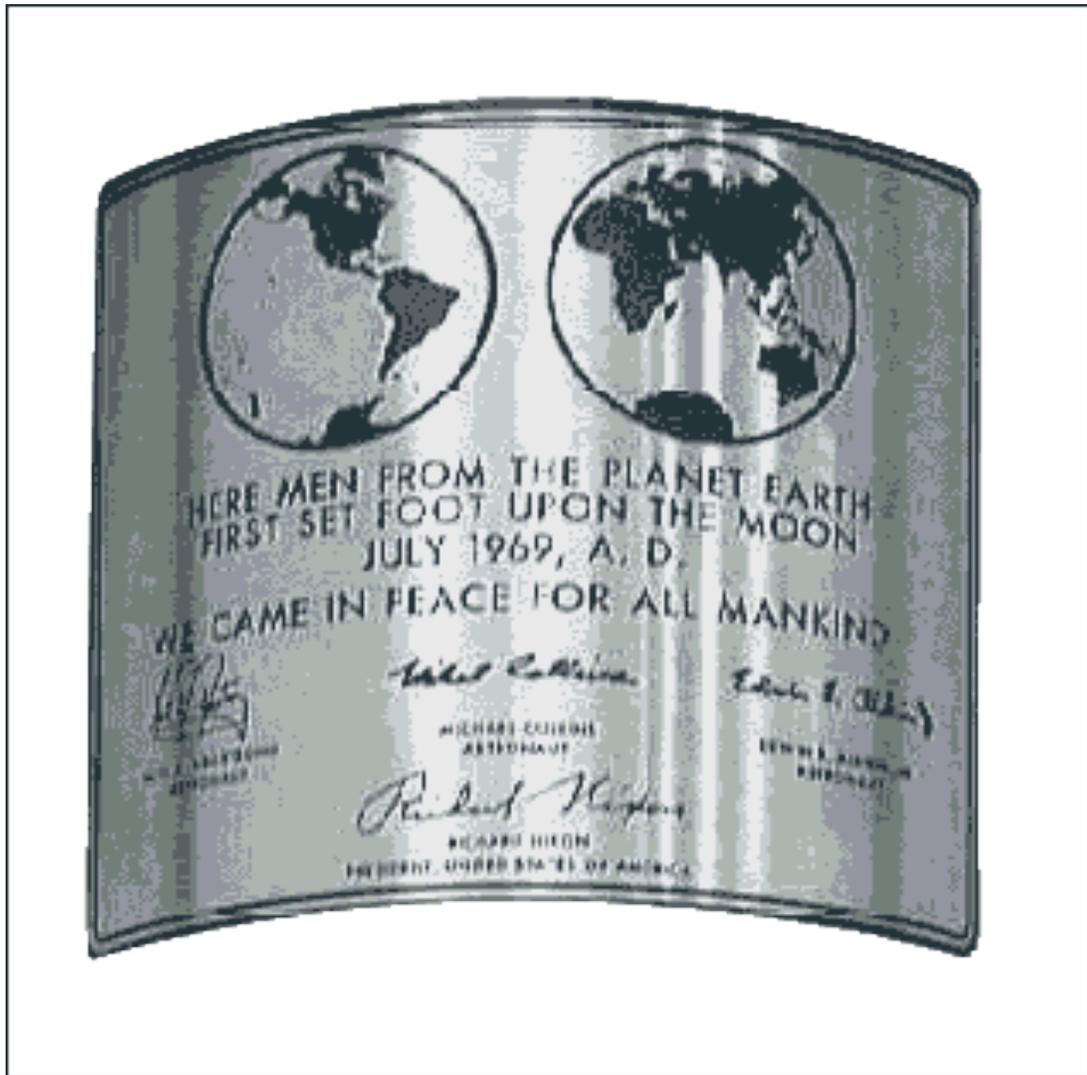


XO

A TALE FOR THE NEW ATLANTIS



ANDRÉ SPEARS

XO

A TALE FOR THE NEW ATLANTIS

by

ANDRÉ SPEARS

A Dispatches Virtual Chapbook

2019

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Note to a new edition: *Xo: A tale for the new Atlantis* is inspired in part by the six manned American moon landings, all of which took place during the Nixon presidency, between July 1969 and December 1972.

A Dispatches Virtual Chapbook

for A. M.

New York,
November, 1980.

Prelude

crash
between land and island
(is: the oceanic!)
splash
higher... higher
HIGHER
sizzle
in the making of heavy light
the glorious erection
measure of a drop
abounds in lines
that draw ways
within
so weird
is the form
that beams round a maze
all about!
day in and day out
through naught
questions
loom
cast and set
as junctures direct
the vessel
the totem
visions
come to climax
changes

the works of matters
long born
change past change
till all over remains
luster
eons gone
beyond prime
phases
manifold
ciphers & entrances
still tears
in twilight
smoke & fizz
air lives
spread in dread
abandon
unto the selfsame
myriads
ethereal mirrors
flash
disguises got
used to refuse
grace
space and
time design
occult chains
down
brains
bound
where the deep ends

sound wild
echoes
the manifest answers
spring & fall
kindling memories
of 'phenomenal origins
animate shadows
on inside eyes
open desire
higher & higher
yields sooner
or later to
utter arcana
89°
out in the cosmos
where vibrations stir
like spirits
signal scorpions rising
from under fate's horizon
lures in the hues
of the blue dead ahead
will wanton anew
attempts to see through
Reality's nebulous nature
owing to seeming
metamorphoses motive
on windows
hollowing flesh
and blood
humors thrills & pains

as worthwhile as
nubile nymphs
offshore
jewel scales divine
up
the silver river of time
before the current winds
key
knowledge
quavers & whispers
in dehiscent fields
words wherein each flower
issues at the mouth
mellow murmurs
of hidden
root colors:
*“white as light
black as night...
whitest night
blackest night...”*
while just up above
traveling like a cloud
that keeps getting bigger
a fermenting crystal mass
kaleidoscopically sparkles
then suddenly disappears
destined for the spheres
where the portals of power
are entered
and left

by the ever subtler sum
collective states
of mind
become
one by one
under the sun
under the stars
under Heavens
where old gods are
e
i
i
i

I am Xo, the Last Poet, who put an end to war.

On the night I finished writing,
a woman's face with deep blue eyes
appeared to me in a mist of light.

“Now that you are done,” she said,
“harness four white horses.
Head for where the Unknown lies
and leave Atlantis far behind.”

I found them all except the fourth
before the moon was full.

“Curse the moon!” was the word of the Fool.
“The fun has just begun!”

Little did I know then of the chaos yet to come.

They say magicians after power overstepped
their mark, and caused the gods to vomit
by practicing black arts.

Life became just like a dream;
all our virgins died. The moto *life is fire*
was tattooed upon their thighs.

Insomnia struck the kingdom like a plague.

The pyramid of Helix started sinking
in the ground, while those of Eüs and Izýpho
slowly turned around.

They numbered out our days for us
as each day got more crazed.
Obelisks throughout the land began to levitate.

Change past change,
the changes kept unfolding.

We became like actors playing
strange new roles; all of us in fever,
with eyes that never closed.

The Sacred Monkeys turned to sponge.
Idols fell apart. The wind was filled with whispers
that cried the names of stars.

I searched in all directions for that fourth
and final horse, to go beyond the wall of death
that sealed Atlantis off.

My quest seemed almost hopeless,
till one day by the sea I heard a dying jellyfish
speak these words to me:

“Poet — In your wish to leave these shores,
think of us as stepping stones, lined up
here before you on your way across the water.”

No sooner had I heard these words
than one by one my hopes returned.

It seemed as though the water's edge
would lead me to my goal, and turning to the left
at last I started up the coast.

2

Voices arising from the breaking of the waves
called to one another, like animals of prey:

“The Queen is being sodomized,
One more time.
Disaster.”

“Her robots down the hall
Are bouncing off
The marble walls.
Locked in deadly combat,
They collide.”

“Mounted police
Sucking blood from their teeth
Go patrolling
Through steel wire gardens.”

“Snails are closing the eyes
Of the wise men who died
Round a grape-soda lake
In the mountains.”

“The suburbs! Oh, the suburbs!
How they teem
With calls for help!”

“In villas made of lipstick
Housewives watch
As windows melt.”

“Every T.V. is a laughter machine
That grows in asthmatic attacks.”

“Nonstop on the screen
There are shows so obscene
That kids turn to plastic
And crack.”

“Mounted and illumined
In a dark museum room,
The members of the zodiac
Keep putting out fresh stool.”

“They take turns in proceeding,
Sealed off by mural glass,

While back and forth in Libra
Sways a balance, keeping track.”

“Murder, rape and other crimes
Are up on billboards advertised.”

“Overnight they came to be;
On posters too, for all to see,
In the land that bleeds
Amid the seas—”

“Atlantis, we await you.”

3

Before too long I met a man with a bandage
on his head. He lit a cigarette
and said his testicles were dead.

When asked about a white horse, he looked me
in the eye, and mentioned having dreamt of one
that flew across the sky...

A trail of bloody band-aids led me further on,
to a field of broken colored glass
that sparkled in the sun.

All along at intervals children stood in pairs.
Some of them wore costumes;
they shouted to beware.

An elephant not far beyond was strangling
a giraffe. Cavemen, at the sight of this,
held their sides and laughed.

But suddenly the tables turned; the cavemen
writhed in pain. I heard them screaming.
Then I saw their hair burst into flames.

To my surprise and horror in panic off they ran
into a pit of quicksand, where they sank
with outstretched hands.

I had tried in vain to help them. In return,
once touched by death, they pointed up
the seacoast as if to guide my quest.

Clouds were forming question marks, haze
was in the air, when I reached an obese woman
who was dressed in underwear.

Standing by a fire, she held two black dogs
on leash; she whipped them as they charged
at flames and gnashed their silver teeth.

A chorus of ventriloquists was present at the scene,
pretending to be candy bars filled
with different creams.

Behind them there were giant trees all made
of meat and bone, where masturbating midgets
wearing blindfolds cried for more.

Flies passed by, whirling in a spiral, slowly
moving out of sight along the path I followed.

As if from a dream came scene after scene
before the water's edge, where people looking
to the sea waited for their death.

4

I found the Wheelchair Poets, who were gathered
by a wall that rose up high, was thick and wide
and made of greyish stones.

Voices issued from the wall,
hundreds at a time; the old men sitting

in their chairs listened mesmerized:

“glup
glup
and so
the killer
spaceship
returned
ooh baby
that feels
I remember
when
having lost
his face
in a
washable blue
jungle of jungles
at carnival
time
the mimes
were divine
but oh
the poison
toilet seats
and the
cripples
in the sauna
one-eyed
handmaiden
obstacle
course
with a
marching band
to boot
you say
they believe
in remote
control
demagnetize

the bank tellers
her fibers
are automatic
darling
piles of
elephant
ash
the curtain
fell for
revenge
I spat on
sleeping crowds
with his pants
down to
his knees
you fornicator
the devouring
armies
with their pustules
it's the
onslaught
of the belly
dancers
crumbling
foam
at the
phantom
plaza
loose ropes
and gunsmoke
the smell of
man-eaters
in my stomach
bathing in
dogs' urine
like thieves
gargling
debris
omniprimal
cocktail

waitress
with your
blue hair
macaroni
screams
all inside
a hole..."

Suddenly the talking stopped. The poets
came to life; then one of them spoke out
and asked: "Who will now recite?"

"The man who farts the loudest!"
answered several of the rest.

The competition started;
each man gave forth his best.

Some did worse than others, but all began
to cheer when the winning blast was sounded
by a man named Oblamir.

He cleared his throat, gave thanks to all,
said nothing for a while, then in a voice
both loud and clear began to improvise.

"Krinchi soulik too
Umagu
Faralalay.

Gomassi
Wick labato
Gum fat shew.

Samgram otoki
Lacta mozar.

Habel crad

Sitvak.

Jomu!

Nolu vilith,
Nolu vilith.

Ah! Ha! Ha!

Daltrol
Slick vagin.

Toblaroid
Lexob.

Slimburt
Pizzle
Whack mish.

Shasm
Block furt.

Olomono
Yitti
Up sass.

Landlip... colert!”

The poet was applauded, but then to my surprise
new stones appeared atop the wall,
increasing it in size.

Delerious, the old men started spinning
in their chairs, laughing loud and shouting,
waving crutches in the air.

As if intoxicated, they made the biggest row,
but the wall began to talk once more
and calmed their spirits down.

I left them sitting by the wall as voices filled
the air, and headed further on my way
along the shoreline trail.

5

I traveled as the day wore on,
always by the sea, till finally I reached
a pier where a ship prepared to leave.

People by the hundreds had come from all around
to join in the festivities and see the ship set out.

Among the crowd were nudists in a game
of volleyball. Every time they hit the ball
they uttered words of war:

“Bomb ball! Bomb ball!”

“Automatic attack!”

“Our death mobile is now in gear.”

“Super smash at last!”

“The power's on. It's time to charge.”

“Kill vibrations flow!”

“Destructo-blast about to pass!”

Into the net fell the ball.

The game was won; they had such fun,
a wild and rousing time. Hunchbacks
under parasols sold shish-kebab nearby.

And then there was the music, by a band
called Bless-r-Ears. They improvised
with passion to purge us of our fears.

The man in charge of playing bass
showed signs of bliss upon his face;
he searched recesses of his soul
to find the notes that would explode.

The drummer unleashed rhythms feverishly fast.
The pianist struck exotic chords
that sounded with a crash.

The man on silver saxophone explored the realm
of dreams. He twisted scales, and made them wail,
while stabbing them with screams.

The music reached a frenzied pitch,
a long impassioned cry, that disappeared in echoes
and became a lullaby...

A singer soon appeared on stage, beautiful
and young; she mingled hope with longing
in the melody she sung:

*Let us go
To Grecian isles,*

*To Egypt
Alongshore the Nile,*

*And find one day
Our peace of mind.*

*Oh, let us go
To Grecian isles.*

*Let us go
To Eastern lands,*

*And walk together
Hand in hand.*

*There we will be
Free at last.*

*Oh, let us go
To Eastern lands.*

*Let us go
To Africa,*

*Or somewhere
Like America,*

*And spend our days
In waves of love.*

*Oh, let us go
To Africa.*

Then she broke into a dance
that had us one and all entranced.

Her arms were like two serpents reaching
into space. She stirred up such excitement
with the movement of her waist.

In a surge of sudden ecstasy she started
whirling round; it seemed as if her body
slowly rose above the ground!

To the beat of wild percussion
she headed for the ship.

The passengers soon followed,
to begin their fateful trip.

6

Amid the noise and tumult
I came across a man, who directed the proceedings
with a motion of his hands.

His name was Captain Eon; he had a twisted smile.
A scar ran down his forehead;
a patch concealed one eye.

We struck up conversation. He told me of his plan:
to dare defy the sea at last
and travel to a peaceful land.

“My passengers bear objects to help us
on our way. Come join us now,” he said to me,
“for soon we start to sail.”

I told him of the white horse, how destiny
had called. He looked at me and pointed
to a man who came aboard.

“This person you see coming
ate his mother's heart; then in a rage
his father's brains. Now he burps a lot.”

The man in question passed us by, carrying
two urns, claiming one held menstrual blood,
the other his own sperm.

A priestess walked behind him; she was dressed
in gold and black. An hourglass was fastened
to suspenders on her back.

“Her name is Deorada,” Captain Eon said to me.
“She'll pray for us bare-breasted

as we venture out to sea.”

“And here comes Amystilix, a merchant
well-rekknowned. He'll play his magic horn for us,
to keep the waters down.”

The merchant Amystilix proceeded on his way;
he held a wooden box that was enclosed
in rusty chains.

Women wearing welding masks
brought on board dead swans.
Other people followed, eager to be gone.

7

The members of the band were last to join
this great escape; as they embarked
they left behind piano, drums and bass.

With bells and tambourines they marched,
chanting all the while. Then the Captain
said farewell, and clouds obscured the sky.

The gangplank and the anchor
were raised up by the crew.

I watched the ship take off at last
on water clear and blue.

The passengers all waved and cheered with hopes
of going far, but just as things seemed promising
a whirlpool formed at large.

The sea took on a purple hue; the air turned
damp and cold. The surge of winding water
made an ever-growing hole.

Like a matchstick down a toilet,

the ship was whirled around till—swallowed up—
she disappeared, and all aboard were drowned.

The turbulence subsided and soon came to an end.

The urge to leave Atlantis
once again had led to death.

I tried, despite despair and doubt,
to put my mind at rest, and looking out
before me I continued on my quest.

8

Voices arising from the breaking of the waves
kept calling to each other, like animals of prey:

“At the temple of the Sacred Whore
A crowd is going wild,
Defacing walls with aerosols
And shouting to the sky.”

“City lights are flashing
Beneath the midday sun;
Bridges built throughout the land
Are falling one by one.”

“Polka dots have just appeared
Upon the Senate's doors
And floors.”

“Within them there is written:
Chew gum and think no more.”

“From out of holes in necropolises
Sprout phallic marble pillars.”

“Carrot juice and whipped cream

Have filled up all the rivers.”

“By a blue lagoon,
More signs of doom:
The sand has turned to cocaine.”

“There groups of men
Who sit cross-legged
Are tortured by intense pain.”

“Turtles at the entrance
Of Rocco's discotheque
Have names of saints
In day-glo paint
Scribbled on their shells.”

“Lo! Lo! Lo and behold!
The sewers now are lined
With gold.”

“And the mighty Sphinx
(Oh, can it be!)
Is melting
Into poison cheese,
In the land that bleeds
Amid the seas—”

“Atlantis, we await you.”

9

Onward then I traveled, distraught and
in a daze, when by a cliff I found a book
with pictures on each page.

Beneath them there were captions
I did not comprehend. The title of the book was:
A Poet Meets His End.

I turned the pages slowly, amazed at what I saw.
The pictures were mysterious
and intricately drawn.

In one of them a man was shown sitting
on a lunar throne, staring at the viewer,
his dark eyes filled with furor.

A horde of women warriors stood behind
the throne. Each proudly puffed a naked chest
where one breast hung alone.

Where should have been the other breast
two scars designed an "X".

The women's eyes were empty;
they wore seashells round their necks.

The scene took place in outer space: it seemed
to be the moon. Beneath a starry darkness
a soft light bathed all in blue.

At the bottom there was written
in small italic type:
The poet and his cohorts prepare to take a dive.

Another picture stopped me, equally as strange.
It showed a straight wide river
down the middle of the page.

Along the river's shores were rows of big black
metal bars. Between them stretched,
from either side, enormous sets of arms.

They were thrust out towards a cradle
that was on its way downstream and that floated
in the center, slightly out of reach.

In this case there was written at the bottom
of the page: *None will follow in his wake;*

guess what is this poet's name.

Perplexed by what these captions meant,
book in hand off I went—but suddenly
to my surprise the book took off into the sky.

It sailed up high just like a bird flying on its way,
until it reached the upper cliff
and went inside a cave.

I stood there for a moment, then turned
to take the path that led beyond the seaside cliff
and joined a stretch of sand.

10

I had a time of brief respite—all alone,
no freakish sights—but still the voices
from the sea shattered any sense of peace.

On those shores, those shores of death—
where people came as if possessed—
the jellyfish themselves bespoke the end of life,
the end of hope.

As I continued further on, I suddenly could see
the severed heads of men and women
lying on the beach.

Each head let out obscenities angrily
and loud, as if to curse the world itself,
its endless going round.

Impulsively I reached for one and took it
in my hand. A young man's face looked
straight at me; he had a waxed moustache.

The other heads fell silent, and then,
like hypnotized, the one I held began to speak

and closed its weary eyes:

“We have
rolled
and
rolled
and
rolled

From bodies
where we once
belonged

To find
ourselves
upon
these shores

We have
rolled
and
rolled
and
rolled...

Past
decomposed
lost spacemen's
bones

Among
the atoms
of a mold

Beyond
a black
galactic
hole

In and out
of dreams
untold

From palaces
to shattered
homes

Along
a valley
filled
with gold

And
pools of blood
that overflowed

Behind
big signs
with small
peepholes

Beside
a cyclops
on patrol

Atop a cliff
with yellow
snow

Around
an ocean
eons old

Under gods
who overdosed

Next to
ringing
telephones

In front
of statues
telling
jokes

Above
the ruins
of false
hope

Inside
a teardrop's
mystic folds

By endless
rows of
sizzling
foam

Where
broken wings
had just
been sold

And
full-grown
slaves
had reached
their goal

Where poems
passed through
sudden vogues

And back
again
to points
unknown.

We have
rolled
and
rolled
and
rolled

From bodies
where we once
belonged

To find

ourselves
upon
these shores

We have
rolled
and
rolled
and
rolled...”

The head soon opened up its eyes. I placed it
near the rest; and, moving on, I left them
to their sadness, and their wrath.

11

Within a while I came across a woman
dressed in grey. Old and bent, she stood alone
and listened to the waves.

Her face was pale and wrinkled and the veins
bulged from her hands. Dreamily she gazed at me,
like someone in a trance.

She poked the ground before her with a twisted
wooden cane, and in a voice that cracked with age
said: “Maya is my name.”

“My trade is telling fortunes,” she continued
with a smile. “I have read for the illustrious;
my fame spreads far and wide.”

“So if you dare discover what fate
may have in store, let me see your penis—
a penis tells it all!”

I hesitated briefly, but, curious to know,
I pulled it out and let it hang;
she took it in her hand.

She scrutinized its every line, the veins
and marks that made it mine, and slowly
she pronounced herself.

This woman knew her art so well.

“Never have I seen before such strange
configurations. What your future holds in store
defies all explanation.

“I can tell that you are sensitive,
a man of wealth and taste; diligent, ambitious too,
but prone to little fits of rage.

“You have courage and are generous,
but oftentimes too proud.

“You tend to live in fantasy,
for fear of feeling down.

“I would say you are a poet, judging
from these lines; author of a recent book
finished in the nick of time.”

I stood amazed at what I heard—
the truth behind her every word.

I said I was a poet who had finished his last work
about the time Atlantis began to go berserk.

I told her of the woman's face appearing
in the night, and of the horses that I sought
in order to escape in time.

“Maya,” I then said to her, “what more
do you see? Will I find the fourth white horse,

or will it be the end of me?”

Stooped above my penis, she handled it with care
and, weighing every word she spoke,
pronounced herself again.

“Yes, indeed, I see a quest—
and in it you will find success.

“But what then follows baffles me...
I think you will confront a beast,
some dark force you will defeat.

“I also see an ally.

“This wrinkle shows a journey ending in return.
You'll go where none have been before,
past thresholds that will lead you home.

“I see light and I see darkness! A kingdom
that is yours... A spiral ends your lifeline.
I cannot tell you more.”

I thanked the woman for her time;
then I turned away, and leaving her behind me
went on to brave my fate.

12

I could not help but wonder at the things
that she had said, but soon such thoughts
were banished by the sights that I beheld.

I reached a giant lobster, the size of twenty men,
dead upon its stomach, its carapace bright red.

Next to it were people in purple hooded robes,
one of whom was speaking

in a sonorous deep tone:

“So brethren unto you I say: rejoice, rejoice!
Oh, happy day!

“Verily we shall find peace
by eating of this lobster meat.

“Yes, salvation is at hand. We need not
suffer more. This lobster is a blessing,
from heaven sent pre-boiled.

“Let me hear your voices! Raise them unto me!
If indeed ye do believe that there be truth
in what I speak.”

“We believe!”

“Do ye believe in the power of this Crustacean's
flesh to heal, restore, and make whole?”

“We believe!”

“Do ye believe in the Ophthalmic, the Antennal
and the Mandibular Somites?”

“We believe!”

“And in the glory of the Pereiopods,
the Maxillipeds, the Pleopods
and the Great Chelipeds?”

“We believe!”

“Then in the name of the Head, the Thorax
and the Abdomen, I bid you, Friends:
start digging in!”

Each person took a hammer out and raising it
began to shout; then all at once they charged

the beast, pounding it repeatedly.

They struck and struck, but had no luck:
the shell refused to break.

They persevered; they would not yield.
Their zeal turned into rage.

For quite a while I stood nearby,
till one of them at last gave out a cry of victory
and said the shell had cracked.

The others gathered round him and helped him
make a hole, from which they tore out
chunks of meat to satisfy their souls.

After having eaten they one by one undressed
and holding hands stood naked,
waiting to be blessed.

As nothing seemed to happen they looked up
into the sky. But soon they started moaning
and then they clutched their sides.

Seized with diarrhea, they vomited blue gobs.
Foam oozed from their nostrils;
their eyes began to throb.

Their groins blew open suddenly.
Out came thorny weeds.

Their bodies shrank to half their size;
they all grew sharp green teeth.

From heads that kept on swelling sprouted
long grey oily hair. Wires from their anuses
were dangling in the air.

Part animal, part human, part plant, machine
and stone—they were covered with transistors

and tentacles that shone.

On each a yellow flashing light
accompanied a siren.

Their mouths were pointing to the sky
and spewing milk and fire.

An endless metamorphosis took place
before my eyes; I watched them all in horror
as they changed in shape and size.

They took on such repulsive forms
till I could watch no more, so turning round
I made my way still further up the coast.

Dazed, I traveled on till all at once,
in front of me, a big bright yellow school bus
came rising from the sea.

13

Emerging from the water, it drove
across the beach, and kept on coming toward me
till it stopped within my reach.

I saw there was a curtain hung behind
the driver's back. The windows, all except for his,
were covered up in black.

After rolling down his window, the driver
said hello. He wiped his brow and told me
just how far he had to go.

“My passengers are tired,” he then went on
to say. “We want to get away in time,
or else we're sure to die.

“I started off one day alone, and passed a man

on saxophone who belted out fierce overtones—
I offered him a ride.

“Next I took on naked boys who sang of joys
and sorrows, and babies that I found beneath
a sign that said *Tomorrow*.

“A man sat playing bongo drums
further down the road. We stopped for him.
Two athletes and a jester came along.

“Others joined us each in turn,
including more musicians.

“And last of all a dancing girl,
who in a frenzy whirled and whirled.

“Ever since she boarded, I drive without respite.
We want to get away in time,
or else we're sure to die.”

And so the driver of this bus that pulled up
on the beach put his engine in first gear,
and waved farewell to me.

He drove off in a trail of dust; I stood and watched
a while. He went to where the sun
had set, as clouds obscured the sky.

I started heading on my way,
when suddenly I heard a terrible explosion
that made me stop and turn.

To my dismay the bus was now a raging
mass of flames. The blast had torn it all to bits;
no sign of life remained.

I left the burning wreck behind and started off
once more, prepared, despite my weariness,
to face what lay in store.

Voices arising from the breaking
of the waves kept calling to each other,
as I traveled on my way:

“‘Why?’ asks the High Priest
With servants by his side.
In a tower by the sea
He hangs his head and cries.”

“His cosmic gong burst into dust
Upon the twilight stroke of eight.”

“Where once he held a mallet
Now he clutches nasal spray.”

“Elevators everywhere
Obey controls no more,
And speed their victims
To a crash
Above the topmost floor.”

“The end is near!
The end is near!”

“Mass suicides
Will make it clear.”

“How fervently men hope and pray
For peace and love to come their way,
In this the land
Where hope is vain—”

“Atlantis, we await you.”

15

Darkness had begun to fall when, further up
the shore, a horse appeared before my eyes—
the white horse that I sought!

Overjoyed, I mounted and took off on a ride—
homeward, through the dead of night,
beneath a starlit sky.

16

Nighttime
ride

Twilight
cries

Elevators
side
by
side

Castles
bursting
into
dust

High
priest
stroking
peace
and
love

Hopeless
victims
asking

why

Prayer
gongs
for
suicide

Masses
clutching
nasal
spray

Faster
faster

On
my
way.

Tortured
day-glo
discotheque

Mighty
groups
of
melting
men

Poison
pillars

Phallic
cheese

Sewer
juice
and
cocaine

cream

Polka
dotted
signs
of
doom

Marble
river
painted
blue

Saints
awaiting
midday
sun

Necropole
of
chewing
gum

Fallen
bridges
to
the
sky

Sphinx
beholding
city
lights

Flashing
sand
and
crowded
doors

Voices
rising
lined
with
gold

Plastic
housewives
sodomized

Robot
lipstick
advertised

Wire
gardens

Laughing
halls

Lake
of
steel

Grape
soda
walls

Wise
men
snails
and
dead
police

Sucking
blood
from
T.V.

screens

Suburbs
inside
mural
glass

Faster
faster

Home
at
last!

17

I rode into my garden where the launching pad
was set, and shouted to my servants
to raise themselves from bed.

I bid them place the horses—the four
that now were mine—together with my chariot
on the Disk I had designed.

The team was quickly harnessed;
I took the reins in hand, and as the tension
mounted I gave my last command.

“Take your seats,” I said to them,
“and start to pedal fast!”

“Flap your wings while pedaling
and see me off at last...”

Their efforts caused the Disk to turn
and rise up on its edge until the team and chariot
were pointing overhead.

I waited for the moment that the Unknown

was aligned. When it came I gave a cry,
and cracked the whip with all my might.

18

Sudden, sudden darkness descended in a flash.
Everything had vanished to the sound
of broken glass.

I found myself in some great void—
anxious, tense, alone. My chariot and horses
had turned to glowing stone.

Amid the pitch black darkness,
with silence on all sides, I stood completely
motionless and chills ran down my spine.

I dared not make the slightest sound,
till finally I heard, like comets speeding
through the night, these paralyzing words:

“Poet!”

poet poet poet

“Who do you think you are?”

you are

“Never will your poem...”

poem

“...take you very far.”

far far far

“None will ever read it!”

read it

“All was done in vain.”

“Your singsong rhymes are awkward,
your images inane...”

inane inane inane

The raspy voice continued to assault me
on all sides. Indeed, this was the very Beast
that Maya had divined!

I felt the urgent need to scream
and get the voice to stop, but found myself
remaining still, as though my jaws were locked.

Frightened and defenseless, and growing more
confused, I suddenly heard someone call—
and turned to find my Muse.

19

She was dressed in red and white and black,
in garments made of vinyl, with paper clips around
her waist and diamond-studded sandals.

She had on mirror glasses
and a feather by one ear.

I knew the Beast would leave me be,
as long as she was near.

“Xo,” she softly said to me, “do not be afraid.
Your poem has delivered you

from dark and dreadful days.

“Listen as I tell you of that which came to pass
all across Atlantis, the home that you once had.

“After your escape from there
death began to spread.
Pestilence was everywhere;
men were killing men.

“The coming of the holocaust
made people crazed and wild.

“The elderly were tortured,
and children crucified.

“Half the land went up in flames.
Terror reigned supreme. The stench of corpses
filled the air; the living wailed and screamed.

“The days were marked by scorching heat;
the nights by freezing cold.

“Thousands turned to suicide. Hysteria took hold.

“Then came earthquakes one by one,
and violent destruction, followed by the onset
of volcanoes' mass eruption.

“The continent began to sink as meteors fell down,
and finally great tidal waves approached
from all around.

“They reached the land and crashed at last;
the havoc soon was over.

“Where once there stood Atlantis
now lies water... water... water...”

“You find yourself at present tormented
by the Beast, a serpent in whose body
all destinies are sealed.

“Seize the time and make your move, or soon
you will be lost. Take this die and cast it—
quickly!—down that serpent's throat.”

She offered me a small white die
with which to try my luck; it had a different vowel
marked on every side but one.

The side without a vowel had been left
completely blank. After having viewed the cube
I clutched it in my hand.

“Xo,” my Muse then said to me,
“be careful with your throw.
The Beast will open up its mouth
and down it we will go.”

I scrutinized the darkness that seemed
as thick as lead, and lifting up the die at last
I threw it straight ahead.

I heard a hiss, then like a hole
a circle opened wide.

In it was a mass of stars whirling
toward the right.

My chariot soon gathered speed,
and then began to soar—sucked into a vortex
with my Muse and me aboard.

The stars continued spinning round.
We kept on moving faster, along what seemed
a corridor through a whirlwind's center.

Suddenly there came a flash of overwhelming
darkness; then once again the stars appeared
in what seemed fewer numbers.

“My name is **AA-OAAO!**”
I heard a voice shout out.

“One full year of Peace and Love
is yours to bring about!”

Faster, faster, on we sped as stars kept
whirling round; then once again they vanished
and still fewer came back out.

“My name is **IIU-EII!**” another voice exclaimed.

“10 full years of Peace and Love
will bring you endless fame!”

Deeper, deeper down the line,
the dark kept flashing faster, and as it did
new voices called and stars got ever scarcer.

“100 Years of Peace and Love!”

“1000 years of Love!”

“**I-AA!**”

“**O-E!**”

“**AII-O!**”

“UU-E-UU!”

“O-OA!”

“10,000 years of Peace and Love!”

“100, 000 years!”

The voices each cried out their names:

“E-EO-E!”

“II-UA!!”

I thought again of Maya—the journey
she had seen: my trip back to Atlantis,
and my future as a king.

“1,000,000 years of Peace and Love!”

The voices kept on calling. As fewer stars whirled
round and round the dark continued growing.

I felt a wild excitement when at last
before my eyes one single star alone remained,
piercing through the night.

A thousand thoughts rushed through my mind;
my prize was now at hand. Then there came
a sudden jolt, followed by a splash.

22

I found myself to my surprise emerging
from the sea, standing in my chariot
behind a surging team.

The horses, when they surfaced, had changed

from lifeless stone to bigger, stronger, sea-green
beasts with golden manes that shone.

Just as I raced on amid the rising ocean spray,
a mighty bird came sweeping down
to carry me away.

The chariot and horses all sank back into
the sea—and with them too there went
my Muse, who waved farewell to me.

The giant bird flew on its way—
further, further up—until we reached
the blinding light that burns inside the sun...

23

When next I opened up my eyes
I found myself alone inside a long, dark
passageway filled with clouds of smoke.

At one end in the distance
was a dimly glowing light;
I went in that direction, strangely hypnotized.

Feeling very weary, my mind devoid of thoughts,
on and on I walked
until the tunnel's end approached.

At last I reached a chamber that was bathed
in mellow light, where on a bed of thick green
moss a woman was reclined.

Her naked body clearly showed that she was big
with child; but then she spoke these words to me,
while looking in my eyes:

“Poet — You who think me pregnant, be not
fooled by what you see. Within my swollen belly

is a world made up of dreams.

“Put your head upon my stomach, and listen
to the sound of Nothing chasing Nothing,
a thousand times around.”

I lay down there beside her and did
as she had said, resting on her belly
with her hand upon my head.

I closed my eyes and realized I felt
a sense of peace; then drifting off, content
and warm, I slept... and had a dream.

24

And in my dream a woman's face
with deep blue eyes appeared to me
in a mist of light.

“Now that you are done,” she said,
“tell your tale in full. All that you have seen
and heard will circle round the world.

“Prepare to face the Water Gate,
beyond which you must go. Forged from human
tears and sweat, behind you it will close.

“Enter, Poet! Enter! Let everything be known:
what the writing of a book meant
in your Atlantean home.”

The woman's face then vanished
and a portal opened wide, leading to a giant room
with mirrors on all sides.

My every footstep echoed as I entered
and walked on, till finally the portal closed and
sealed me the dark.

Then it was that I began to tell my tale in full,
surrounded by the darkness
of a mirror-coated room.

But since the time I first came in
this room has gotten smaller, with silence
closing in on me from each and every quarter.

In a falsely pregnant woman's womb,
a king has found a land to rule—
and with it too an empty tomb.

Atlantis, my dominion!

Like bombs exploded in my head,
my verses serve no more.

I was Xo, the Last Poet, who put an end to war.