

xii. *Sipa-ho*, Golden Tortoise, bearer of the world སྤོང་བ་ཏོ། གཤེར་ལྷི་རུས་སྤྲུལ། འཛམ་གླིང་གི་རྗེན།

My carapace–gridded hearth beneath, domed plastron as protection above, is a carrier of the whole cosmos. My anti-clockwise oracular bones.

Oracle bones of auspicious inscriptions, cinnabar and brush, a script that looks like code and is hewn with knives.

Bones thrown in the air or read at random.

I am rebellious because I rest on my way to work.

I know the weather because what we can't see we can smell.

I know the state of the nation.

I know the year the tomatoes didn't ripen to the right red.

My back reaches up into my shoulders, my ribs expand and crack with the heat of the golden rod that prods into my gut, into time. The way that things break can tell us about the way things will be.

I lie spreadeagled on my four green squares in thunderbolt tail pointing calendar. The days of the hand, arrow, kila, sheaf maybe an eclipse, orbit four elements, eight magic numbers, twelve constellations. They are together by distance.



back; grasping, clawing every direction, north. My belly, a week, the sun, moon, eye, and the head of a bird, around me. I bear the consciousnesses, nine hours, twenty-eight separate and held

I can tell you when to set off on your journey. I can tell you the year of the dragon, the hurricane of the red bird, the harmony of the tiger. My machine is a memory palace.

I am secretive but I am an open text. I plead you this: *build a shell*. The bridge between plastron and carapace is not bone: it is not solid, but permeable, not opaque but translucent, not mantle but mesh. It can be read, re-written and re-interpreted. Our boundaries protect us if we understand that they are not still, but move very slowly. They are compact in space but abundant in time. These boundaries are scored with rings like on a tree. Rings that remind us that our lives are a map, vast and with a multitude of meandering lines.