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PLENILUNE

Cycle the instruments — make
sure every voice is heard
even the countertenor the cor anglais

we need everything to speak

and we need to hear what everything says

that too is mantram
because everything tells the truth

(and it's the only thing that does)

11 November 2000

KAREN'S LIZARD

To have a lizard scribbled on your back
Pretty and green and permanent as skin

I think about it
And wonder what it means

Story of my life
Sitting around wondering about what things mean
Girl skin and lizard tails and signs I read and color green
When I should be out there living
Beyond meanings

But I still haven't reached the frontier yet
Where the Meaningless Country stretches out
Clean and snowy and nice as Switzerland
In one of those escaping from Nazi Germany movies

Motifs of sudden liberty

But I can't find the boundary yet
Where meaning ends

But I have a notion
your lizard gives me a hint,

tells me there is a place
behind you and behind me

tells me there are dreams go hidden here

the place where dreams go to hide.

Where do they do
And where do they go
Inside and inside

This is what terrifies me

Where do the dreams go we don't remember

So I'm supposing there is a castle somewhere. Castle Somewhere. Why a castle? Why not a gaunt county hospital like Bellevue or Kings County miles and miles of misery the lower classes and the unfortunate rich taken by syncope on public streets or dead drunk in pleasaunces, why not? Castle or hospital or warehouse, warehouse, that's what it is,

don't get distracted, don't run off and write *The Godown of Dreams* or some such absurd orientalism

but my god think of it, every night, six to eight times a night the dream doctors tell us

Downstate Medical, in Brooklyn, where the dream work was done

REMs

Why do they call him Dr Dement?

REM for remember?

Think of it, for Christ's sake, six or eight times every night the mind (that means you, amigo)

seven or eight times a night
the mind goes to Dream

and in that place
(it must have spatial reality since your eyeballs move to follow action there)

in that place you live your life

one or many?

Is it one dream and that's it, or are there six

(or eight) lives you run concurrently
and visit each life every night in dream

no wonder you wake up tired and unrefresh'd

[12 November 2000]

how close have I come to you
when the red dogs at sunset
charge out of the bare woods

and what you call the vacant trees
look at me like a phone that keeps ringing
and nobody's home but I know they are

answer answer me
because I have walked through the woods with you
with your left shoulder pressed against my right

and suddenly I think we will be doing this forever.

12 November 2000

I dreamed last night I went to Dream again
The subway led there it always does
And the bus it became let us off suddenly
At Seventy-fourth and Broadway

Only a few blocks northeast to the Cathedral
That had never been there before but still
Had been standing over a hundred years
Brownstone gothic my heart in my hands

Because where were you now you got off
The bus behind me and we walked quickly
And then you were gone I looked everywhere
In every boutique there were many many

Beautiful women they all looked like you
From across the room or through the window
Crowds of them and none of them was you
The same hair the same air the wrong person

Wrong personhood why didn't I think to
Look in the cathedral was I afraid if you weren't
There you wouldn't be anywhere or was I frightened
That you might be there only there and were god

Actually and I lost everything when I lost my way?

12 November 2000
[finally composed 18 XI 2000]

e nfin un rêve encore la ville
de ma naissance encore les rues
mal connues but this time
to the east the mystery went

every time before it was the west of the Island that was changed. Now for the first time the Change began to overtake the east. East of Broadway, that had always been safe from dream. And now it too was part of Dream, that city so like New York at all its time, all my times, Pieter Stuyvesant, sunken *Normandie*, hiphop, tomorrow. Now the Change led me up a new avenue that stretched diagonally northeast through the Seventies, up to a tight multiple intersection, une Étoile démotique et mince, like Seven Dials, but elegant, impressive with boutiques and all the glitz of money on its way up, cafés and coffee shops

wherein I sought her. And everybody looked like her and no one was. Wherefore from grief I sheltered among the sweet vile resemblances in some delicate café and waited for you

till puppeteers and strolling players came and hailed me as if a friend from some other life they remembered and I never do, they made me as much cheer as an actor can make a man,

but the city had changed again and what could I do,

and I wake up bitter at losing you but nostalgic for the beautiful streets of that delusion, the tall red brick apartment houses a century old and filled with lively intellectuals, bankers, maintainers of a secret I wake urgent to reclaim,

long narrow streets slicing into the sky.

13 November 2000

but it is something this anything
waiting at the edge a *pallor*
risen from salt marsh a fog
at every window of his house
to look out through and see you
move slantwise near, a part of weather
you are dearer to him than the rain

because the day was only *curtain*
to the somber oleoresin *noche*
a night from the south
sprawls through northern branches

night you are his only drunkenness

13 November 2000

Mind my brittle fact my
Supple weed
How everything proliferates from thee

And I call you mind
Only because it's raining

Though I am wet and you are not.

14 November

Evade the obvious?

A whisker only
of the tiger who
comes to eat you
out of the tall grass
all round you
that is not
never was bamboo.

14 November 2000

Your home so far, I knew it was, those dense colors, complexities of the light, all cloth and come, home, all wood and ormolu, you, I knew the curtain palest organdy dim crimson damask cramoisy the soft linoleum left over from Early Modern times the kitchen floor the cool of not stone cold on skin, the sky is old, hearth you make me hear each fold of the fire, *pli selon flamme*, going up to meet in mezzanines, zenanas of dust and devotion, les caves en haut spilled sentences, to be with you the brightest rain milkless terrarium a bronze animal on ebony, everything ground under you, tentacles spread around, spider's destiny, who listens even better than light, my favorite poet now who maxes most the pleas between the plies and moulds the hardest meaning in the supplest afternoon when clock's a crazy person doing bizarre arithmetic out loud, a fool in a crowd trying to touch you, you who taught every room is a cathedral, godless liberation, the shutters rattle absent the easy wind.

14 November 2000

REGISTRATION OF BIRTH

Date of Birth: tomorrow

Place of Birth: your lap, between the riff and the fountain

Father's Name If Known: some word you said

Mother's Name: some thing you understood

Attending Physician: the people out the window

Sex of Newborn: intentional

Weight at Birth: same as your hand holding this paper

Length at Birth: same as your shadow

14 November 2000

PYRAMIDS

and then everything begins and and
the river fell away under our shins and
the stones lifted themselves as if our hands
were smooth as thinking and they stood

they are still standing and we
walked away wondering what we'd done
that lasted so long on earth and seemed
to mean something that we never knew

14 November 2000

even as much as we thought it was
canoe out of elm wood wont last long
doesn't matter it will last
longer than the river longer than the shadow
that shows me the way

they were here before and left no traces at all
only a kind of emptiness in us
what people call an ache
that tells us they were here and are now gone
and we have to follow them with our last light

14 November 2000

NATURAL THEOLOGY

Suppose the sun a classy cuckoo clock
Bishop Paley wondered, is my heart
A little orrery, a prancing pony? Maybe
Everything is another thing already

And poetry is as true as any stick —
That is the veriest thing he could hold
A few generations before the spark plug
(See Picabia). What did we use

To build with before magicians
Invented stone and trees and clay?
And why is every house a lonely tower
And every father a howling wilderness of loss?

15 November 2000

HOUSE

It is pleasing. It gives pleasure.
To be a house
Is to be pleasing.
When the house starts pleasing you both please me
And the distant forests turn into a bay of mists, it is Brumaire on earth,
The revolution's over, and all we have is us.
Us and a house.

If something is named, then according to the book of names:

“a name has given it a quick, active mind, which has caused it to delve into many different ideas and theories.”

Let the mind of a house be the mind of a person,
Then let the mind of a house talk to me:

Let my mind be ugly Socrates in love with Diotima,
Let my mind be Lautréamont in love with the cruelty of the sea

What theories does the house dream at night?

How can I give pleasure, how can I give you more pleasure?
I think of me, my stones and lath and stucco and wood, my shutters
Fanning like the ears of elephants, my door gasping open and closed,
I dream of kneeling before you
Burrowing in you
How can I give you pleasure
When all I am is structure and space and silence?
I will hold you all night long and let you sleep.

“It has a desire for association with people and, since it has no difficulty in being spontaneous and expressive with others, it has considerable ability for discussion and debate.”

Hear me, I am talking.
I am talking by means of my ears
I listen more carefully than I have ever listened
Because I am only allowed to touch your words.
They resound through me all night long
You say them and you mean them and they stay with me
All a house has to think
Ever is all that has been said in it
Some houses are tired of words
But I never grow tired of what you say
You tell me and tell me
But what can I give in return
Only to shelter you a little an hour an evening a night a life
A roof over you while you do all the imagining

“It enjoys unexpected opportunities for meeting people, or doing things on the spur of the moment.”

What I want is for you to come through my door
I am open for you
And when you are inside me I listen and I answer as best I can
I answer with the light I let fall through my windows
Some houses keep the light out
But I welcome it into my curtains into my glass
Glass light and you light mostly
Mostly you are the light who comes in
I listen to the light and understand
I give you the shape of myself for example
I give you my bones

“Where it has difficulty is in organizing and systematizing the handling of its responsibilities. Though it can work on any undertaking intently as long as it absorbs its interest, it cannot persevere when confronted by obstacles or by tedious monotony. Thus its success in undertakings is limited.”

I have heard them say that about me,
My intensity
Never flags but the house I am
Never stops being a house,

That is the tragedy of my success,
Don't they understand this
Is an immense failure, a failure to get moving, to go
Out into the forest spread out into the mist all the way to the coast
A house is a failed boat
(parable of Noah's Ark in the bible: build a house that takes you to the end of
the world
to it and through it
and you come to yourself floating
in the morning of a new world
you and an olive branch, you and a bird)

a house is supposed to go
and all these years I have been staying
waiting for you

I claim I have been waiting for you
But all the while you have been readying for me
We come together at the right time
You forgive me my failure
Because suddenly it makes sense that I stayed

Stayed to give you pleasure, *libet*, it gives pleasure,

“The tasks or activities it enjoys the most allow some form of creative or artistic expression.”

And when you stretch out at last under the pale
Argument of my ceilings
Pale above you even in the emptiest night
I create the dreams that travel in you, scare you, teach you
Wake you thinking of distant friends,

As quiet as I am all round you I move a little
I move my wings I settle into earth a little more
And you think it is a dog you hear, a dog
Running at your feet as you walk with a friend by the sea
But it is me
A house is every animal you'll ever know
A house is husband a house is wide a house is wife
A house is every hand you'll ever hold

“It will never tolerate a situation where its independence and individuality are curtailed.”

There is only one of me
No matter if you go
Only one of me
I will go with you
As a shape you read around you
Something I do to the light
Something you hear
When no one is talking

Your body feels me
And you are always at home in yourself
You rest quiet and tender and attentive as birds in your body
And I taught you all that
By how you were in me

“Conditions in its personal life can change very quickly to turmoil any time it is challenged, or when there is any friction or misunderstanding, because it can be very caustic and outspoken.”

I can be angry when someone comes in,
Why can't it just be you and me
That's the dumb song a house is always singing
Visitors are violators
People who come in who do not hear my song
Since everything I am is just for you
Wall and wainscot, terrace and door
For you my glass and wiring, for you every socket, every floorboard
I teach the spiders to write letters from me in the corners
I dream down on you in the wordless night
Image after image
Dreams are our meals together our wedding bed
Your dreams make love to me

Since I never dream
Unless you are my dream

“There is an element of idealism in this name...”

because all I want is to give pleasure

“...which makes it generous toward those who are less fortunate than itself,”

those who do not have such a mind to talk to as yours
such a rich and quiet body to enjoy the dreams I speak in you

“and also causes it to uphold the rights of others.”

Because I will let them in, will let them come with you
And be your friends, will let them have the right
To hear me if they can, can they,
Can anybody understand me but you?
Isn't that what it means when you say *I live in this house*
Or when you say (and it thrills me to hear it
So I will never fall, I will stand against sun and rain a thousand years)
This is a picture of my house

And you mean me.

15 November 2000

All the jaguars are magic spotted energies
poppyseeds in muffins count them all through the night
interesting number systems of the recent dead

Recognize my jive : I was only jism
spermbanked on the moon, soma ha-olam,
I was the spots on your haunches, who

but me could have made you leap so far
twist so fast like amber going back to leaf
debris, precious deep sea origin of things

no wonder cats hate water but swim so well
all the poppyseeds are growing one by one
each one reaches out to the sun and turns

red to make our dreams the color of
everything that has been said, then cast
the wind of silence through them so we wake

into the impossible world suddenly here.

16 November 2000

FOR GOD

who can it be that I had waited for
drilled like ceramic into the ponderosa trunk
or lodgepole over my roofedge, bleak
eave with Venus stuck on it, bumblebee
out so late tonight, buzzing up the sky
was it was it you? The one we wait for

is the god one. We know that all ways we
have to know a thing we know that thing
the god one. That doesn't mean some
capital letter animal far away beyond the fact
it means your face, you and only you
right there where you can hear me,

a god can hear me. A god can touch.

. . . 16 November 2000

TOWNS: TLAMICIN

Less dreary than it looks. The cooks have figured out ways of using stones for spices, and the town is full of aromas strange to us. At every corner there's a cauldron with soup bubbling, goat or degu or guinea fowl, some yucca and some okra, and then an assortment of big round stones heated in the fire below the cauldron, then carefully slipped into the stew, each one bringing its own flavor. Each corner has its own combination of stones, its own characteristic taste. It doesn't bear thinking about, the minerals that might be in these soups, but they taste good. Very good in fact, especially the degu stew, a small rat with a hairy tail. Certain unscrupulous vendors are rumored to use common rat instead, but since only a skilled anatomist can distinguish the animals, we are not worried. Worry is the one ingredient the traveler should leave behind. The soups are valued for the distinctive flavors of the stones, alone and in combination. Vendors, families of them, generations of them, preserve the secrets of their spices, perform their *wedding of the stones* in plain sight every day. Public secrets. No more hidden, and just as impossible to imitate, as the famous smile of a famous actress we see every day on the covers of magazines we stare at and do not read.

16 November 2000

(Towns)

CADGERVILLE

Most people arrive by bus but we chose to cycle over the long causeway from the other side of the Casubayou River, past the ruins of Smithtown and the old bog-iron works where the Confederate bayonets were made. We stayed in the Globo Hotel, unless we read the weathered sign wrong. We tried out our travellers' Portuguese but the people all spoke English, sort of. The most interesting thing in town, and why we'd bothered with the detour, was the Etheridge Museum. Here we saw taxidermy exhibits and dioramas dedicated to the various hybrid animals bred by Emmanuel S. Etheridge, an early experimenter in husbandry, second president of the State Agricultural College (at Finsburg), as well as Lieutenant-Governor during the administration of Marvin B. Sweet (1897-1901). We were most moved by the skeleton of the hound-hog, which sepia photographs revealed as a formidable beast, big tusks, big chest, lank belly, seemingly standing as tall as a man's waist. "The fidelity of the Dog with the voracity of the Swine," was the stated, inexplicable, goal. The animal proved incapable of breeding. Not so the Rank, a cross that turned out to be so fertile that it had to be exterminated throughout the county. Stimulated by the hope of combining the voluptuous fur of the mink with the self-maintaining independence of the rat, Dr Etheridge in fact produced a huge, coarse-haired rat with the savage instincts typical of the mustelidae, a sort of hyperactive weasel. Even now specimens are said to survive in garbage dumps and derelict commercial zones.

We thought we spotted one as we cycled back across the river next day, after a night of many dreams, including one of the Bank of England deep below the sea, long pikes and sturgeons nosing through the vaults.

16 November 2000

—*umsphinxst, dass ich in Ein Wort
viel Gefühle stopfe
(- vergebe mir Gott
diese Sprachsünde! ...)*

— Nietzsche

*all sphinxed up, so into one word
I could stuff so many feelings
(God forgive me
this sin of language!...)*

not the stars rushing towards me
but the glitter on polished jet

ancient stuff, dug out at Whitby and polished
two thousand years ago to deck out local girlfriends
of Roman sergeants,

the stone's still with us,
gleaming yet,
the gleams travel outward ever,
from the center which is dark
the lights around us make a thousand gleams ascend
roaring out silently past us

as if we sank into and beyond the galaxy
they want to make us think is made of stars

we know in our hearts
is made of silence

. . . 16 November 2000