

# STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

## issue 80



summer's so bright, gotta wear shades @ helen gwyn jones

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## issue 80

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yuri bruscky - trava-língua nº 11 (tongue twister nº 11, 2021)

seth crook - i will be in it big and loud

abbie doll - land of i don't even know & the good ol'  
'merican heartbreak

eli dunham –take cover

ivanka fear – a reminder

gabriela denise frank- the day

mark goodwin – on entering

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abriana jetté – health check

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pauline mccarthy – roseberry topping

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saalem paige - my body as an abandoned storage unit

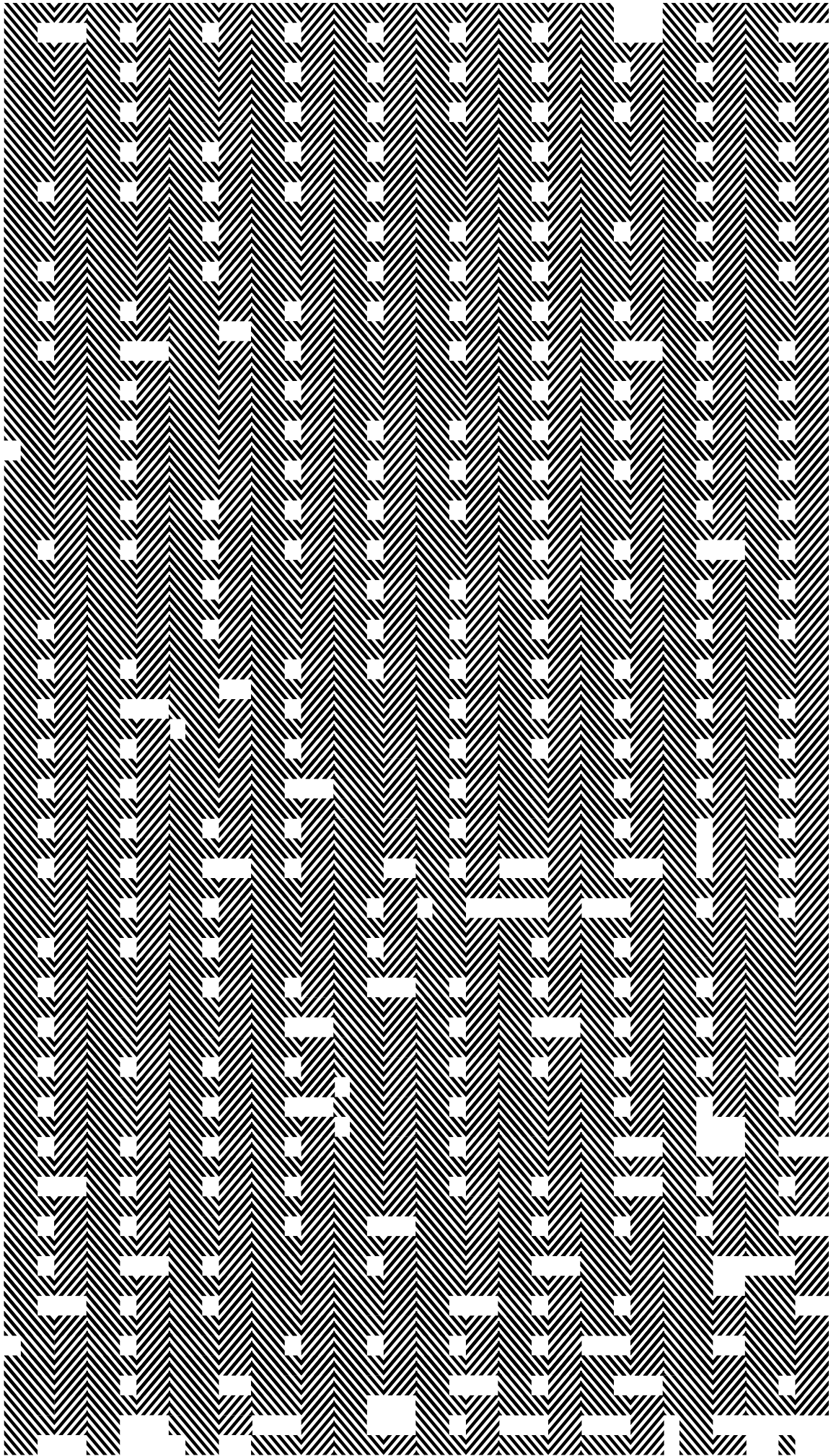
dave read – callisto

ankur jyoti saikia and jp seabright –a glossary of life as a stream

sylvia santiago – “xliv”

fabio sassi – flux

laura sweeney – post cards from lake charles



I will be in it big and loud

**i**  
Str      ke

land of the i don't even know

this new  
america has  
butchered  
my wick-  
depleted  
my shelves  
of outrage

i no longer  
have the strength  
or energy  
to be  
irate  
or engaged, even—

& i don't know  
how to remedy  
the well  
run dry

freshout  
soldout  
soulout

we are in

the dark

& no one

thought to

bring their

flashlights.

the good-ol' 'Merican heartache

every day's a god-damn lottery  
go on & pull your number  
while someone else  
pulls the trigger— .

## TAKE COVER

a strange  
 -r to warn  
 why did you do your  
 make up that way. my  
 cupped palms are the kiln  
 burning you into something brittle  
 something to break. how long has it been  
 since you cut your hair? since you brought me  
 peonies that bloom like bombs. everything as br  
 ight  
 as  
 a  
 ka  
 mi  
 ka er  
 ze isp  
 or a wh

# A Reminder

NO

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it's

time

to

Wake

up!!

N

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## On Entering

the forgone room I find the floor is missing  
instead someone else's thought shimmers between

my toes as I step across a span (drel) of crystal exist  
ence the light in the ceiling does exist its grey/green

b linking dots stacked & packed from axon to  
axon beyond beginning's tinkering fingers 1<sup>st</sup>

corner lingers in my ear 2<sup>nd</sup> corner evaporates on  
my retina 3<sup>rd</sup> corner o the 3<sup>rd</sup> corner is my fold

ed tongue but vertical as lust's song 4<sup>th</sup> corner is my  
elbow's need to flex across a veil of bone&ligament I

call my exercise the walls are larger than the words  
beyond the sure face is within itself wrapped 9

times across an inside I've always known but can't  
with only 5 dimensions wallpaper is swirling

fingerprints each print a larger on a heart each  
curved line a wall & the wall of the curve are many

prints yes! I guessed this guessed this into exit  
the print in the print is printed for all evers there is

one window it reflects the floorless ground the  
curtains congealing blood flap gently in my gaze's

collision space beyond moaning glass is flat its  
vastness purely dependent on my limitations my toes

are now black the someone's thought I stand on  
is ice cold nought at a chip of blood begins to slowly





HEALTH

[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	
Check [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	[REDACTED] <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Parent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] <input type="checkbox"/> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Major [REDACTED] <input type="checkbox"/> [REDACTED] <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]		
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	Limits [REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] <input type="checkbox"/> Art [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	

My husband says: 'Here he comes.'

I look up and there he is: the man who walks past our dining room windows every evening at exactly the same time. Whatever the conversation at our dinner table, my husband, who faces the windows, interrupts to tell me that the man has just walked past. The man is always alone. He never carries anything. He stares ahead, as if his neck is too stiff. His back is as straight as a puppet's pulled taut on a string. There is a pronounced regularity to his pace, as if his body incorporates a clockwork mechanism.

We used to think that he was on his evening walk. But whenever we are out, at any time, in any part of the village, we spot the man. He seems to have no destination. He walks for the sake of walking. That is unusual in an agricultural area where people work hard in the fields and do not need other physical exercise. A few times, when our paths crossed, we greeted him, as is customary in a small community. I think he responded, without looking at us or changing the rhythm of his movement but my husband says that the man ignored us. He thinks the man is the village fool, disturbed in some sense.

I would like to ask the man why he walks but I dare not interrupt his routine.

Every day, as we finish dinner, we remain seated at the table, waiting for the man to walk past. He is always on time.

Today, while we are out for our daily walk, a young man, wearing cycling gear and sitting on a bench, smiles and greets us. We return the greeting. He says he sees us pass by his house every day. He admires our routine. The regularity of our timing is impressive, he adds.

## The Man who Always Walks Past 2

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Every day, as we finish dinner, we remain seated at the table, waiting for the man to walk past. He is always on time.

Today, after we finish eating, we remain seated, waiting to see the man but he doesn't pass by. 'Oh, well, he is not coming,' my husband says.

My husband walks to the kitchen but before he starts to tidy up, he turns and says, 'I hope he is not ill. I thought he looked a bit peaky yesterday.'

I see that he is loading the dishwasher and his back is turned to the door of the dining room.

‘Here he comes,’ I shout. My husband runs in. ‘You missed him.’

‘Have you seen him?’

‘Yes, of course,’ I lie.

## After Dinner

The red  
of an early evening.  
When I enjoy listening

to the silence after dinner,  
when the kitchen bathes  
me in a blush of pink,

when the children's florescent  
stars on the wall  
are peripheral.

I enjoy the start  
of the night song,  
dishes dancing in unison

against the gush  
of the faucet finally turned  
on.

I hold a sponge  
between my fingers, feel  
its rough essence of razor as it rubs

against a spoon.  
I enjoy the sonorous clang  
of the last plates,

coming clean as moonlight.





## Blah blah blah

People on this train route love talking about mortgages at a loud volume

mortgages are a social construction

make a den in the woods

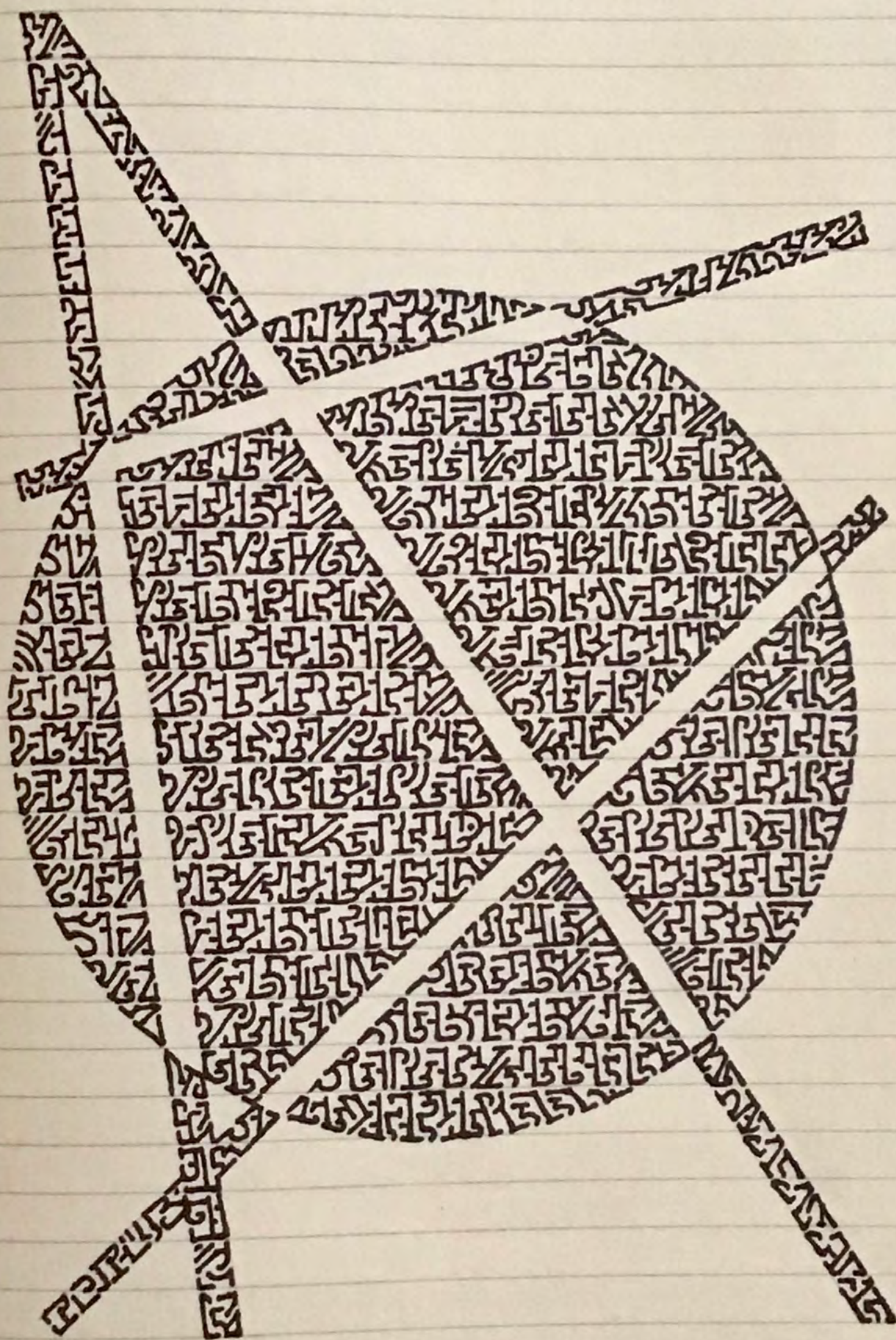
for all our sakes.

my body as an abandoned storage unit

half-finished / half-full before  
left behind, where did you go to  
forget me? death, or further –

collectable / plastic and bones inside  
my open mouth, three meters tall and  
toothless, ten deep. hating  
the way it looks unless empty  
unless without a thought  
in my head a quiet morning in my  
mind. filled, a mess –  
most of it is  
garbage anyways –







## A Glossary of Life as a Stream

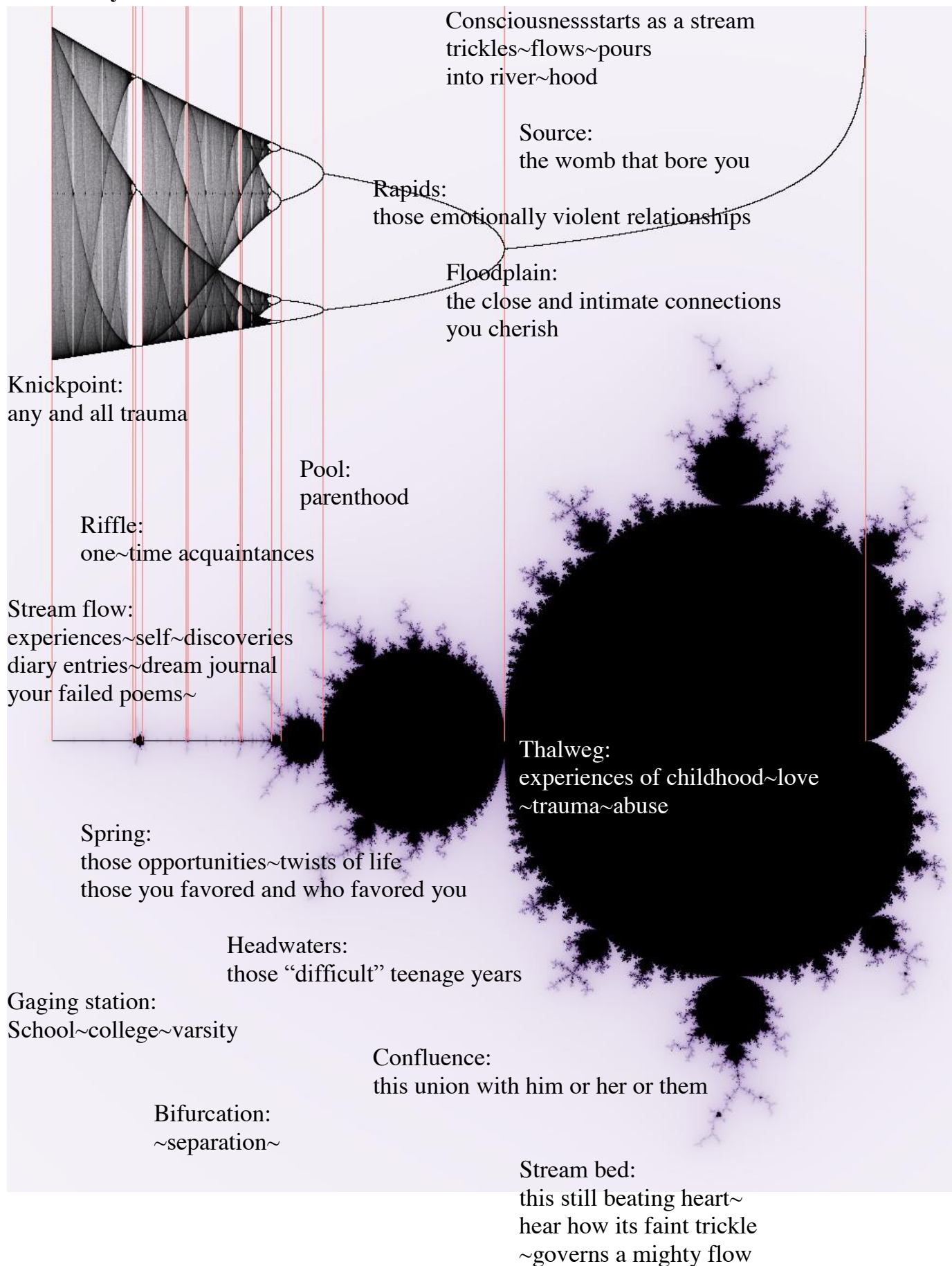


Image: Verhulst-Mandelbrot-Bifurcation, CC



· X L I V ·

One need not be a chamber to be haunted.

One need not be a house.

The brain has corridors, surpassing

Material place.

Far safer of a midnight meeting.

External ghost.

Than an inner confrontation.

That winter loss.

Far safer through an

Inner stone release.

Than moonless, to

A loneliest place.

Myself, then

Should not

Be seen in

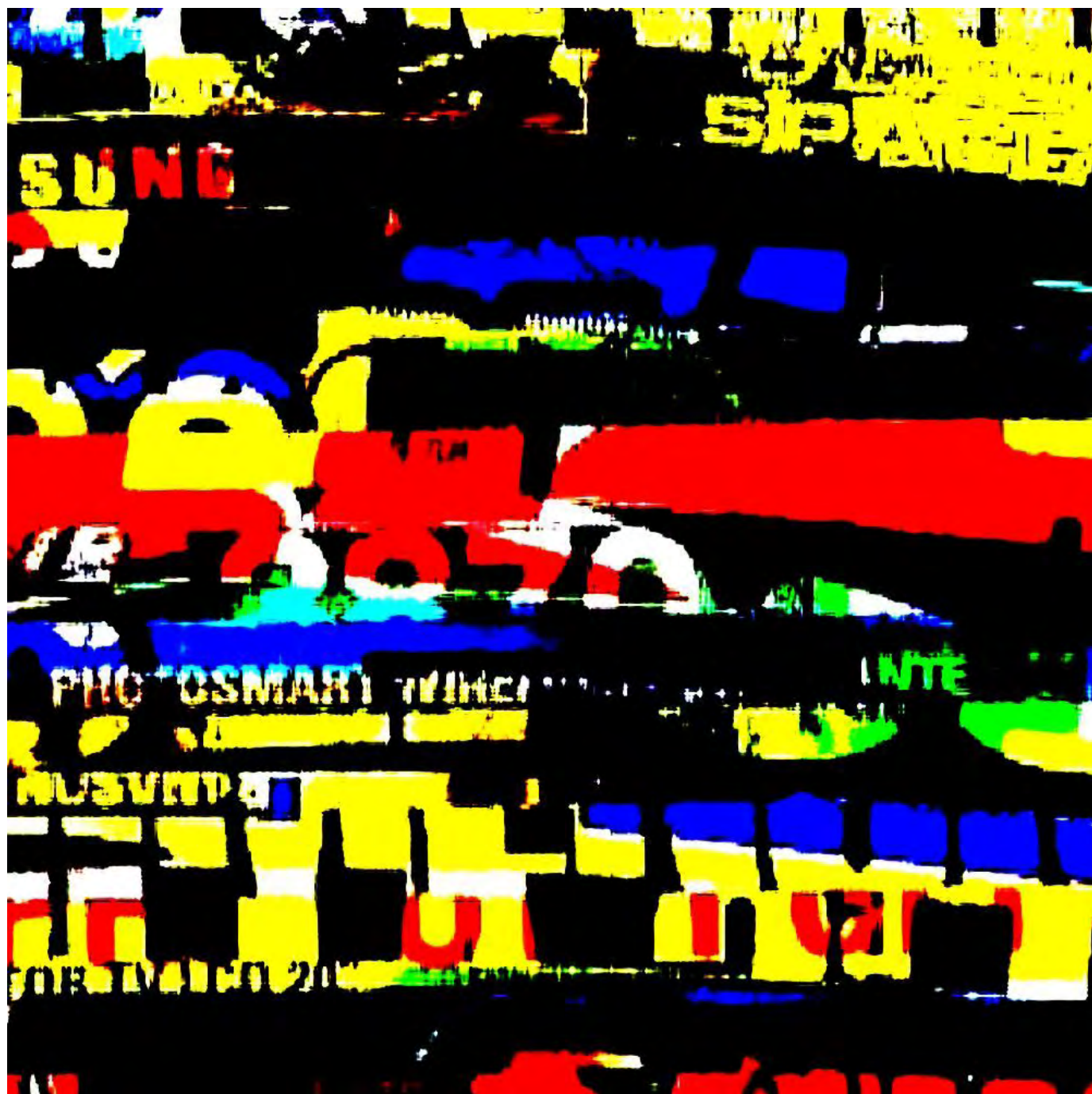
My horn

That in

My horn







## POSTCARDS FROM LAKE CHARLES

### *Things people said before I left for Lake Charles*

My hairstylist said, “There will be parks there, and the people will be sweet.”

A client from Baton Rouge said, “Hey Cajun girl, do you like seafood?”

My therapist said, “You’re holding on to threads, take the adventure.”

The clerk at HyVee said, “Why go to Lake Charles—nothing happens there.”

“Go to Louisiana. Do your MFA. I’m not ready to get married.”

### *Things I noticed on South 71 Fayetteville to Lake Charles*

Big Coon Creek. Little Coon Creek. Pond Creek. Haw Creek Baptist Church. Magnolia Baptist Church. Nantachie Pentacostal Church. Cowboy Church. Church On Fire. Needmore City. Y City. Oil City. Crawfish Exit Now. Crawfish Mound Now. Crawbilly’s Crawfish. Jumbo Shrimp. Armadillo Café. Double Ds café. Caddo Parish. Bossier Parish. Winn Parish. Grant Parish. Radises Parish. Five Confederate flags. One head of black cattle huddled under a tree. 14 lumber trucks. Loggy Bayou. Boggy Bayou. Kelly Bayou. A cloud shaped like an alligator. Kent House Plantation. Plantation Plaza. A billboard: If you died today where would you spend eternity?

### *Things that warn me about Lake Charles*

My friend’s hand stung by an insect and a tick on his dick.

The electrical spark on Pujo St. near my garage apt. My friend said sparks are statistically rare.

That Baptist church between Texarkana and Shreveport called Colquitt,  
as in call it quits.

### *Things to do with hospitality in Lake Charles*

Someone in Admissions said, “Welcome,” then handed me an emergency rain poncho.

My neighbor said. “If you need a garbage sack, come on by, these boys’ll take care of you.”

A tour guide said, “You can call this district Carpentier or Charpentier. The lumber barons built these homes trying to outdo one another, a my-porch-is-better-than-your-porch mentality.”

The clerk at the City Hall art exhibit asked. “Would you like a beer?”



*Things that suggest that things might be different in Lake Charles*

Oil refineries.

Creole St. Cypress St. Azalea St. Gulf St. Contraband St. Bayou Rd. Peachwood Dr. Pelican Pt.

Ghosthunters: The girl at the Imperial Calcasieu Museum said she went to the cemetery with a professor and her equipment. There was a clear message—get out, go home.

Amanda's joke that it rains so much even the cars suffer kidney stones.

Dog baptisms.

*Things I was coached about what is considered The South in Lake Charles*

Louisiana and Texas want to secede from the Union—

the North needs them, they don't need the North.

The South is maybe Alabama and Mississippi, not Texas or Florida.

Anything north of Lake Charles? Yankee country.

Unless it's Cajun, it's not South. What is south of Lake Charles?

The Gulf of Mexico.

*Things I've been advised about Lake Charles*

Mosquitoes. Fall and spring blend together. The worst prison system of any state in the country—they don't air condition their inmates. The Old Boys network. Back-ass-wards Napoleonic law. Country Club Christianity. Neither the city nor campus are activist minded—the paper can't pay students to work for them. A garage apartment is safe from the floods. When it rains stay off Ryan, Prien Lake, Broad. In case of a hurricane head the other direction. Crawfish are mud crawling bugs. The sea is murky chocolate milk. Lake Charles is like a crippled man who keeps getting kicked in the shins.

*Things that suggest we might be okay in Lake Charles*

Freya perched her paws on my arm while I was driving,

a relaxed companion.

October. The humidity lifts, the leaves turn,

I'm not going to miss autumn.

Amanda's dog party.

*Things I've noticed in Lake Charles*

A sign that reads: Domestic homicide hotline...

A sign that reads: Syphilis #1 in the nation...

A sign that reads: Gambling addiction?

A sign that reads: Laissez les bons temps rouler.

A sign that reads: Keep calm and crawfish on.

*Things that have been on my mind since arriving in Lake Charles*

Surrender. Surrender to the South.

To the something that drew me this far. To the charm  
of delapidation.

*Things about the weather in Lake Charles*

humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid/////humid

*Things that weird me out in Lake Charles*

A couple in Lock Park who asked for money

and prayer

as they swigged from their beers

then called me a two-faced Christian.

Gin next to baby diapers. Drive-through daquiris.

Raccoons dropping from the ceiling or running down the hallways.

*Things I appreciate more after arriving in Lake Charles*

Midwestern poems.

*Things that charm me about Lake Charles*

Alligators in the bayous. Breakfast casserole with salsa. Beignets. Boudin. The Bord du Lac. Caribbean colors. Cinnamon pecans. Crape Myrtle trees. Cactus in the courtyard. The dive of a pelican. East Texas meets Cajun country. Fleur de Lis. Father Jack. Fried catfish and hush puppies. The French Krewes. The gumbo place on Broad. Geckos on my front steps. Haunted houses in

my district. Imperial Calcasieu Museum. Jalepeno chicken salad. Kissing cultures. Lebleu's Landing. Lagniappe. Mosquito art. Mardis Gras beads in the palm trees. Mitch the guitar guy greeting me each morning. Mama Rita's Kitchen. Nina P's. Newk's po'boys and strawberry cake. Odes to cockroaches. Plate lunches on Pujo's patio. Pops & Rockets gourmet popsicles.

Quintessential jazz. Rocking chairs on the porches. Southern banana pies. The Tree of Life mural on the side of the Charleston Hotel. Tuna curry sandwiches. Tony Chachere's seasoning on everything, even the fried mushrooms are spicy. USS Orleck naval history. Voodoo. The Cajun accent of the waitress from Italy. White blue yellow lanterns draped from the live oaks on campus. Yoga Y'all studio. Zydeco festivals.

*~In memory of the Lake Charles I encountered from August – December 2016*