

Réponds: How did you arrive? (2)

a series of
steps or decelerating
progressions pas de
(no

schematic
covering the familiar
scape
((escape

presupposes return
the past

“an ideal dimension”
or velocity
((water))
aground

water
always returning
though never fully
retrievable

an archive of lost things
memory
longing grief
ark

hive

Isle(s)

Dernière(s)

Flora

Some days I stand at a drawing table, sketching native plants, some rare, some common. Bluevine milkweed, or swallow-wort, twines gorgeously up fence posts, along roadsides, stitches its way through fields. Some call it a noxious weed though the monarchs love them. How not love something named “honeyvine” with its heart-shaped leaves? Its lines, simple and diffuse, come easily to the page. Equisetum hyemale, on the other hand, demands my attention, its creamy strobilus knotted with sporangiophores. Horsetail rush, or winter scouring rush because once used to clean pots, grows happily in shallow water. Its rigid stems laced with sand, all the better for scrubbing. Quiet in the diffuse light of my room, I listen to the pond outside, water splashing into itself among native iris, pickerel and zebra rush. Reflections waver over the panes of the window, water-marking the page. In the late evenings, gulf coast toads call from pond to plumeria, *come see, come see, come see*.

How know to know any place comes first to me through trees and birds, native plants. In *Florula Ludoviciana, A Flora of Louisiana*, I find a companion creature, often as uncertain as I am. First collected and recorded by C. S. Rafinesque then “Translated, Revised, and Improved, from the French of C. C. Robin” its plant names are often in error. Tracking them through the aegis of Google, most modern names come clear. Though in the end, I choose not to include their names with the images. Instead the entries become a reservoir from which I draw fragmented narratives. What might such language say of south Louisiana in 1817 translated by this means to the present? “cirriform/ like a star/ a real white/ and four.” Of honeyvine, “some faint/ fruit and habit/ a stranger/ natural order.” The exquisite common world everywhere feeds me. Which bird? Which vine? What sort of tree, whose thorned trunk thrusts sharp hooks from smooth, gray skin? Pressed flowers at the base of the page.

Through woods and trails, along canoe trails circumnavigating lakes, tramping into the woods, the ground alternately wet and dry, the quotidian chance of wet feet. The understory is thick with dwarf palmettos sending their broad fronds splay-like into the air or collapsed onto the ground: almost any vine makes the palmettos habitat, banana spiders spinning nets of golden silk between one frond and the next. South Louisiana names them after their long, curved orange- and amber-mottled abdomens. They are lovely spiders, happy stringing their traps in my garden between roses and roofline, or among the ragged woods of oak and pecan trees, of blackberry brambles where the horse and I pass, almost blithely though I keep a long stick handy for clearing the biggest ones. The horse flicks his tail at flies, and canters, left foreleg reaching out, white hind bright in the dust: a leafy desire roused by riding through these woods, finding balance as the horse accelerates across last spring’s acorns and over a low fence. A white blaze and one white stocking for luck. When I brush him down after the ride, squirrels scold overhead and he nickers at his neighbors stamping in a line beside the weathered red of the barn. Behind the woods, wind sighs through a cane field, the sugar already eight feet high. Of banana spiders, the females eat the males after mating, a high protein meal before egg-laying, assuring the success of her clutch. At home, half-finished in pond-light, drawings wait on my return.

Réponds: What do you remember about the earth?

processes

plains :: mountains :: seas

canyon cañon

inverting the heights

accretion precipitation erosion

stonetomud

stone to mud

st o n e t o m u d

s t o n e t o m u d

s t o n e t o m u d



neither/not ::

stone

sand

loam

late pleistocene sediment

lagoonal clay

deltaic clay

Mississippi alluvial loess

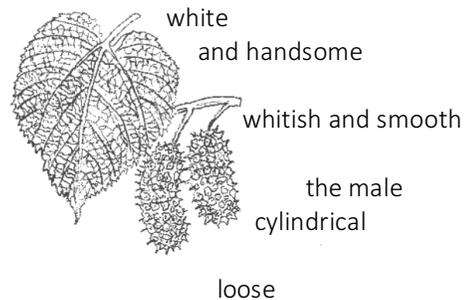
not dry

ils naviguèrent les marécages en pirogue

les bayous || swamp wetland

bay

And the environment they came from. The trawlin,' the crabbin,' the shrimpin,' the trappin.' You know, the survival thing to do to make a living and survive. Well, when they'd get to the oilfield they'd use the same practical applications, you know? Let's try this see if it works. Let's try this. We used to do this. I remember when we did this with the boat. You know? We had to get it up we didn't have no...dry dock and we'd utilize this. You know? Just from life experience. They... applied that. When they went on their...on their jobs. And it didn't take them long to learn. And then....all the boat skippers were local people. From down the Bayou. Been on boats all their life. And they didn't need compasses. They didn't need...well they didn't have. They didn't even have compasses. Much less radar. But they didn't need compasses. —Werlien Prosperie, July 9, 2003. Houma, LA. Cajun musician and oilfield worker



Réponds: What this means

snak

-ing

(figure and

ground)

a means through

nothing

certain

(((buoyed, bodied)

watersupposing ground

what Texaco used: Jimmi Martin

on the bayou and
off the land
Texaco
Texaco

a sixty-five foot
a seventy-two foot boat
in the fisheries
in the fisheries

the oilfield
booming
a matter of
knowing

oil rigs
wooden rigs
Leeville and
Golden Meadow

pipelines in the marsh
hauling pipe
laying pipe in the marsh
like a

pie
in the sky
steady paycheck, and
fishing oysters

the small luggers
small wooden luggers
the oil companies
dumped

everything overboard
could
fill
the Gulf up

the bay, or the lakes

fill the Gulf up with
can't hardly trawl
or we

dodging, these
long hangs
no regulation
regulation

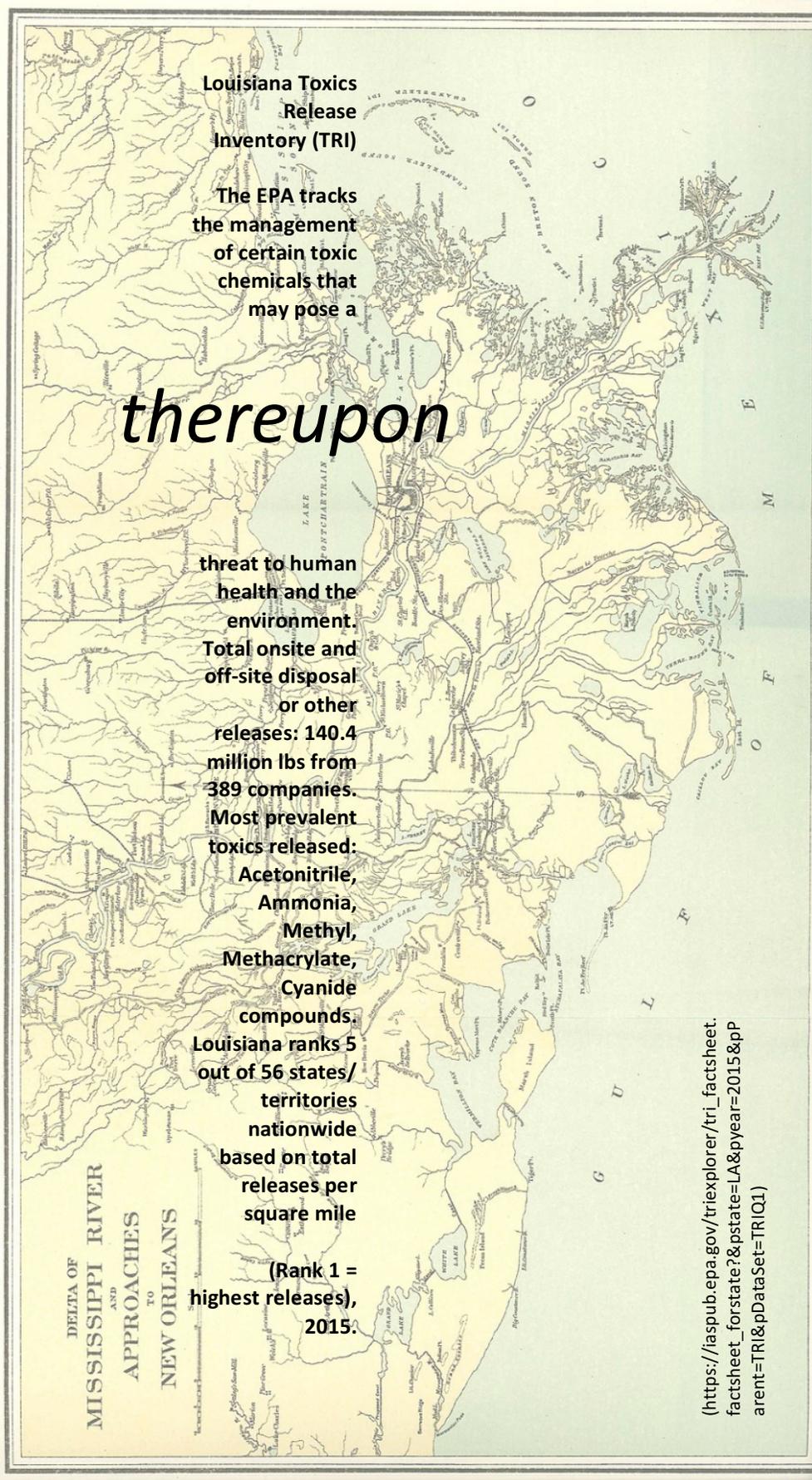
trash
left on the bottom
cars, grating
file cabinets

desks, a sink
anything
went over the side
don't care what

over the side
ten foot deep



"We are all okay. It hit bad. We had plenty of trouble keeping things together with nothing much to do. Tannie and I took Olga and her two children, Glenn and Old Nora and her five children to high land until the storm was over. Now I am on the boat with Dada and Tannie, going back home.... We still did not have high gulf water but wind and sand blowing...I can't say if we will have a big loss. Some families will lose plenty. –Zoe Cessac Sagrera, Chenier au Tigre, September 20, 1943, Louisiana Paradise



...Grand Terre is going: the sea mines her fort, and will before many years carry the ramparts by storm. Grand Isle is going, –slowly but surely; the Gulf has eaten three miles into her meadowed land. Last Isle has gone! –Lafcadio Hearn, Chita



Lapse :: a city

the city shifts on its piers :: a local vernacular

inundation subsidence

down-warping alluvial earth flood control and

navigational concerns that like

laughing gulls on

levees

lithosphere

merely mud

river's ancient deposition bird-

foot

shallow

sea

the weight of things

:: highways

bridges

rectilinear city

sprawling toward

water

coteau :: maiden cane

and arrowhead

things of the past

sea rising over

narrow shoals

hydrology

of channelization

sun king's

flooded realm

le Conseil

Souverain

erodes

a brackish hem ::

salt grass and wire grass

lapse toward

fresh canouche

city wrapped within

by the river rapt

**Plaquemine Aquifer Report
(EPA, 10/7/04)**

*“It was a beautiful spring morning—warm & quiet with mists.”
—Dorothy Wordsworth*

it was a beautiful contaminant transport
a beautiful original source area
beautiful probable source

& quiet solid phases eroded
quiet turbulent river flow
quiet cut-bank

it was a beautiful turn in the stream
a beautiful channel each
beautiful shift to the outside turn

& quiet any contaminant
quiet any released at or
quiet near site 13

it was a beautiful fluvial process
a beautiful site 13
beautiful facilitated the movement

& quiet cutting tends to be
quiet prominent at the likely
quiet significant source

it was a beautiful direct ((in direct)) contact
a beautiful upper sand aquifer
beautiful once contaminants moved

& quiet Plaquemine Aquifer
quiet aquifer
quiet upper sand

it was a beautiful transport
a beautiful Mississippi River transport
beautiful dispersed away

& quiet processes ((advection and

quiet dispersion)) contribute to
quiet plume growth

it was a beautiful lateral stream cutting
a beautiful pipeline
beautiful accelerated descent

& quiet cutting there
quiet vinyl chloride
quiet cis-1,2dichlorethene

it was a beautiful 1 foot per day
a beautiful rough estimate
beautiful spreading

& quiet indicated by
quiet purpose
quiet an idea of

it was a beautiful order of magnitude
a beautiful contaminant reach
beautiful Myrtle Grove wells

& quiet 20-40 year
quiet time frame
quiet 1964 Dow dioxin

it was a beautiful [formerly Morrisonville] spill
a beautiful racial
beautiful profiling of chemical

& quiet plant placement
quiet likely significant source
quiet area in black

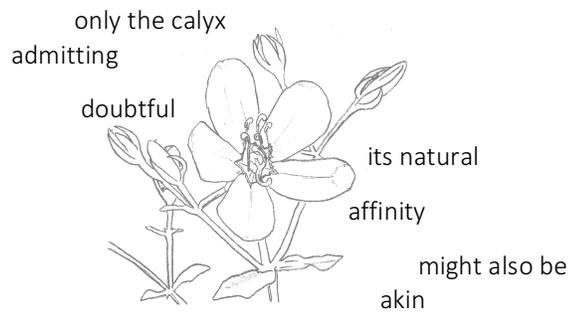
it was a beautiful ((color line
a beautiful color line)) does not rule out
beautiful does not

& quiet rule out
quiet 1993 release
quiet the contaminated material

it was a beautiful no longer identifiable on the surface

a beautiful vinyl-
beautiful chloride in ground water

& quiet 97ppb
quiet drinking water
quiet Myrtle Grove water supply



Réponds: What this means (2)

what this means
what any

distance
answers

what matters

meaning this also
asking
what waters
what you're asking

((peri-tactical
meaning

any such
any such waters

matter no
matter

water

water || (para)tactical
(-taxa a matter of

what water gathers
what this
gather

asks

watering the ground

current of geography

1

adrift on a current of geography

here || now

a movement like breath

scaffolding time:

insect hum bird call water spill

leaf rattle

oak pollen & oak catkins drift in the air collect

on every surface vernal

shower of oaks south

Louisiana douses itself in male gametes turns

chartreuse while azaleas beckon white

and blushed wanton

seed making

2

time (re)asserts itself generationally

if I stop

moving do I occupy the same

place or has

history left me behind

larks still call from lemon trees dart

in low trajectory from

lemon to oak

shallow goblets of rose scent wave

on pressure of wind, this

breeze traversing another

(felt) space

3

walking as rest

here now there

gather laundry before rain

or wash

my hair

read voraciously

outdoors

ignoring the summons to

day and duty:

small carp carve algae with orange mouths
green giving way to black water
spills into itself
a long trough introducing sound and
oxygen lemon
blossom brushes its scent over my skin
and spring stays
here where I stop

Myrtle Grove Trailer Park

rows of sugar cane
hard against

"we all had miscarriages"

dented but decent
smothered steak and stewed
PLAK-uh-mun trailers

a community ceases to
exist what was not
said a word

not— Louisiana
Hospitals and
Human Services

a word—
failed to, failed
vinyl

-chloride in the water
report
to report
Myrtle Grove

"And I thought—"

Dow Chemical
working to pin-
point the source

((part of the
solution ((source)) the plant
is not the source

"I hope—"

"—I don't lose my baby"

5 years
"human error"
failure to report to tell

vinyl-
chloride detected in
Upper Plaquemine Aquifer

jobs for more than
6000 Dow and
contract employees

part of the surrounding
community balancing
economic environmental and

:: big shade trees
trailers with porches
social responsibility

splash pools men
washing cars
empty space brown

“we all just went—”

patches people and
homes
gone wind

blows in off the cane
Dow’s “pure product”
((1964 PVC

“—on with life, cooking with it”

production))
no knowing how 5 years
Dow “working

to be part of the solution”
toxic
grounds already condemned

Morrisonville ((cemetery))
contaminated water

*“Thirteen—”
miscarrying
“—That many women on one street?”*

Dow in Louisiana
children throng from the school
bus afternoon

cools
re-
locating on checks al-

“It was—”

ready spoken for
(("part of the solution"))

"a nice place"