

Florida Fire Ant Tide & 3 More

by [Christopher Fried](#) (November 2024)



Still Life with Ants (Gustavo Iseo, 1954)

Florida Fire Ant Tide

Beyond the recessed ground and flooded farm
they journey north, away from the storm's dross
that washed away their queen as garbage tossed
across the floating chaff. En masse they swarm
as pain personified, the cyclone's scythe
that reaps a harvest against fleeing pets
and owners. Swimming down the flush, they whet

the bellies' sting against the flotsam, blithe
to what's behind though they've lost many soldiers
along the path since the storm dropped. The march
continues with form shifting ovate to arch
as people convey askance at the sojourn
discharged from the marshlands, which used to parch
at summer's peak, now shrouding drenched exposure.

James City County Mall Memorial

*The malls are getting more and more crowded. Customers will
come online and find an easy place to shop. –Robert J. Fisher*

When I was young, I should've known your tricks:
You claimed to be a place that dispensed dreams.
Those were the precious days we thought would last,
before rough cynicism dropped to memes.
Where were the arcades, greasy fast-food stands
and other magnets? Always fraudulence
wasn't it? Yes, I should've known what's real,
was not to be, but where's the recompense?
Now driving by piled bricks, what comes to mind
are teenage times—a new high school was built
across the street a few years back, and then,
the police station: see memories guilt
for what was, could've been, but I still smile
though sounds of toppled stores blast the landscape.
And those of falling dispositions stand
still while their moods engage plans for escape.
Back then the wanting guise of this dead mall
still purposed much for shoppers floating store
to store, some hand in hand, or even those
alone withdrawn on that wide single floor.
Disgrace to other malls, (I traveled south

to Patrick Henry and Coliseum Malls
before the downturn overcame), you were
of the community despite the faults,
and as a part, but now no more, some praise
is due despite frustration built across
the three decades you opened your blue doors
as you're remade to concrete and our loss.

History's Wild Dance (re-reading *Blood Meridian*)

For Cormac McCarthy (1933-2023)

Not one to hide grotesque realities
despite the human tendency to peek
between the trembling fingers. Moral law
is set against the gnawing history
of blood v. blood and appetite persists.
What's left are obligations as to man.

In '84, the floodgates holding back
a flush of horrors all-too human failed
as the doomed Brileys seized security
and throttled as they had the innocent
five years before, and this, another land,
long after Glanton's gang rode wild with death.

For here, as then, monsters are not a race
as separate but sprung from the seed of Seth.

John Self(less)

For Martin Amis (1949-2023)

“How goes the agitators of the world,
as I, like most of us, indulge, awaiting
oblivion? You call it vice while curled
asleep with books, but it must be so grating
to you as I gorge life by not relating
to scantiness you desire for me, but I’m
the truly martyred one by wading my slime
through all five boroughs of this guignol city
as well as London-by-the-Thames teatimes
that hide a loud song of salacity.”

Your '81 passed years ago,
lit tastes will shift, and Larkin, Bellow,
and Hitchens are dead and gone to mellow.
Blackout the ending of your show.

[Table of Contents](#)

Christopher Fried lives in Richmond, VA and works as an ocean shipping logistics analyst. A poetry collection, *All Aboard the Timesphere*, was published in 2013 by Alabaster Leaves/Kelsay Books. His novel, *Whole Lot of Hullabaloo: A Twenty-First Century Campus Phantasmagoria*, was published in 2020. Recently, he was an advisor on the 1980s science fiction film documentary *In Search of Tomorrow* (2022). His recent poetry has been published in *Society of Classical Poets*, *Snakeskin*, and *WestWard Quarterly*, and a new collection, *Analog Synthesis*, is planned for publication by White Violet Press/Kelsay Books in Spring 2025.

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