

# 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alone withdrawn on that wide single floor.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.

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**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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