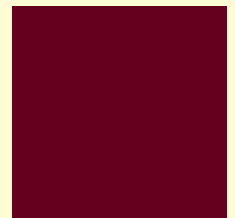


**DAVID  
SMITH**

PAGES FROM A  
PANGLOSSIAN  
DICTIONARY

— *demi-fiction* —





# Pages From A Panglossian Dictionary

David Smith



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*\* Edited and abridged from the originally-published, serialized chapters, available for individual download from [designartcraft.com](http://designartcraft.com)*









# ROUGH GUIDE TO NOWHERE

GUCCI





Let the story wreck itself on the spreading rails of the *Non Sequitur* Limited, if it will; first you must take your seat in the observation car “Raison d’etre” for one moment. It is for no longer than to consider a brief essay on the subject — let us call it: “What’s Around the Corner.”

— “The Venturers” by O. Henry

















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*Walking bare-legged through brambles and poison ivy, or rather mental equivalents thereof, scratches open and inflames the mind. Seeking out the frisson of the dangerous, damaged, and unsightly has been a favourite pastime of mine since an early age. Conventional beauty can be soporific, the pabulum of the cognoscenti. Stuff that isn't challenges, and may scare the shit out of you.*

*No, we're not there yet.*

### **Nowhere**

Travelling to places you've never been provides a kind of stimulation and escape. What if you went nowhere instead? Here is a technique for glimpsing what is familiar to us as a stranger might, a stranger within. The key is *glimpsing*.

### **The camera and the photograph**

It turns out the camera is an excellent tool for achieving the desired state, and (sometimes) result. Something of the nowhere condition can be recorded! I don't mean as a subject—we already know that can be recorded. The difficult thing is to make nowhere look like somewhere.

The analogue photography process is equivalent in some ways to opening a ceramics kiln after a firing: one never knows what you'll get, and if you do already know, it will likely be derivative work. This is not to throw shade on new imaging technologies, but the instant gratification they pander to demands different strategies, probably.

I always want to be surprised by photographs. Really good photographs subtly disturb our world view, revealing their insights on repeated viewing and study. This calls for unconventional framing, leaving stuff in the frame that most photographers, by instinct and training, want to leave out, and vice-versa. Take it weird, you can pretty it up later if you must.

I find almost all photographs, especially those taken by naifs, can have amazing qualities. And I'm always surprised some photographers and critics either fail to recognize this, or it frightens them. I think it means that the camera, and anybody who picks one up, has the potential to produce what feels to us like magic—talent and expertise are just add-ons (Susan Sontag nailed this point for all time). We want to harness this magic and bend it to our vision. That's the trick of this one-trick pony.

### **Glimpsing v. filtering**

Unless we're dead or watching tv, our eyes are constantly moving. Our minds build all the things we glimpse into a coherent visual map of our environment, mainly by *filtering out* almost everything we see. Visual information we *think* we want or can use, and perceived threats are top of the heap. Everything else we habitually ignore.

Our stranger is incapable of exercising the sustained level of prejudice required for this to work effectively in a new environment, and that's exactly what we want. By turning off the filter, we may suspend *received* visual hierarchies.

A stranger looks about wildly, seeking anything remotely recognizable to rebuild a kernel of meaning from. This is how the stranger is able to perceive new meanings in ossified systems, often by sheer accident—the collision between alien and new environments.

Knowing this, we can subvert rather than reify conventional expectations.

### **What about (...)**

If conventional filters stifle creativity, are there other filters that may yet be useful? Indeed there are, but *we have to make them for ourselves*.

We humans have been making visual stuff for millennia, sometimes as 'art', sometimes for more prosaic or outlandish applications. The thing about art is, better minds have been working out just these questions for a very, very long time. We can develop new filters to fit our own, evolving vision, by absorbing as much as we can of this inexhaustible library. It can take many years for new filters to coalesce.

If you're a visual person, the effort is supremely enjoyable, and there's a real risk of falling down some rabbit hole and losing the plot for extended periods. That's OK, it comes with the territory, and one never knows which rabbit hole(s) will yield pay dirt. Also, it takes time to learn what the plot even is, bearing in mind it is meant to be different from everybody else's, and there's no map.

Some of the effort may involve formal study as a starting point. Mostly it's best left to osmosis; looking, looking, and still more looking, *mutely* acquiring the knowledge that will form the basis of one's expanding creative vocabulary.

### **The how**

The literal mind and its acolytes will constantly try on rationalizations about the un/suitability of subjects and their treatments. They are irrelevant.

Our *unconventional* new filters provide a solid framework for both glimpsing, and *what comes after* in the photographic context. Glimpses are pre-composed before a picture is taken, by referencing our individual visual knowledge, the knowledge we want to reconfigure and expand.

*How* the raw material of glimpses/snapshots is organized, so suspected new meanings may be identified, developed, and presented, is equally important. Ultimately we want to convey our own, fully realized visual ideas, not half-baked glimpses that could mean anything, or nothing—we are chasing new visual ideas *and their proofs*.

New visual ideas are communicated solely by clear and convincing visual evidence (the pictures), and can't be verbally or literally described.

*An earlier draft of this text was published on [Photothunk](#).*









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A collection of vintage glass and ceramic items is displayed on a dark blue surface. In the upper left, there are several green glass vases with gold-colored rims, some stacked. To their right is a clear glass vase with a white label. In the center, a white heart-shaped box is decorated with a floral pattern of yellow, pink, and purple roses. To the right of the heart box is a white, teardrop-shaped object. In the lower right, there is a large, ornate brass bowl with intricate embossed designs. In the lower left, a blue ceramic bowl with a white lattice pattern and floral decorations is visible. A small, clear glass bottle is also present near the brass bowl. The items are arranged in a somewhat circular pattern, suggesting a display or collection.















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## Chapter 3

# UNKNOWN BIZARRE





*“There are known unknowns, and  
unknown unknowns.”*

**Donald Rumsfeld**

























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18 yrs  
and under















## Excerpts from *The Furnished Room* by O. Henry

The sophisticated comfort came in reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a foot-wide cheap pier glass between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and a brass bedstead in a corner.

*...the room, confused in speech as though  
it were an apartment in Babel...*

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular, tropical islet lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled matting. Upon the gay-papered wall were those pictures that pursue the homeless one from house to house — *The Huguenot Lovers, The First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain*. The mantel's chastely severe outline was ingloriously veiled behind some pert drapery drawn rakishly askew like the sashes of the Amazonian ballet. Upon it was some desolate flotsam cast aside by the room's marooned when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port — a trifling vase or two, pictures of actresses, a medicine bottle, some stray cards out of a deck.

Across the pier glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name Marie. It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room had turned in fury — perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness — and wreaked upon it their passions.

The furniture was chipped and bruised; the couch, distorted by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more potent upheaval had cloven a great slice from the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular cant and shriek as from a separate and individual agony.













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## Chapter 4

# FUGUE STATE







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HERE  
ON  
RED  
SIGNAL

Becky Supply

716



her lack of identity or pre-

her lack of identity or pre-

history" -- Encyclopaedia

Neurological Sciences

# Fugue State

David Smith  
David Smith

"a person may wander for days in pursuit of a particular destination or goal...unaware and oblivious to his or her lack of identity or personal history" -- Encyclopedia of the Neurological Sciences, 2003

































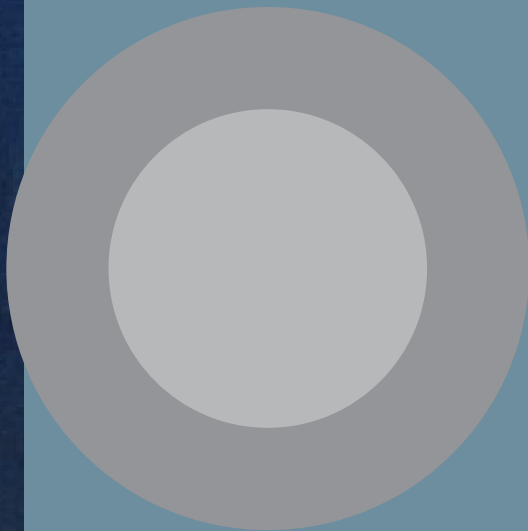


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# Chapter 5





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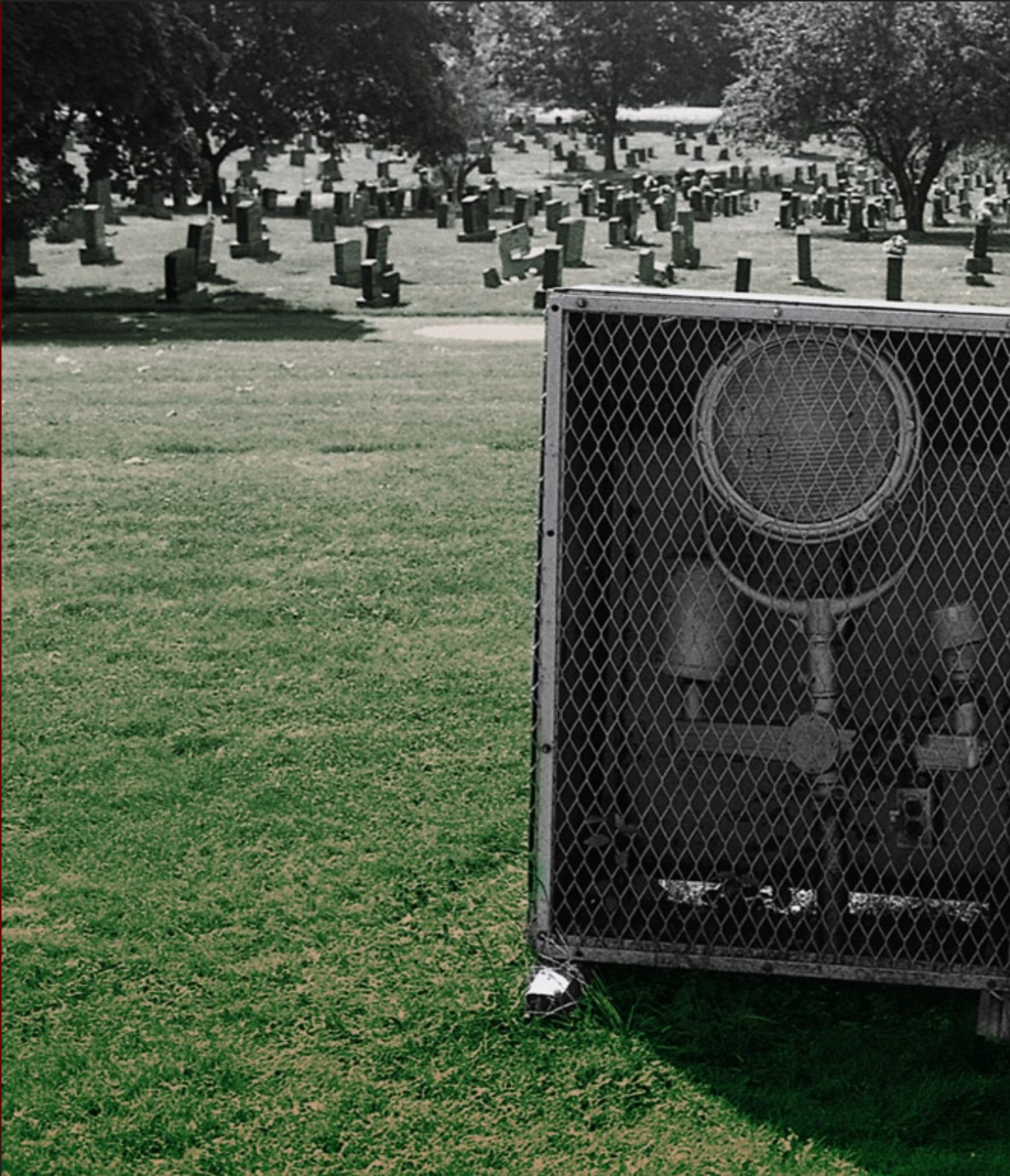
















## Chapter 6

# GORMLESS







**“Float down the river, with rats in your hair.”**

**Bertolt**





**“Everything’s lovely. The sky is still there.”**

**Brecht**





















### Palm House

The treatment strategies for the  
the house. The plant collection  
is being temporarily relocated to  
other spaces and conservatories.





***'Gormless' is considered pejorative. Yes, and no. It pulls at the unravelling threads of our civilization, our frailty and delusions, our striving after deeply flawed, objectively nihilistic goals. This is a service!***

***It is also a poignant reminder of where we are on an evolutionary continuum.***

***We forget we are glorified animals. Our clothing, our dwellings, our possessions a cover for bestial appetites and behaviors, clutched before unrecognized mortality.***

***Can we make the best of it, gormlessly slogging on? Our history as a species suggests otherwise, yet we continue to hope and endeavor, against long odds. And so, the Gormless metastasizes.***

***This is my contribution.***



807

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large

undulating mass

of something



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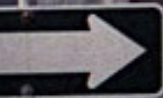


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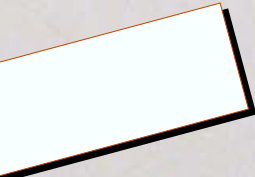






























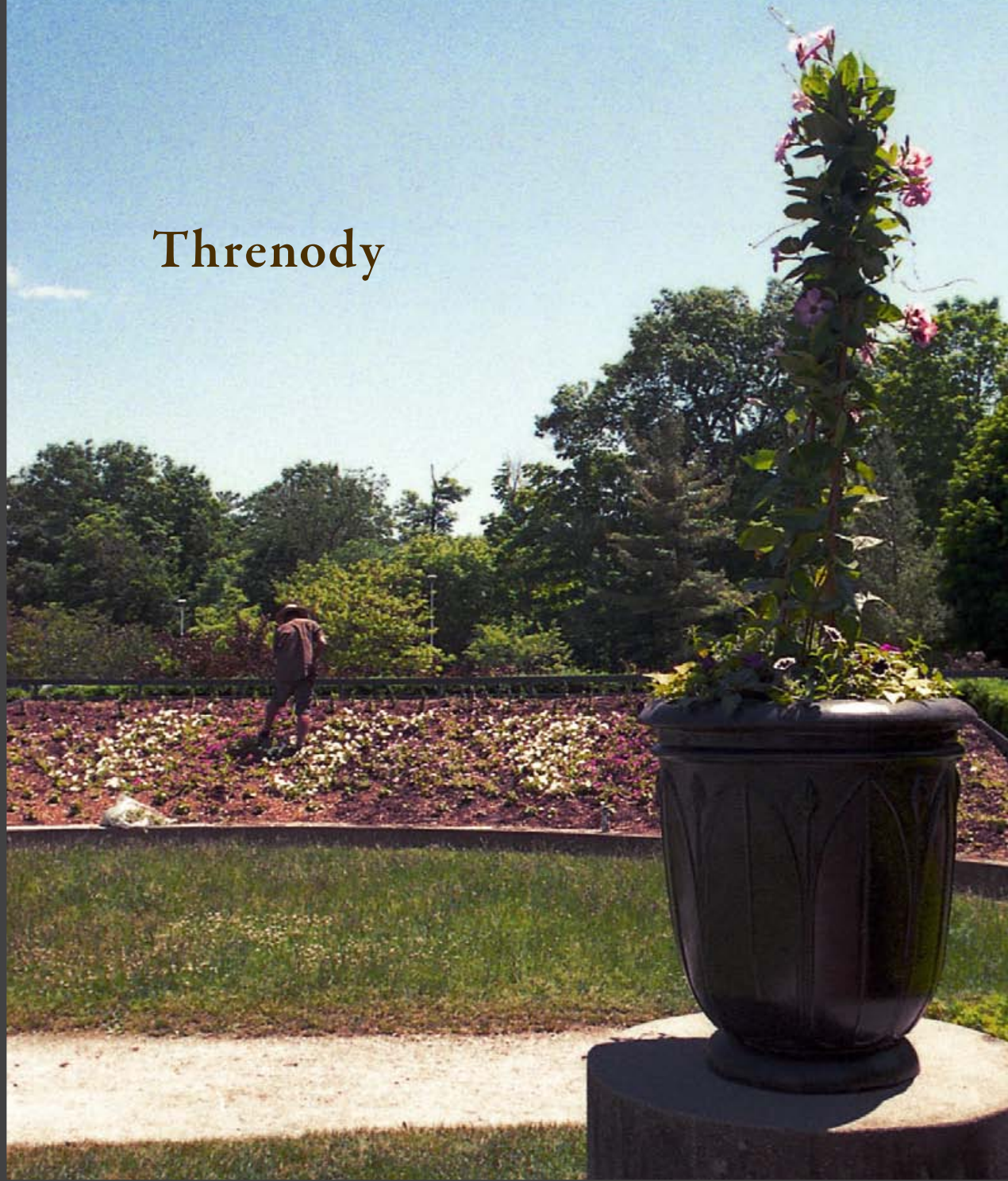








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Argent doré  
Espagne, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle  
1480/1490













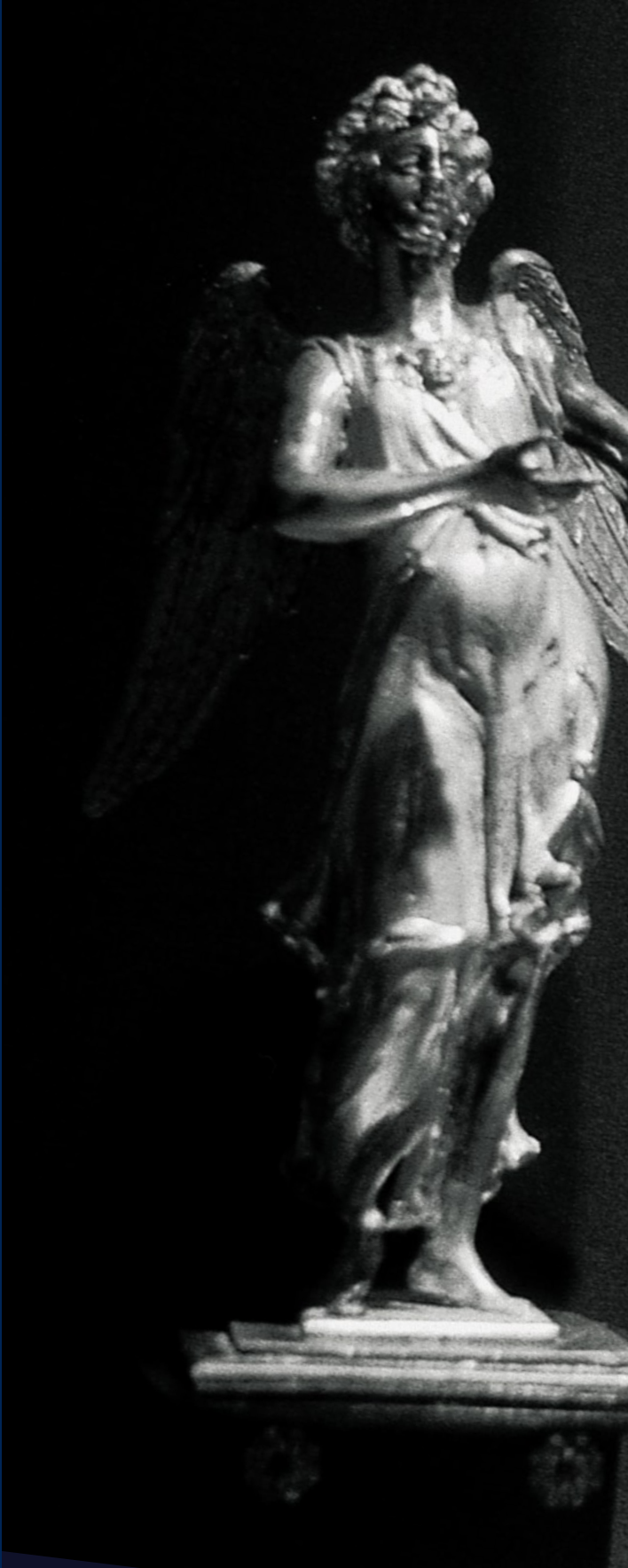
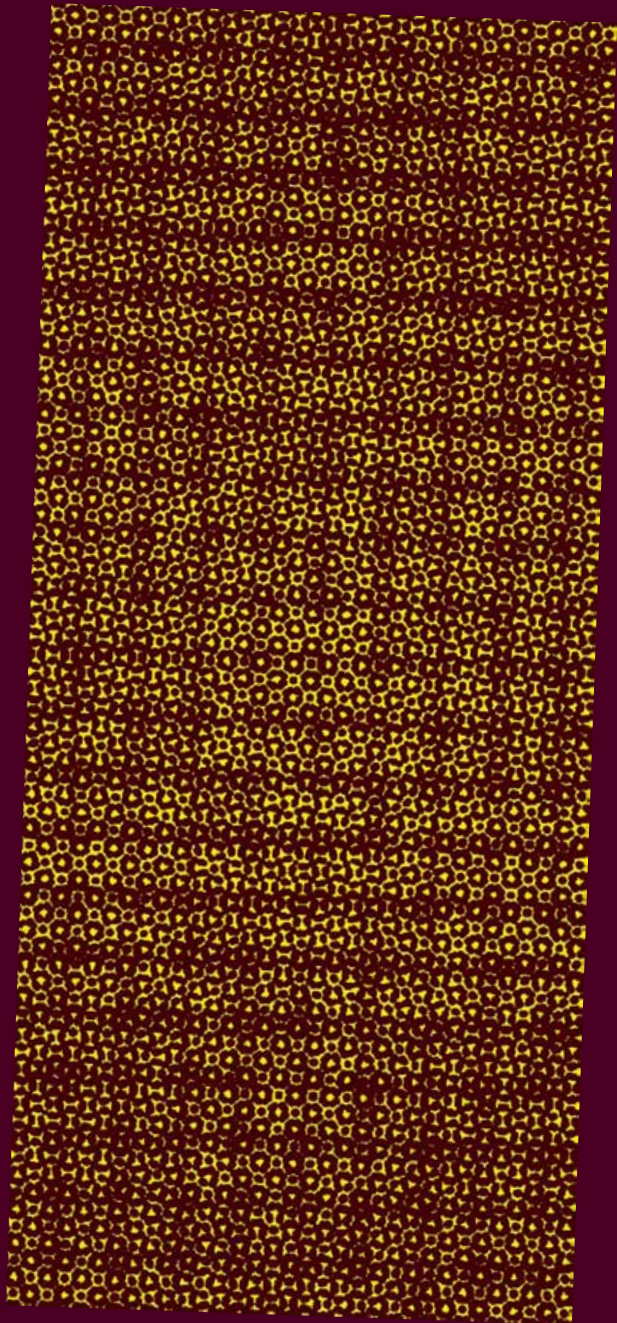




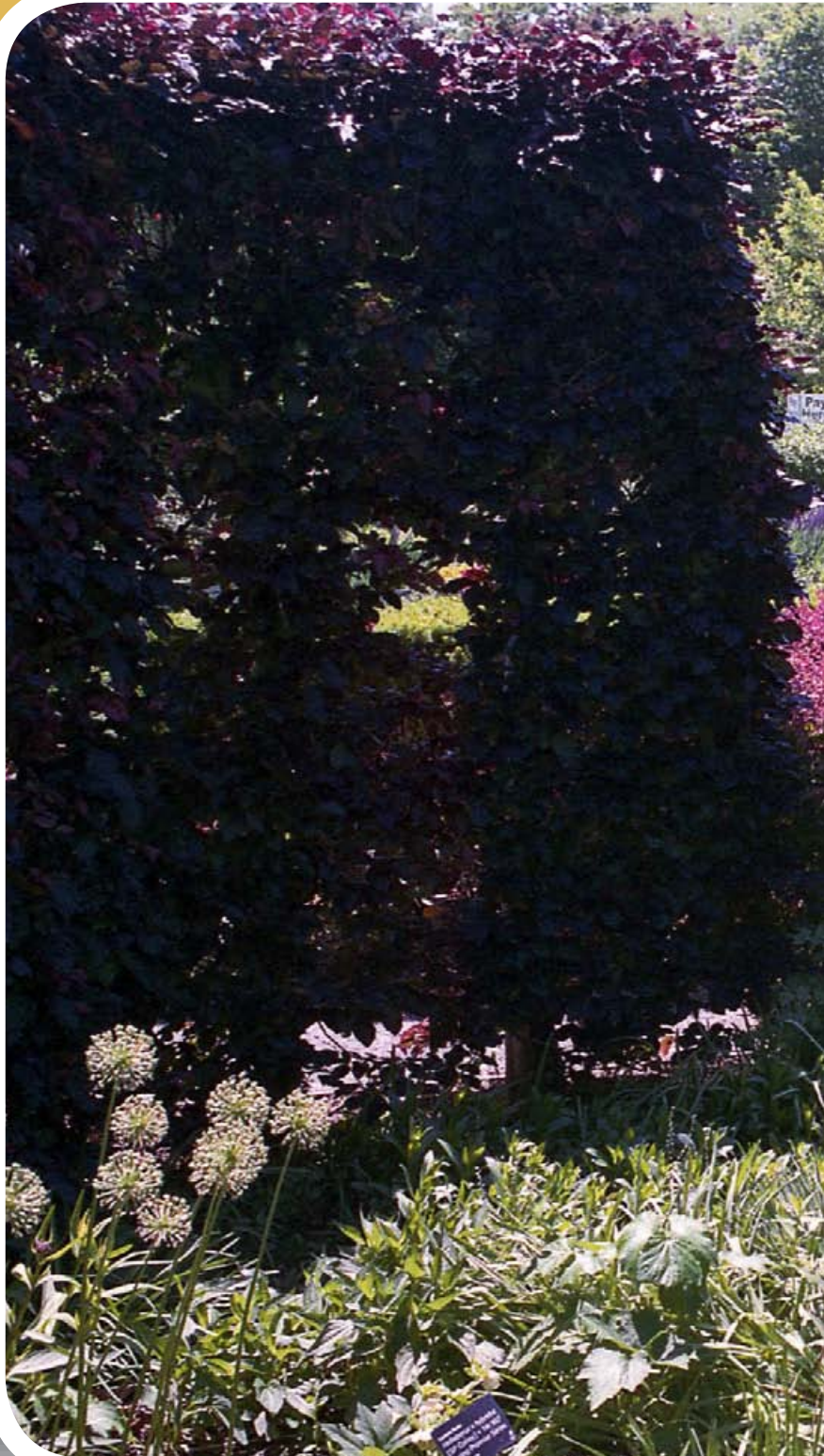




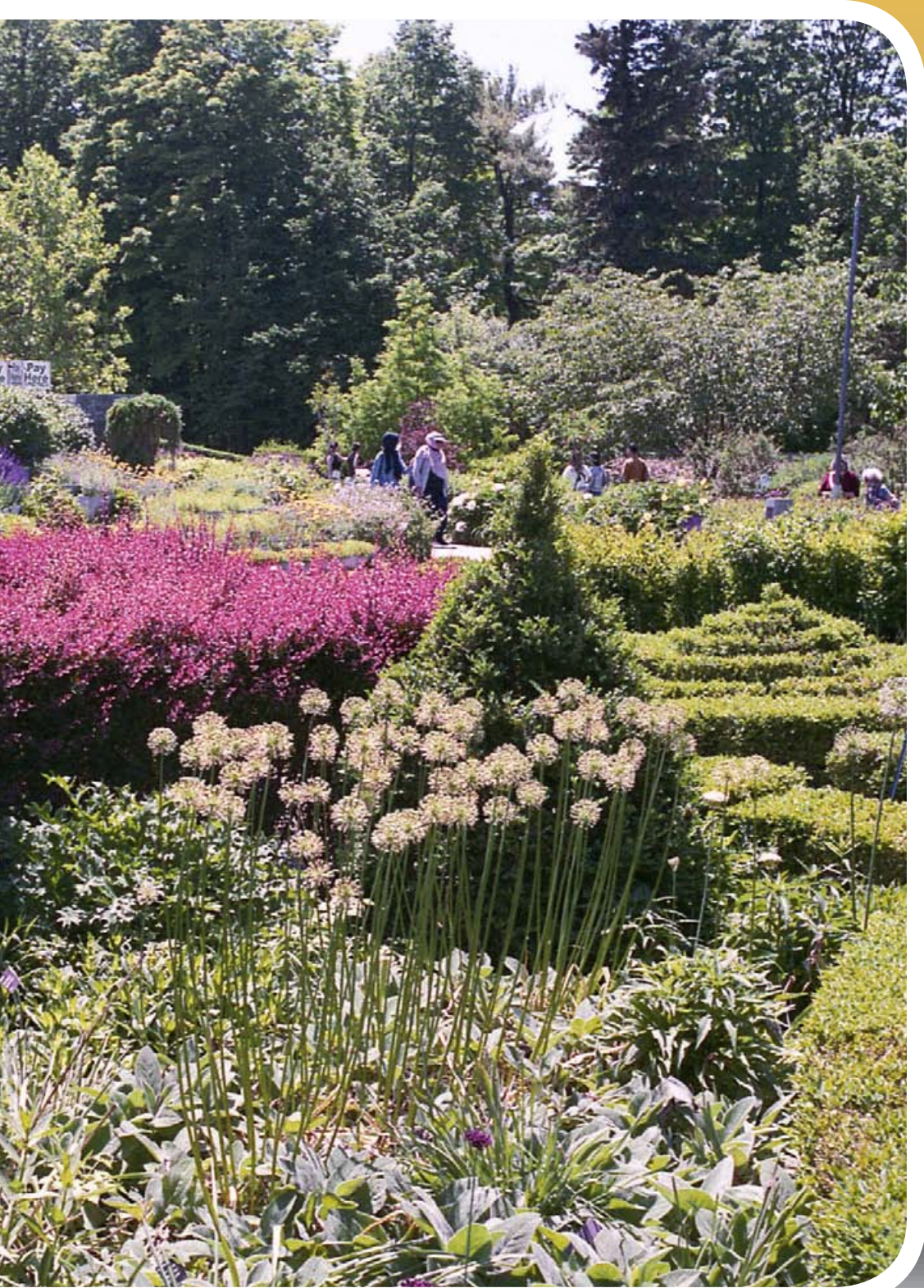


















Where  
Something  
Happened



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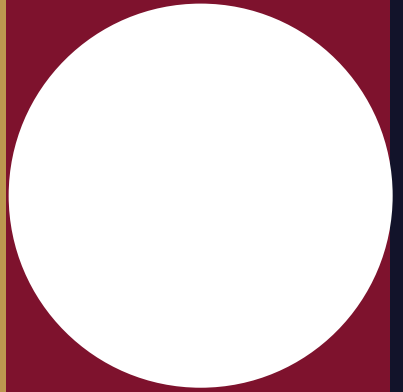














# Chapter 16





HARBINGER



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40



Tim

*Hortons*











162

162









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EMERSON

CHARTER

STAR WARS  
TAMMIE ORAN

STAR WARS

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EMERSON



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# The

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# End

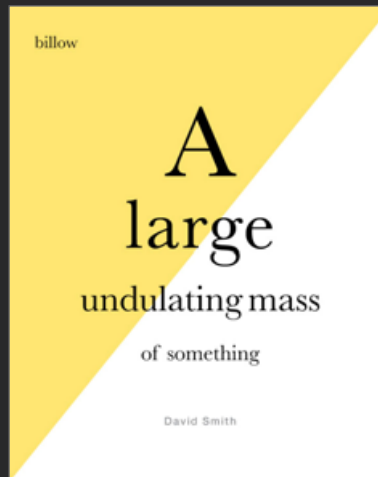
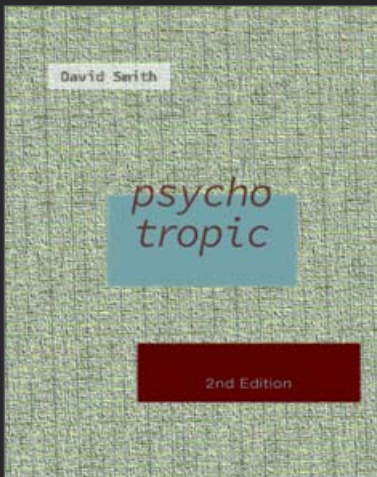
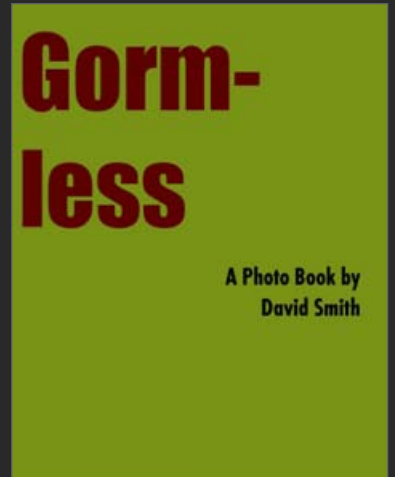
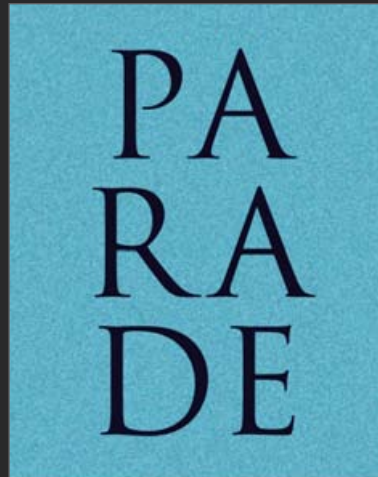
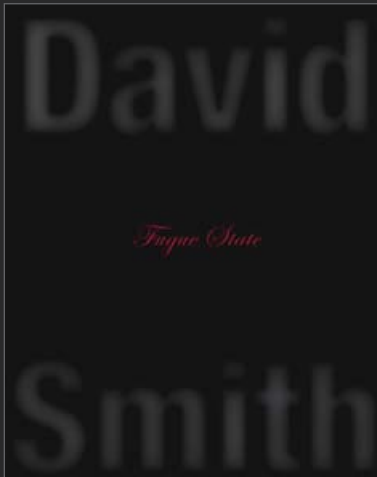
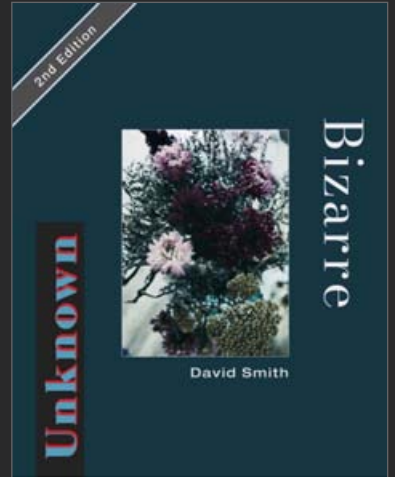
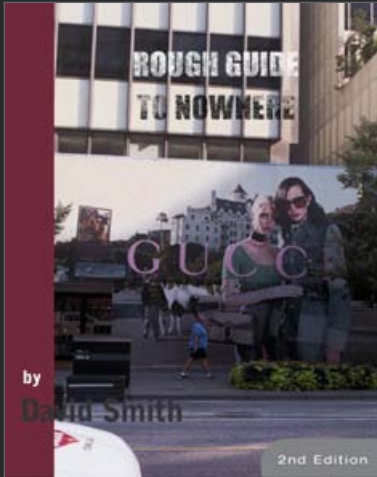
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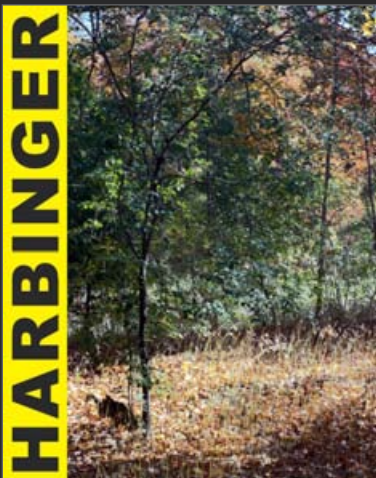
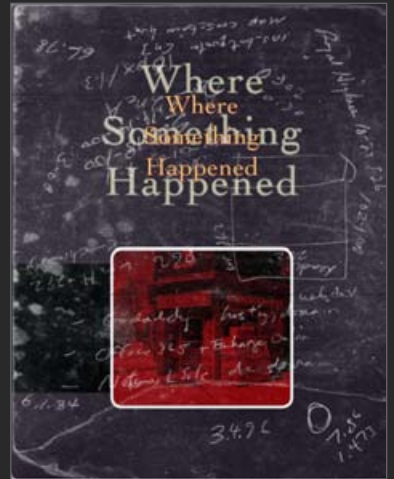
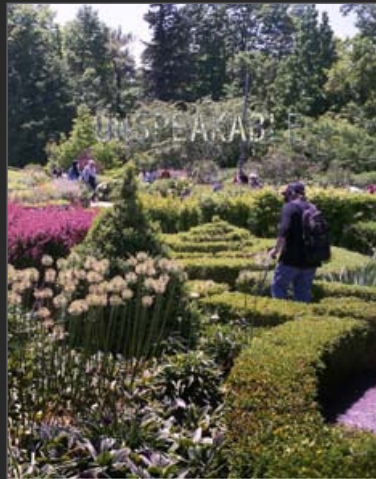
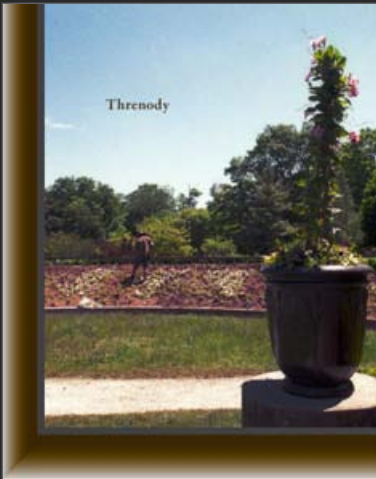
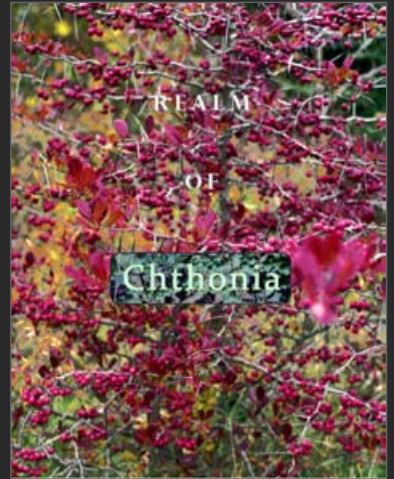
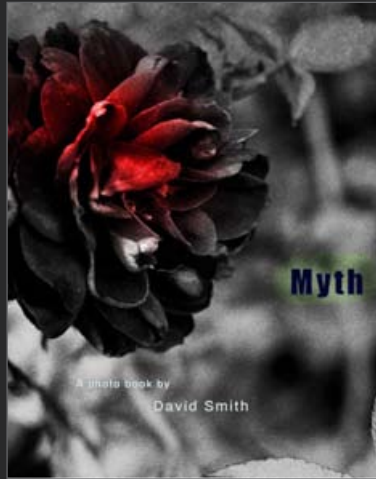
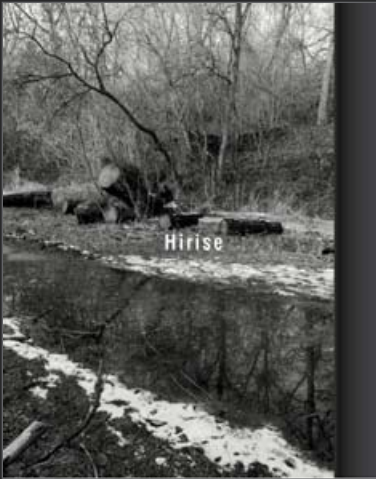
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"Death Jug" ceramic 1988



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