

SCIENCE

STAR POWER

Shine on, you crazy quasar.

Black holes are known for tearing stars and light itself apart. The movies warned us. Books warned us. Yes, even the sweet-but-intense conspiracy theorist that you work with warned us. Black holes destroy things. Yet there on their doorsteps live quasars, shining and not giving a fuck.

Originally mistaken for stars, quasars—“quasi-stellar objects” if you’re nasty—have been around longer than the Earth herself. Discovered in the 1950s along with diet soda and Pop Rocks, these pure balls of energy are believed to reside in the center of galaxies. The world actually does revolve around them, and, based on how bright they shine, they are very aware of it. Quasars are 27 trillion times more brilliant than Earth’s own sun and a single quasar alone emits the same amount of light as one trillion stars. Not even the galaxies that hold them can match a quasar’s luster, and the black holes beside them can do nothing to stifle their light.

To be fair, it isn’t as if black holes are not trying. As galaxies collide and stars and planets die, black holes do their job, sucking up the universe’s past like some high-end cosmic public relations. But despite all bribes and best efforts, the quasars refuse to fade out, choosing instead to absorb energy from the darkness and destruction around them and shine all the brighter. For even though the universe wishes to forget, quasars choose to endure, their radiance reminding us humans of a time gone by, when space breathed free of technology and the stars were still finding their heat.

By all logical standards, the quasar shouldn’t be able to live or survive, yet it does and it thrives, despite everything the universe throws at it. Sometimes I think about this and just say, “Same.”
Words by Caeli Faisst. Art by archangel80889/123RF.

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 Cosmic View’s Suns & Moons Honey Sweets made with wildflower honey and rosin are a celestial experience for when gravity is weighing you down (cosmicview.com).

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 In a 1964 issue of *Science News*, Ann Ewing ranked quasars as the “mostest”: “the most distant, brightest, most energetic, heaviest and most puzzling sources of radio and light waves yet found.”

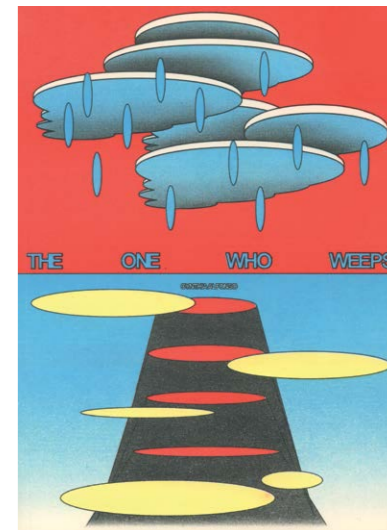
BOOK CLUB

SIGHT READING

Will Schofield, the creative mind behind the compulsively shoppable online 50 Watts Books, picks three titles from small presses that need a home on your shelves.

The One Who Weeps by Cynthia Alfonso (Cold Cube Press).

Cold Cube Press from Seattle prints and publishes books using risograph printers. One of their most mysterious and haunting books is a translation of *The One Who Weeps* by Cynthia Alfonso from Galicia, Spain. The book opens with what looks like an alien IKEA instruction manual. The strange tools and shapes slowly morph into a woman grappling with the void—“you reappear in breath, playing at an inner life.” The publisher describes it as a “visual examination of the cycle of grief and confusion.”



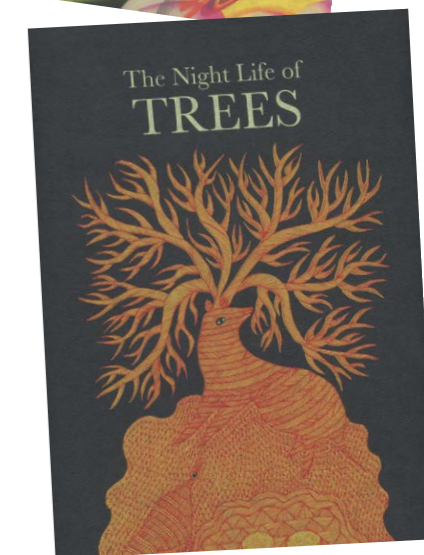
Girl by Maren Karlson (Nieves).

Nieves, based in Zurich, Switzerland, publishes zines and small books, often in collaboration with musicians and artists from around the world. In Maren Karlson’s gorgeous 16-page wordless zine *Girl* (2018), distorted plant-like figures get pulled into a swirling mirror world. In one painting, two green figures with red fingernails entwine. One appears to offer a magic mushroom to the other, who is wearing fabulous purple shoes and catching a daisy on their tongue. The images are not titled or described, but I learned that some of them are oil paintings on wood panels, with titles like “Bluebell to Hell.”



The Night Life of Trees by Bhajju Shyam, Durga Bai, and Ram Singh Urveti (Tara Books).

Gita Wolf founded Tara Books in 1994, working with tribal Indian artists to publish remarkable handmade, silk-screened books. *The Night Life of Trees* is one of Tara’s finest creations, a large-format art book featuring mythic trees from Hindi narratives, illustrated by three artists from the Gond tribe. The Peepal tree is “so perfect that seen against the sky, it seems to have the same shape as its own leaf.” The final image shows us that “sometimes a tree is actually a deer with twelve horns.”



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 More picture books for stoners: *A Weed is a Flower*, our book of weedy floral arrangements, and *Snail World: Life in the Slimelight*, our collaboration with Aleia Murawski, Sam Copeland, and assorted gastropods (broccolimag.com/shop).

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 “Rubbery suction-footed life forms with telescopic eyes smoke bubbleweed in mushroom meadows under violet skies and green stars.”—Wakefield Press’ description of *Lesabéndio: An Asteroid Novel* by Paul Scheerbart, via the 50 Watts blog.

Words by Will Schofield. Art courtesy of 50 Watts Books.