

JANINA AZA KARPINSKA

The Poetics of Site and Sight

a cento

When we come to unformulated Nature,
to the vast world of complex forms,
full of life and movement:
white coral islands in a dark blue sea;
a land of streams—some, like a downward
smoke, or wave-like movement,
hypnotising, merging . . .

These things must be considered
continuous with all other meanings,
as a suggestive field for instantaneous translation,
revealing impressions accessible as the outcome
or image of the *inner vision*.

ABOUT THE POEM

“The Poetics of Site and Sight” was created from *The Book of the Damned* by Charles Fort (1919), *Line & Form* by Walter Crane (1900), and “The Lotos-Eaters” by Alfred Tennyson (1832/1833). About the poem and the process of composing it, Janina Aza Karpinska writes:

Being new to centos, and just days away from the magazine submission deadline, I was thrust into the familiar, much-loved spirit of the experimental writing ethos of Oulipo—making good use of (self-)imposed constraints: here, of texts and time. I wanted to see if I could conform with all three given submission categories, choosing “The Lotus Eaters” as the added source material. I worked quickly, splicing lines together from each text, with none of my own words added. The poem was originally titled “Site Scientific: Sight Specific.” I was conscious of things seen, or just imagined, having so many associations and meanings that can be applied, so they are never just things in their own right, but so much more, and other.

