

One of the Damned

from II

I lapse.

A question.

A table.

Not a hippopotamus.

...

I fear

budding liberalities,

hailstones the size of hens' eggs,

smiles.

I blurt out something

the size of an elephant:

Black rains/red rains,

a thousand tons of butter,

blue hailstones flavored like oranges,

punk and silk and charcoal.

...

Nothing more is real.

Luminous objects and hot stones

falling upon the ground

of every sentence

cause the writer to surface

and see the conventional.

We believe. We accept.

Some scientists surface.

The censurable

retreat from the sky.

Science wept
butter and beef and blood,
a stone with strange inscriptions.

...

from XVI

Small bodies cross the moon.
Luminous bodies move from the sun.

Whether seeds, insects, birds, or other.

Bodies remarkably brilliant—
we may step out of them
or lift them off—
in swarms
dying by thousands.

Shadows crossing.

Bodies passed.

Beasts that left no history:
angels
crusaders
aeronauts
aerial elephants
bison
dinosaurs.

Except wings.

...

from XXIII

A very convenient doctrine:
small bodies—

not seeds, birds, ice crystals
but tourists and dragons—
roar thinkable wrecks of opinion,
the mystery unexplained.

from XXVII

Things have fallen from sky to earth.
Our slippery brains.
Cannon balls.

Showers of blood.
Showers of blood.
Showers of blood.

Earth bled.
Oceans of blood in the sky.
Rain of a peach-red color.

...

I have looked at one small area
and then, again, the same small area.

This earth, our expression.

Suppose we sift and sift and discard,
suppose that one should survive.

ABOUT THE POEM

“One of the Damned” was created from *The Book of the Damned* by Charles Fort (1919). About the poem and the process of composing it, Diane LeBlanc writes:

I’m drawn to Charles Fort’s *The Book of the Damned* for its quirky anecdotes and poetic language. The book is dense with evidence to support its primary argument that the universe, not human knowledge, is its own truth. To navigate the density, I limited my process to exact language in chronological order. My redaction of Chapters II, XVI, XXIII, and XXVII developed into a pattern of lyric fragments that temper the original text’s excessive logic and create meaning through association. In the spirit of the original, I maintain some repetition for echo.

