

Anomalistics Aggregate

I. Witch-finding

A stab and a laugh—
false or illusory—
the little harlots will caper.

Damned only by disregard,
the woman, found near an old willow,
poised like a crow over the moon, laughed.

To a child, she is ugly,
wild, fantastic, grotesque,
covered with the dust of disregard.

There is nothing but jest—jest and tragedy—
only because dark blue shadows have been seen
poised like a crow over the moon.

II. Womb of Infinitude

The Witch's Stone.
Vast black thing
like a poised crow
of unholy dimensions.

The spirit of the whole
is processional.
The cloud in the question
is a new unintelligibility.

Conceivably a whirlwind,
dust from somewhere
beyond this earth, dust
of your great-great-grandfather,

ultra-respectable, but covered
with cosmic dust, bright flakes

resembling thistleblows floating in
the sunlight or the haze of uncertainty

that surrounds all things, or
that is the essence of everything,
a cosmic haze of some kind,
the shells of diatoms mixed in,

corals, sponges, shells, and crinoids—
all of them microscopic,
bugs and stars and chemical messes
brooding in space like a red resentment

similar to brick dust, the blood-red
color of the moon, or illusory blood-colored
clouds, or fear, or the froth of evil, or
clouds of souls, or whiffs of cosmic ambition,

an all-inclusive nexus or nebulae,
adrift in inter-planetary tides and currents,
demons and angels merging into each other,
or an overlapping, the merging away of all phenomena

into other phenomena, merging away
into indistinguishability,
birth-pangs of translation to infinitude,
to the Positive Absolute,

no more than a dust cloud disregarded
as extra-telluric forces, as evil
or false or discordant or absurd,
falling luminously from the sky.

Was it a thing or the shadow of a thing?
A poised crow of unholy dimensions
buried alive in the heart of propriety,
a luminous stone with

strange inscriptions on it
translated by a whirlwind
into something else besides which
there is nothing else?

I like best the super-wolves
that were seen to cross the sun.
They howled.
The howls of the planets.

III. Malices with Occasional Charities

The aggregate voice is a defiant prayer,
ultra-respectable, but the aggregate
appearance is of dignity and dissoluteness,
and freaks will distract attention.

Bodies seem to link together
in the aspect of homogeneousness
but the clowns will break the rhythm
of the whole with their buffooneries.

There is something of ultra-pathos—
of cosmic sadness—
in old stories of demons and angels,
the damned and the saved.

Such is the gossip of angels:
pretty little thing; not at all frowsy;
rather damnable. She is
ugly. She is beautiful.

Negligible and limited,
poor sham of a thing,
like all other illusions
of realness in quasi-existence.

Just human filaments,
gelatinous and silky.
Ignorance surrounded by laughter
is what they call knowledge.

We laugh with celestial superiority,
but we're quite as much interested
in the dilemma it made for the faithful
to have more of Realness than they had

when we were only imagined.

IV. Argosies of Celestial Voyagers

Winged beings
or beings in machines,
worlds in hordes,
lights of various colors,

illuminated signs,
exhalations of souls,
motions that betray
influence

by something else,
something else would be that
besides which
there is nothing else.

Something else
that may have looked
like a vast black crow
poised over this earth from the moon.

I begin to suspect something else.

ABOUT THE POEM

“Anomalistics Aggregate” was created from *The Book of the Damned* by Charles Fort (1919). About the poem and the process of composing it, Kate Falvey writes:

I associate Charles Fort with my early Skeptical Girl enthusiasms for esoterica and arcane amalgamations. I remember being struck many moons ago by Fort’s absolute delight in the language and lore of weird (possibly) occult lushness. His work is a bounty for word pickers and phenomenon seekers, and I can remember being enamored of a life spent collating the bizarre and inexplicable: blood rain, rains of fish and frogs, floating cities, spontaneous combustion, UFO’s....

For this poem sequence, I had a few rules that I dispensed with pretty swiftly, words in order of appearance being one of them. I rather roamed around at random and tried to make a semi-coherent impressionistic story of sorts—heavy on the haze. Every now and then I found a conjunction or some other kind of transition word—but all words are in *The Book of the Damned* and many a phrase just needed to be kept intact.

I did try to avoid taking sections of Fort’s words and using them whole. I mean, just breaking the lines in a paragraph like the one below from the very beginning of *The Book of the Damned* is a poem in itself—but that seemed like cheating. He often writes in what seem like murky koans: “Or everything that is, won’t be. And everything that isn’t, will be.” “All repulsion is reaction to the unassimilable.” “What does it matter what my notions may be?” “In cosmic punctuation there are no periods: illusion of periods is incomplete view of colons and semi-colons.” And how can you beat this for creepily philosophic poetic intensity?

Some of them are corpses, skeletons, mummies, twitching, tottering, animated by companions that have been damned alive. There are giants that will walk by, though sound asleep. There are things that are theorems and things that are rags: they’ll go by like Euclid arm in arm with the spirit of anarchy. Here and there will flit little harlots. Many are clowns. But many are of the highest respectability. Some are assassins. There are pale stenchers and gaunt superstitions and mere shadows and lively malices: whims and amiabilities. The naïve and the pedantic and the bizarre and the grotesque and the sincere and the insincere, the profound and the puerile.

Don’t think it’s worth even trying to best him...though I’m itching to use “mere shadows and lively malices” in something.

