

Reliquary

1

nothing settles.

several ages ago

prehistoric people

rouged stone

with spirit bulls, fishes

and celestial visitors

half insane with sky

with the moon's

other worldly trail

across the night

2

hidden burial

pyramids house

fallen rulers

fragments of silk, blood

esoteric malices

caught within a hand

a whirlwind, a disk

a red hot signal

a possession

3

and later,
in ancient greece
fanatics shaped quartz
with flint implements
fused molten bronze
with coarse walnut
marked impressions
of the gods

we go north.

4

hibernian isle
vast, remote

centuries ago
a monk
found a staff
graven with spheres
crystalline snakes
and uncanny origin
wretched with temptation
he rejects the heresy
the wand is smashed
in violence
the natives wrecked
to atoms

5

at dusk,

scientists discover nature

under the bark of a willow tree

washed by rains roots snake

with a brilliant light

somewhere an overlapping

'attempts to communicate'

a signal flourishes

larger now

less hollow

a profound note baptises

the night

they go on widely.

warmed even

ABOUT THE POEM

“Reliquary” was created from *The Book of the Damned* by Charles Fort (1919). About the poem and the process of composing it, Jai Michelle Louissen writes:

I came upon Chapter 8 in *The Book of the Damned* and found the word “reliquary” in italics. I was inspired to write a piece about a shrine. Something in the nature of the chapter of the book as whole has a reporting style, so I took myself on a journey through time to different sorts of shrines. I went through a good section of Chapter 8, selecting words where I could build on the idea. It took me weeks to absorb all of the words, and it became both very simple and very long.

