



The Complete Books

Charles Fort

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"Did beings from outer space visit earth in the past ... are the various objects seen in the sky evidences of their visits?"

What is the explanation of falls of frogs, falls of fishes, falls of seagulls, which have been recorded from time to time?

How can we account for all the inexplicable astronomical observations that have been made in the past?

How can we answer reports of strange animals, disappearances of men from open sight, curious structures in the snow, talents like teleportation and telekinesis?"

These are the "damned," by which the late Charles Ford meant all the wide range of mysteries that are ignored by orthodox science or explained away improperly.

He worked for 27 years at the British Museum and the New York Public Library gathering material on phenomena from the borderlands between science and fantasy. His research appeared in four books: *The Book of the Damned*, *New Lands*, *Lo!*, and *Wild Talents*.

In these four volumes Fort organized and commented on a wild host of phenomena: flying saucers seen in the sky before the invention of aircraft, flying wheels, strange noises in the sky; correlations between volcanic activity and atmospheric phenomena; falls of red snow; falls of frogs, fishes, worms, shells, jellies; finding of "thunderbolts"; discrepancies in the schedules of comets, sightings on Mars and the moon; infra-Mercurian planets; inexplicable footprints in snowfields; flat earth phenomena, disruptions of gravity; poltergeist phenomena; stigmata; surviving fossil animals; the Jersey devil; Kaspar Hauser; spontaneous combustion; and similar weird effects.

While Charles Ford never actually explained the phenomena, beyond making vague hints of an organic universe and neo-Hegelianism, through the years his following has grown. At first his work was picked up by literary men such as Theodore Dreiser, Booth Tarkington, Clarence Darrow, Havelock Ellis, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Later, "Fortean themes" influenced the development of science fiction, and today his work remains the great predecessor to all extraterrestrial speculations.

The Complete Books Details

Date : Published February 1st 1975 by Dover Publications (first published May 1941)

ISBN : 9780486230948

Author : Charles Fort

Format : Paperback 1152 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Fantasy, Paranormal, Science, Philosophy, Occult

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Andrew says

What more is there to say about Charles Fort? The man spent years combing through newspapers, scientific journals, and other publications, pulling out weird and anomalous tales. Some are creepy, some are commonplace, some are just downright WTF? The first book ("The Book of the Damned") is concerned mainly with anomalous falls of objects like fish, frogs, meat, and blood; the second ("New Lands") mainly mystery planets, anomalous celestial bodies, and what would become Ufology; the third ("Lo!") earthly phenomena, including cattle mutilations and cryptozoology; and the fourth ("Wild Talents") mainly concerns itself with psychic phenomena, people with bizarre physical abilities, and touches on vampirism.

???? ???? says

Couldn't get past 10% or so. Exhausting and unsatisfying.

Deb says

Gave up on this one. Although it had some great reports of strange and unusual things in it the writing and deliver around them seemed to make little sense and went in circles.

Melissa says

Many call him crazy but there are many more who call him genius. Charles Fort is a man who was not afraid to write books about phenomena that science has ignored for so long. He paved the way to societies interest in the unknown and we have repayed him by many denying him credit and the recognition he really does deserve.

The Complete Books contain all of Fort's work so it is a big book. The Book of the Damned, Lo!, New Worlds, and Wild Talents all covering different phenomena he discovered in news papers. The most known being items falling from the sky to strange disapparences and much more!

Why do I love Charles Fort? He makes you question the world around and look beyond what we see everyday. He does not expect you to believe what he writes, he tells you what he found and creates theories based on it. Some of his theories are a bit farfetched but you can create your own.

Charles Fort is a mixer or philospher, researcher, and skeptic. It is the perfect mixture for a reader interested in the Fortean.

Max Nemtsov says

delightfully anti-scientific (in a good sense), beautifully written, and wickedly funny

Donna K Fitch says

This book is my absolute favorite reference book. Various bits of it have inspired me in two of my novels. Fort never ceases to delight me with his unique philosophy and his fierce attitude toward unexamined science. I'll confess I've never read it straight through, but this isn't necessarily the sort of book you could read that way. I think my head might explode if I did, because of all the ideas he packs into these books.

The Book of the Damned is my favorite, not just for all the cataloging of falls of fish, meat, black rains, red rains, aerial phenomena, etc., but also for the conceit of the Super-Sargasso Sea.

New Lands deals largely with astronomical strangeness--planets that are there and then aren't there, meteors, unexpected lights on the moon, and connections between seismological events and the sky.

In *Lo!*, Fort talks about more strange phenomena, including water falling on one specific area (on, say, a tree) for a period of time, but he also discusses the disappearance of the *Marie Celeste*, Holy Dancers, and people who disappear and reappear--or who just appear in an odd location.

Finally, *Wild Talents* presents recurring phenomena, such as people in a city shot by unknown assailants--the "phantom sniper" of 1928, serial fires and spontaneous human combustion. The final chapters deal with instances of "witchcraft"--the poltergeist girl, the "Human Cork," the "Electric Girl."

The book has a wonderful index, although I have found errors in it, but it's essential for such a treasure-trove. Not only can you search by topic, but by location, month and year.

If you have any interest at all in the unexplained, the odd and the delightful in this universe of ours, pick up *The Complete Books of Charles Fort*. I guarantee you'll be entertained.

Jennifer (JC-S) says

‘All things in the sky are pure to those who have no telescopes.’

This book contains all four of Charles Fort's books: ‘The Book of the Damned’; ‘New Lands’; ‘Lo!’; and ‘Wild Talents’. ‘By the damned’, wrote Charles Fort, ‘I mean the excluded. We shall have a procession of data that Science excluded.’ And in these four books (or processions) we have a feat of recorded events of bizarre, strange and inexplicable anomalies for which science could not fully account. And what are these recorded events? They include frogs falling from the sky during storms, monsters, teleportation, poltergeists, and floating islands. They include people who disappear; people who reappear; and people who spontaneously combust. This is an engrossing compilation of miscellaneous attention-grabbing events, approached with both belief and scepticism, and blended with scholarship and humour.

How to read this massive book? I'm pleased that I took Jim Steinmeyer's advice to read ‘Lo!’ (the third book) first. By the time I got (back) to ‘Book of the Damned’, I was totally engrossed. Fort's writing is humorous, cynical and witty. In Fort's view, it is not possible for humans to fully know or define the universe. I especially like his statement that: ‘There is something wrong with everything that is popular.’ Whether or not this is always true, popularity certainly does not guarantee ‘truth’.

The collection of oddities compiled by Charles Fort is fascinating and it is possible to simply enjoy the descriptions without wondering about how and why these events took place. Fort's floating ‘Sargasso Seas’ in the sky as a means of sucking in and dropping of frogs (and other objects) is as good as any other

explanation for frogs falling from skies during storms. The fact that we can't explain all events doesn't mean that we shouldn't look for explanations to examine, accept or reject. Now that I have read Fort's writings, I am keen to read more about Fort himself.

Jennifer Cameron-Smith

Alytha says

Stuck somewhere in the middle of it...

Eddie Watkins says

Most people seem to think of Charles Fort as the wacky guy who wrote about fish and other things falling from the sky (as per the lovely cover of this book), but he was actually more of a philosopher who used stories of fish falling from the sky to exemplify his philosophy.

He was extremely rational but also fervently anti-science, or at least against the type of scientific thinking that thinks it can fully explain all facets of this world; hence his feverish insistence on opening our eyes to the fact that very real fish can fall from a very unscientific sky.

Another thing that often goes overlooked is that Fort was also a very good writer, full of passion and barbed humor and irony. Granted, these books are loaded with verbatim transcriptions of thousands of newspaper clippings, which are interesting to the encyclopedia nerd in all of us, but the parts when Fort is on his soapbox are full of fire and fun and might actually fundamentally change the way you view the world.

Donald says

Charles Fort was one of the most brilliant, original and eccentric voices in the history of the written word. From the first line in "The Book Of The Damned," you know that you are reading something really different. Fort should have been a truly influential literary figure, but his unconventional nature prevented that from happening. Fort wrote two full-length novels that were described as awesome by those who read them, but burned them in a fit of rage and depression. What a loss to history that was. We are left then with Fort's non-fiction, which consisted of four books; "The Book Of The Damned," "Lo!," "New Lands" and "Wild Talents." Fort spent almost every day of his adult life at the public library, poring over old scientific journals and newspapers, collecting stories of the weird and unexplained. He filled his books with these tidbits, and the scientific world's ridiculous responses to them. In between these cases, he waxed passionately, in his quirky, off-the-wall style, about anything and everything, throwing out commentary and theories that are unforgettable. He also laughed at himself as much as he laughed at others, and never appeared to take himself seriously. Fort was the first writer to speak about UFO encounters, although he didn't call them that. He also was the first one to tabulate strange falls (frogs, blood, fishes, stones, etc.) from the sky and cases of spontaneous human combustion. Fort is a one-of-a-kind literary dynamo that should never be forgotten. He did attract a loyal following during his lifetime, and after his death his fans formed the still-active Fortean Society.

John says

This is basically where the Weekly World News and Hellboy/BPRD got much of their inspiration from. Charles Fort is a controversial writer whose beliefs, intentions and purpose are still very much for debate.

Part of me highly doubts that Fort would approve of the Fortean Times that sprung from his literary lineage. I think Fort wrote largely to thumb a nose at the Scientific establishment--who at the time was smug without the mastery to back much of it up (I'm thinking of "Knickerbacker Institute" and how much of it seemed to be trial and error).

Mike (the Paladin) says

This book is another that would better be a 3.5. I considered a 4 star rating but marked it down only because it is somewhat dated in the way it's written. That in no way detracts from the books quality or from how interesting the subject matter is.

This is not a book I can get through in a sitting, but can go back to from time to time. Fort's most well known work is *The Book of the Damned*, an interesting title. The "damned" by Mr. Fort's definition are those bits of knowledge or information (or possibly facts) that are dismissed out of hand because "they can't be true". For example for centuries it was an "established fact" or "established science" that rocks don't fall from the sky. After all the "educated" asked "how would rocks get up in the sky in the first place?" So anyone who reported a meteorite was dismissed either as a lyer or mad. You see there was not any need to look into it, rocks don't fall from the sky.

From there we get into a collection and discussion of things that are of a more esoteric nature. Fort collected reports of odd rains, frogs, fish, flesh and blood. He looks into other "unexplained" reports. People who have seemingly vanished without a trace and such all these and more he points out are considered "damed facts".

Fort is a forerunner of others (for example Frank Edwards) who have followed in gathering reports of strange events.

Linda says

People who are interested in alternative theories for unexplained occurrences, like UFO or black rain, might enjoy these books, but I didn't. I had read that Fort is one of the fathers of sci fi because of his insistence that there can be explanations for occurrences that can not be explained by science. He calls these occurrences "damned" because scientists refuse to acknowledge them. He, however, is willing to think that they are events that can be accounted for, just not in the realm of current science. For instance, perhaps a rain of red dust is the result of a space ship breakup, falling to earth. He has equally interesting explanations for other events.

I was not put off, however, by his alternative theories. I might have read the complete book if that was all.

But Fort wrote at the very beginning of the 20th century and was not a writer (although he had been a journalist) and I found his writing obtuse and difficult. He also seems to need to hit the reader over the head with constant repetition of the events others have "tried" (his word) to explain away. I got very tired of reading and reading and making very little progress because of the dense prose and the constant repetition.

However, if you are interested in alternative theories (and some of what Fort mentions CAN be explained by science these days) and the origins of sci fi, you might want to read at least one of the books in this trilogy. Just beware that you'll have to fight to find the interesting ideas.

Todd says

Fortean madness.

Dimitris Hall says

Below you will find an assortment of highlights from *The Book of the Damned* pulled from the clipping file of my Kindle. Convenient, that. You can find the same super-version of the book as the one I read for free on Amazon. I'm still not sure if it's a best-of, Charles Fort's collected works, or what... There seems to be at least *some* content which doesn't match up with the text found on his four books as found separately.

Anyway, **back to the quotes:**

The data of the damned. I have gone into the outer darkness of scientific and philosophical transactions and proceedings, ultra-respectable, but covered with the dust of disregard. I have descended into journalism. I have come back with the quasi-souls of lost data. They will march.

The power that has said to all these things that they are damned, is Dogmatic Science.

All sciences begin with attempts to define. Nothing ever has been defined. Because there is nothing to define. Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*. He was never able to tell what he meant by a "species." It is not possible to define. Nothing has ever been finally found out. Because there is nothing final to find out. It's like looking for a needle that no one ever lost in a haystack that never was—

The novel is a challenge to vulgarization: write something that looks new to you: someone will point out that the thrice-accursed Greeks said it long ago.

It may be that in the whole nineteenth century no event more important than this occurred. In *La Nature*, 1887, and in *L'Année Scientifique*, 1887, this occurrence is noted. It is mentioned in one of the summer numbers of *Nature*, 1887. Fassig lists a paper upon it in the *Annuaire de Soc. Met.*, 1887. Not a word of discussion. Not a subsequent mention can I find. Our own expression: What matters it how we, the French Academy, or the Salvation Army may explain? A disk of worked stone fell from the sky, at Tarbes, France, June 20, 1887.

My notion of astronomic accuracy: Who could not be a prize marksman, if only his hits be recorded?

But what would a deep-sea fish learn even if a steel plate of a wrecked vessel above him should drop and bump him on the nose? Our submergence in a sea of conventionality of almost impenetrable density. Sometimes I'm a savage who has found something on the beach of his island. Sometimes I'm a deep-sea fish with a sore nose.

Charles Fort was a trailblazer. What we call today paranormal or occult, together with all the relevant scientific investigations, in a few words what we'd expect from Mulder and Scully, to a large extent we owe to him. Here's a guy who lived in the '20s and researched old copies of *Scientific American*, *Nature* and other such periodicals and magazines, looking for the *dammned*, the unexplainable, the excluded. For what good is science, if it only chooses to include to its dogma what it *can* explain, sweeping under the carpet all that can be used to challenge its grand theories?

Giant, village-sized wheels submerged in the middle of the ocean; periodic rains of fish, frogs in various states of decay and of a gelatinous mass of unknown origin; falling stone discs, as in the quote above; meteors; lights in the sky moving in formation (reported in the 19th century); footprints of impossible creatures; giant hailstones; cannonballs entombed in solid rock, and that's just a sample.

Reading about these mysterious exclusions was a delight. I love everything that challenges my way of seeing the world and allows me to contemplate alternative explanations for life, the universe and everything. To be fair, some of Fort's favourite theories were down-right bizarre, such as his insistence on imagining a realm above our own from which all the falling creatures and materials originated - what our own surface world would be, conceptually, for the "deep-sea fish with the sore nose", as in the last extract I quoted above. The existence of such a place sounds no less ridiculous now than it did in the 1920s, but I think Fort's point was that his arbitrary explanations were just as good as the official ones offered by the scientific dogma of the time, which our present, widely-accepted, matter-of-fact world theories of today mirror. To be sure, a part - I don't know how significant - of the *excluded*, would be possible to *include* today, but I'm sure that many of the phenomena Fort goes through in his *Book of the Damned* would be just as inexplicable today as they were in the centuries past.

There are two reasons this book isn't getting five stars from me. The first one is that it's twice as long as I think it should have been. I felt that Fort at certain points was simply repeating himself. It's also possible he was just saying the same thing in a different, more difficult to understand way, and this is precisely the second reason this isn't getting five stars. Fort's language and style was very hit or miss. To give you an idea, the quotes I've included in this review are some of the easiest parts to understand from the whole book. Others love it. Myself, I can't say I hate it, but I'm not sure it's as successful a writing technique as Fort must

have hoped for it to be.

The same hit-or-miss-ness is applicable to the book as a whole. I thought it was tremendously interesting and a significant publication that should be studied further and give inspiration to present-day Charles Forts, but I don't believe the style is for everyone. Why don't you find out for yourself if it's right for *you*, though? It's free!
