

ALIENOCENE – SOUND & VISION

THREE POEMS FROM
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF
FATE



JOSEPH DONAHUE

FOAM INTO FOAM

A touch of wonder is now
welcome on all levels of being

Dawn is impressive

But so are the nights that occur inside the sun

*

Night of stolen beer
the can so cold

The two cousins ran down
onto the beach, stood in the surf

to hide the sound of the can as it opened
bubbles breaking on lips

a harsh soda, prickly,
waves fell around them

the sound of the sea hid them

terrible taste, dumped out,

foam to foam, bury the
can in wet sand

*

Snow in the branches brightening

the branches' shadow

*

Nights a fateful letter has been mailed

Days are few before it arrives

A letter the sun sends the earth

written in fire, as if to say:

What could be done, has been

*

Nights of bones boiling all night
roots, greens, spices, meat

scraps from the feast

a hint of extinction

a guess at revelation

pilgrims along the road
begging bowls

steam rising from
a ladle or a spoon

*

The emissaries have all fled

No one wanted to say such words

*

Demeter is in deep despair

*

Such nights as snow falls in celebration
of the ineradicable warmth
consciousness
is about to reclaim

*

Such nights as might be spoken of in an apocryphal gospel

the apostles ask Mary how she came to

conceive the incomprehensible

How, that is, they said,

she could carry within her what

cannot be carried

“Lord, the seven heavens could
hardly contain Thee yet

Thou was pleased to be
contained in me . . .”

So with a prayer
she began but before
the answer

fire shot from her mouth

soon all Creation
was aflame, burning

to the point of
annihilation. Finally
amid unbearable flames

Jesus was again in their midst

And said to his mother:

“Say no more, or all this
will come to an end”

*

Untransformed by
any such darkness

any such night on a motel balcony, at twilight

alligators scuttle into a swimming pool

a rising wind blows away the sun

*

Imperfection must thrive in you
Consider your impulse

to reenact, in the realm of
the interpersonal, what your
ancestors once did to villages

There's an aura about you
of smoke and blood

The carnage of your charm
ignites the entire office

but outrages are
overlooked because
you are such fun to be with

*

Nights of lamenting the dissipation
of the force of fifty years old
sadomasochistic fantasias

Yes, a nostalgia for pain persists
but now pain has turned pure,
like an autumn tree finally
free of its leaves.

*

True, no one has died but
a new life can be discerned

as in the glowing depth of
an obsidian mirror where

gods of death are looking out
at notable contemporary artworks

*

A composer writes a number on a blackboard
He draws an axis, then another, then
a third, the third curves, the
diagram gets too dense to follow
this depth of musicality abides beyond you
until, should it happen,
all notes are struck,
and a drumbeat levitates
the room as, head in hands,
rocking, nodding, you
there in the front row,
start, as is said,
“losing your shit”
as the other instruments
kick in, the bass, the piano
Little is left of you, or the night
as once known by you

*

That rape, in a forest, in autumn,
the night the leaves let go all at once

*

Having unheard all hint of

a higher life

eaten almost all the seeds
ruby-colored, dark blueish core

*

Your mother finds you

Your mother's hair falls across your eyes

She consoles you:

*

“Not again what once was

but more than the nothing of now”

from IN AN ORCHARD AT NIGHT

The fissures in the stones
are beautiful. How

grateful, we are,
these days,

that
the earth

once rolled
in molten waves

So write the newly wed
on their tour of the world

*

So the cycles
of time

continue to overlap,
(if this book is to be believed.)

Some are known
intimately,

others, a lifetime
will only offer a glimpse of.

(if this book is to be believed.)

They have made us

what we are,

but when they

conclude,

we will still be.

(if this book is to be believed, with

all its glimmerings, risings, flashes, pangs, and onslaughts)

*

Let all

fall through

all, was the thought.

Or, all will fall

through all,

where I lie.

Or, where

thought lies,

all falls, let that

be what is.

Let lies fail

and fall,

let thought

be what

is, be
all

*

The light of the sun
reaches through your

closed eyes, the
day exists to wake

only you, only you, and not
whoever died in your

place yesterday
and dropped

into the
dirt today

*

Or is your sleep
not yet deep enough,
not yet as deep

as the lilac
its drops of

dried blood,
its crease

in the white petals

its yellow
center only
the sun touches

DONE THEN, GASPED AT NOW

A bright peak floats mid air
a mountain that seems like a tree
grown parallel to the ground
reaching toward sunlight
from the depth of shade
we have yet to become dust
on the road to the court of God
but peace comes while looking
over the water a house has been
wrapped in white plastic
low voices, sounds of tools,
weeks of mild wonder at the
jeweled tower that is gathering
within the veil, the temple of
Solomon, restored at last.
Thought rides on waves to
far places. Early sun fills the
stream of water in the air.
The boy down the block will be
sent off to a tough love camp,
The son of the judge will turn up
at a Salvation Army barrack
Before the tabernacle is opened
we will become birds of the Spirit
Amid the Chinese food cartons
the crows are a surly choir
I heard a woman say hello in
a far room, no one was there,
The movie last night was terrible

The actors seemed ashamed
they seemed to be saying
between their dismal lines
forget you saw this

*

Semen shines in the darkness
a glistening rain-washed street
where the stones are brightening
beneath the heels of apocalyptic
survivalists running wild past
a black dog with a red aura
A girl lies on a lawn, a yellow
flower resting on her belly atop
the blue and white of her dress
Doves like a whirlwind of white
and grey sweeping a famous sea
that seethes like shadows of leaves
but now a fish in the claws of
a heron makes a promise that
pain proves a purpose beyond itself
then a cake is placed on the table
The spirit of the age was elsewhere
nonetheless you have understood
nothing: not a turnip, a potato
a yucca root an icon saved
from the flood, or an earth
struck by asteroids more often
than admitted. No one here
handles the paint well, splotches
festoon the room we were hired
to turn white. But this is how
homes are made, lives lived
within them, until we awaken

elsewhere, rain beating the roof,
like a woman saying can't you help me
get over this? Nothing can be done
beyond the gentle pulse of
lightning, light by which I
write this down, barely time
in a life to intuit the warring of
earth and sky, as set forth in
The Agamemnon, torchlight on
the mountaintops at night

*

Treated well and yet unhappy
wandering down a corridor white
pillars lead to a small, black door.
Here and there angels whisper
A dove crests the air above the sheds
A faint gold light on the scene
A haphazard transfiguration
We slept on the ferry and awoke
entering the port of an astonishing city
A medical emergency had me on the phone
the consulate broke protocol and got us
into a first-rate clinic with doctors
who went to school in England
but when we left they didn't even
bother to pull out the IV needle
Dank halls of bloodied locals,
This must be the gospel where demons
are driven into pigs, pigs are driven
over a cliff and into the sea
This must be the gospel where
the Redeemer gets secretive
casts us into bewilderment

the gospel where redemption is
a telescope in orbit around Venus
that can pick up the heat signature of
any rock speeding toward us from the beyond
But who could believe such fruit
finds its way into a sherbet?
This is some of the oldest landmass
in the world, he said, this ground
is more soaked in blood than
any other dirt on earth but
the river is shallow and sandy,
warm, clear, you can swim in it
Dolphins come right up to the dock,
ready for Messianic time to start
Until then, the rabbi said, this world
belongs to Batman and The Joker

*

Wall Street is largely underwater
A dog slinks along the high ground
A man without a shirt has clearly
had significant chest surgery
and waits for word to arrive
from a cave in the sky where
time goes back to when it's done
I remain gracious, but out of sync
On a mountainside in some land
yet to be called holy three flare forth
no one there to witness and adore
Instead you're walking along the icy wall
Your mother walked on top of, once,
In summer, with her sister, both
still girls, off to visit a friend

Here's the big wide porch of
the house they grew up in
She talked about it all the time,
you heard about every room inside
It belongs to someone else now
You will never see the inside
of that house, never see
your mother again. The lawn
slopes down to a ditch, a perfect place
to lie down and cry. In your
long winter coat, you do that
The sun warms your face, as if
you had found the last
possible paradise