

the Library

a collection of recent work

poems from 2008 - 2011

by Damien Gossett

The Arkansas Traveler
God Answers
May 16, 2011

nothing is hard for me to do
if i choose to do it
i hear your prayers but i ignore you
you wished for the fruits of my labors
when you left the garden
i gave them generously
yours is free will and knowledge
some say i gave you my son
now is not the time to bother me
you have ceased to be a child
you are eons old
it is time for you to grow up
decide for yourself
when you have
i will converse with you
on the splendors of the universe

December 11, 2010

sadness

sadness is the measure of a man
not honor
not duty
not loyalty
i have learned this from love
love
does not conquer all
can not move mountains
will not bring water
cannot change the way things are to the way you wish them to be
after joy
after laughter
after pleading
after tears
after heartbreak
and pain
there is sadness
we are convinced sadness is pain
a twinge
stinging or for some bringing pleasure
we press on imagining
it is neglect boundary and wall
pain is simple
easy to withstand or inflict
we construct a fortress breached only by death
standing isolated alone atop
we think too highly of ourselves
secure in our stoicism
closeted by our righteousness and virtue
we guard those walls never looking in
fearful to acknowledge the compromises made
be exposed as worlds that can never exist
destinations never to be reached
we are afraid of our own sadness
when we run from it
it finds us
it will guide us if we wish
when there is no hope
when all has collapsed into the blackest of holes
sadness will light the firmament
it is the choice we make when there is none
it is submission
not obedience

it is to cry for ourselves not for others
with our tears the blessing of a new creation
the delight of a new morning

November 28, 2010

there is a place low on the ridge
where golden spires are illuminated
red orange in the morning light
glow turmeric as the sun rises above
apparitions eons long
figures begetting movement
particles shimmering
accumulating shifting
scaled
insignificant to any measure of today
valued
sounds creeping behind approach gradually
two images banshee and wail
distances so great simultaneous events perceived separately
lightening and thunder seen then heard
echoes of unfamiliar past
mirage illusion
vision
an oasis where the mind stops to ponder
chains ornamental gracefully slip aside
one hundred links
one hundred atoms bonded
then shattered across history
reconnected
new compositions compounds
complexities
what was known is no longer our elders remind us
our sons daughters urge us forward
following the way across the face of the dune
rhythm lamentation progress
robes discarded
kneeling in nakedness
supine
high on the ridge
seeing
we are our own master

November 26, 2010

poison oak cloaked
newly green from winter rain
lays in wait on trails abandoned
honey mesquite seeding pods scattered underfoot
audible accompaniment to rise and fall
madrone pine redwoods acorns
lining muddy trails
rocks cropped exposed
cracked here smooth there
creating space sufficient for
surface hazards of impending
slip sloppiness
morning air merges with lungs pushed back out
frost hangs low
smoke maneuvers upward aided by the logic of november coolness
tent cabins closed for the season
point to unused campfire circles
a left takes me farther from the safety of parking lots
horse rings and a easy return
no consequence
there is security in aloneness
there is no need to be the jester
two dogs gliding in opposite directions
ignore me as they have greater interest in pine cones
thrown by their owners
stumbling
it is not possible to disregard them as they claim the entire width of the trail
i am patient but do not have time
for their apologies
i am moving forward to the next division
a moment lies ahead
it is too precious to be lost to yesterday

November 24, 2010
silhouettes

silhouettes across the surface of a sun
gravitational wobbles
measure extrasolar bodies
orbiting stars we have not seen
but surmise are there
pointing towards
flashings across the underpass
haircutting salons insurance agencies cathedrals
coffee shops grocery and pharmacies
standing as each diminution of the light
signals the shift towards you
you conjure an alternate universe forming
illuminated by streetlights on darken wet streets
leaves lining curbs gutters grates and manholes
foreshadowing the reality of a world not yet awake
there are many routes to run
paths to this garden
each with distinct signature
a trek for others that may follow
every globe a star in its own right
with no map to follow
they become a beacon to navigate the uncertainties
of starts and stops fits and halts
as shadows merge and congregate
a silhouette emerges with an unambiguous bearing
precisely defining the nature of a different cosmos
some days boisterous as the pillars of hercules
with conversations divergent as new stars coming to light
others quiet and introspective as ancients in alexandria
tending to the great library
reminiscing with their hubble bubbles
the path veers right and i stay to the inside
this universe has it own cadence
voiced by the buffleheads mandarins and teal
whose existence is sheltered in its time
each morning they question the intruders with ribald calls for their expulsion
pausing only briefly for water they allow us to proceed
there is a tree that marks the end of this universe
hinting the lamp post comes near
with it silhouettes will fade with the morning sun

November 21, 2010

the desert is a burqua
concealing containing reclaiming
modestly a life of unwritten rules and conduct
hidden between verses
behind the soft rustle of the veil
covering
a scorpion seeking the cooling shade
waiting
the first step is one of many
twenty-two hundred ninety-three miles
to the great river
sand to sea
i am not chained
bound only to the thing undiscovered
unknown to me
within mud straw and clay
there is a map
used by the first and many in between
not lost but unowned for centuries
it was thought no longer useful
merely biding its time
obscured like the scorpion
waiting to strike the careless the foolish
revealed to the those who are willing
to find the hiding places
buried in sand
memorialized in the recesses
sorting the debris of accumulated years
subconsciously cataloguing only to deliberately forget
the time comes when one must remember
if for other reason than to find a way home

November 19, 2010

vestibule of emotions unused
constructed of mud bricks on the edge of a great oasis
intellect wisdom and history
water greeting sand
standing
palms prefigure days of greatness
preserved as parchment
testament to stories surreptitiously buried
in the heart of yesterday
forgetfulness rediscovered
catalogued closeted stacked
order laid bare
at times you can remember them all
willingly or not
lifting the weight
revealing traversing
the camel pokes his nose
soon it is in smells dust and all
mocking the narrative you have constructed for yourself
as the tent flap wriggles sways to evening's call
breezes follow as you chase behind them
after the opening dismissal of unpleasantries
you resume the search
tears find me but i cannot find her
she is not in this room
maybe not the next
she is here somewhere
there is a murmur
her footsteps resonate
she whispers it will be revealed only if you confess
i have tried to little avail
on my left a sign
there is a library at the end of the world
many will dine at her table
you must bring what she asks
if you wish to be received
she moves away leaving me to contemplate the camel
and the journey of a thousand miles

November 17, 2010

the half moon kisses venus
floodlights overwriting stars
night turns into night
interrupted by warm jets massaging heels
flutter kicks stroke end to end and back again
bubbles white noise
twenty meter composition
trying to find a rhyme
a cadenza organizes
idle conversation on grandchildren and water polo
i am not there as it continues on to schools holidays and hope
they exit
i enjoy solace darkness
airbuses and 737's
punctuate the stillness with red-eyes to the east coast
sinking lower warmth covers my shoulders
there is a gentlemen in the steam who prefers it very hot
i find this annoying as he exits and enters
each time dousing himself and the sensor with water
waiting for the steam to dissipate to human levels
we converse mostly about flying
staring up at the streetlight
a single drop hits my forehead
in the coolness i tilt my head upwards
watch as the fog from my breath circles and disappears
footsteps crunch fallen leaves
figures move from right to left
each one cutting off the light as they cross my field of vision
a bicyclist with dog decides to make an exception
the result is the same

November 13, 2010

millions
autumn's bursting red maples
crooked eucalyptus looking to be toppled by december's first storm
redwoods
spiny poplars willows and cypress
beaten ground pasted and processed to a common denominator
collective memory
things past and present
said and unsaid
their future is to be dust as they once were
the memory will stay as one and zeros
bits and bytes a new currency
visible at your call

what would you do if you could remember everything
you ever said
did
saw or felt
a perfect memory for you and you alone
remembrance
antiquities of adolescent
inequities of middle age
acquiescence of time
would the pain and anger
cause you burn the library at alexandria
plow under the fields of carthage and seed with salt
would you turn each page slowly and weep
tears mingling with dust
rubbed between fingers calloused from running on too cold days without gloves
pages of a lifetime
tasted savored shared again

November 5, 2010

our local farmer's market hides under a freeway overpass
preserving autumn's well ripened fruit
posing seductively
mingling with orange and black confetti
left from yesterday's parade
and young boys' halloween candy
peaches are long gone
but the memory of
the first bite of wetness
dribbling down cheeks
dripping on collars
wiped with clean sleeves
lingers
tomatoes remain to be tested
fingers selecting carefully for the proper firmness
chopped, salted and simmered with garlic and a few greens for tuesday's dinner
standing back amidst the strawberries
imagine the harvest
a glimpse before she disappears
saturday's perfection

November 1, 2010
intoxicating promises

shoes aligned and paired
rotating knees up
arms and hands palm down
navigating the crooked teeth of urban streets
freshly lubricated joints issue their wake up call
push breathe push harder lift higher
breathe push lift faster
might be saturday
could be sunday
nope it's monday
a blind man walks his three legged dog
clicking out a direction the dog already knows
geese glide by on lakeside water monocle smooth
shadowing finer points of upside down buildings
crescent moon stealing away behind the eucalyptus
street lights dare to clarify the homeless singing
a song where she has forgotten the words
fogged over by too much of too many good things
urban wailing drifting mixing with 5:00 am freeway
the emt's morning coffee interrupted
flash to sirens calling somebody home
if they're lucky only to highland
sidewalks vacuumed power washed courtesy of the local businessman's association
reveal cracks and undone repairs setting up traps for the unwary
highlighting useless campaign signs and other toys
whose higher purpose is to be recycled as toilet paper
the joy of oakland
the intoxicating promise of another day

October 28, 2010

i gather myself
wrapped in fine plumage of leather
velvet and silver
i fend you off with my free hand
clutching a shield of straw
broken battered by your first blow
contemptuously you smile
pretending that you thought it would be a contest of equals
we both knew i had not a chance
what is left is your mercy
i hope for a swift clean killing blow
that you would not defile or mock me
i sink and wait for the inevitable
you offer kind words milk and honey
the tenderness of lips and as you wipe my brow
your hand smooth and strong placed on mine
caresses the dagger as it enters
relieved by the pain
there are times i cannot sleep at night
i lie awake dreaming of the morning
waiting for tomorrow
knowing it is unwise to say
knowing the bargain does not include license
knowing if the worst is to never speak again
confession is an unwelcome indulgence

melancholia of a dog walker or notes on the suspension of genius
October 20, 2010

I.

dogs are geniuses
for lack of opposable thumbs and the ability to make change
they would rule the world
easily exploiting the foibles and vanity of supposed superiors
they could but have not
voluntarily through love and lunacy they have given those choices to humans
as they have known the melancholia of wisdom
they have freely chosen to suspend their genius

II.

a temporary stop
a stop on the road to Damascus
so near a deathbed conversion
an avenue of good intention
with the gold of greater martyrs
soldiers in crusades to follow
laying waste to foundations where you chose not to build your church
contrary evidence eviscerated
a dog follows the path by scent not sight
blinding them would have served no purpose

a temporary removal from the field of play
what are the rules of the game
none
out of habit practice desire
we play with each other's hearts
we have our reasons
deceit only to our selves
a ruse a masquerade hiding what we know is true
the rabbit is ensnared
the dog finds his own way

a type of bridge
hung unsupported threads
steel vines or hemp
magnificent glistening traversing
watery chasms separating you from who you wish to be
if you do not swim
when will you learn
the lesson is tiring
but the answer is not on this side
a dog paddles with certainty without restraint

the Library, collection of recent poems
Damien Gossett

the postponement of sentence/judgment
paris should have waited
there was a better deal
if zeus will not judge what good can come
only cruelty death exile
achilles hector and memnon step forward and we are as ancients
reflecting the same passions and ugliness
to possess the golden apple of our desires
war lust riches
the dog knows only the golden rule

an end to a repayment of a debt
did we care from whom we borrowed
oblivious to the consequences
as in the seventh year all debts would be forgiven
did you not see
the commons was shuttered by their trespass
the temple given to the money changers
compassion and the law are unknown to them
there will be no release
a dog owes only its good name

III.

our genius dispersed vibrating and dissonant
each particle protecting
a part of us we have not seen
that will be revealed at dates unknown
if we are lucky and wise
imagine well ripened fruits
imagine oneself transformed
griffin, rabbit, feline or other wondrous creature
guided by angels
to heaven's doorway
what is genius but lunacy
loss
and love

June 27, 2010

the leaves in the bottom of her cup
say there are no coins in my pocket
save three
divining a line
the road holding yesterday
creates another time today
with late season rains revealing
comfortable secrets in passing conversation
their meaning i cannot know
she chooses not to say
other than the road holds this time
the road dividing and sums to self
a product of constructed purpose
to be somewhere else
to ask differently
what can be challenged
the foolishness of children yields to the foolishness of old men
who think now they understand why they were born
but believe it no longer matters
not hearing their feet on the road
to a place other than tomorrow

December 30, 2008
new years poem

wednesday morning my head hurts
stayed up late last night
drank so much can't see straight
my girl and me we just fight
looking out my window
cool grey morning confronts me
a wasted day in sight
eight o'clock i'm leaving
life comes on once more
walking the dog it starts happening
don't know what it is today
leaves in the trees start dancing
perfect calypso beat
squirrel on a fence post
scampers on tiny feet
stands on his hind legs laughing
this it what he had to say

sun come up in the morning
sun go down at night
moon come up in the evening
stars stay by her side
sun come up in the morning
no matter how you don't like it
world keep going around

office on the third floor
whispers a sirens call
can't fall on rocks below
this job is over and over
sometimes it's really worth doing
other days who's wasting my time
counting the click of the keyboard
every character hides the screen
can't think of life depressing
alone in a world of ideas
look out the window to friday
back inside feels like monday
droning away in silence
letters fall in place on wednesday
my head says i'm dreaming
this time its reggae
this is what they say

the Library, collection of recent poems
Damien Gossett

sun come up in the morning
sun go down at night
moon come up in the evening
stars stay by her side
sun come up in the morning
no matter how you don't like it
world keep going around

too much work
to be alone man
too much play
to be a strong man
too much trash
to get along man
too many bosses
to stay man
jump in the car
to get away man
rear view mirror in sight
just pull away man
traffic's stuck on 880
cars start rocking and rolling
thinking this can't be true
moms comes on the radio
this is what she say

sun come up in the morning
sun go down at night
moon come up in the evening
stars stay by her side
sun come up in the morning
no matter how you don't like it
world keep going around

a year later its on now
forgot what was the issue
brushed it off my shoulders
watched it scurry away
take my time in the morning
don't stay up so late at night
spend my time at the gym
my girl and me its better
it all doesn't happen my way

baby boy grown to fifteen
wondering what's the matter
your 360's driving me crazy
he say pops you gotta chill
today it ain't the thirty's
i look at him and smile
thinking it ain't so new
this is what i say

sun come up in the morning
sun go down at night
moon come up in the evening
stars stay by her side
sun come up in the morning
no matter how you don't like it
world keep going around