

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Lee Rossi: Reckonings

Lee Rossi · Thursday, January 31st, 2013

Lee Rossi is the author of *Wheelchair Samurai*. His poems, reviews and interviews have appeared in *The Harvard Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*. He is a staff reviewer and interviewer for the online magazine *Pedestal*.

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## Above and Below

Above, not the wan idolatry of blue,  
but nothing's generous playroom,  
not a lung filled with misgiving,  
but a tourniquet for the bleeding planet.  
Below, gray hills squeeze olive  
and gold from stone, ore into *oro*.  
Water whispers its gentle death sentence  
to lovers of hierarchy. Stand for an instant  
and feel the pull of everything  
you've ever been.

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## The Ex-Boyfriends' Table: An Epithalamion

Like barroom gigolos,  
they sit by themselves, segregated  
by the oddity of their presence  
or else by shame.  
I try not to notice.  
It's hard enough  
to acknowledge that my darling,  
my doe, has not always held me  
dear, has held these guys instead,  
passionately, in rapture and  
the depths of sleep. By way of  
compensation, I survey briefly,  
as Moses might, from a great distance,  
the ladies who have favored me,

*in absentia* all of them, and better that way.

The all-too-fleshly presence of these  
one-time suitors sets me on edge.  
Would that I had an all-but-unstringable  
bow, and the skill to use it!  
But I learned manners  
at my mother's table where  
even the unwelcome guest  
is not turned away. Just then I spy  
my mother, bottle of wedding  
party champagne in hand, pouring  
for the insect repellent heir,  
the software jockey, the hippie  
motorcycle backpacker  
(how not imagine her thighs  
astraddle his thrumming  
engine or the other one  
flogging her down the stretch?!)  
Later I will show her the ways  
of the generous, unjealous male,  
as we slip from sauna to king-size bed,  
so lost in our momentary tangle  
I pray we never come apart.

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## Equals

X meets Y in a bar on Laurel Street,  
a wine bar with an extensive menu  
of eastern Mediterranean dishes,  
some of which X cannot pronounce.  
There are fewer x's in the bar than y's.  
X interprets this mathematically:  
 $X < Y$ .  
X feels like a dickhead or else  
like a butt pilot or maybe like  
an agnostic at a Southern Baptist Convention.  
The only thing he knows for sure  
is that X is not nothing.  
X thinks that Y is possibly a cunt.  
Y might be the Teeth Mother,  
or a disappearing climate zone,  
but she is not, definitely not a cunt.  
If Y is nothing, then X plus Y is just X.  
Once Y was a girl with a piece of writing paper  
resting gently on her palm, moving it  
up and over then over and up,  
her hand a butterfly swooping in a garden.  
Now she is just Y, just as X is just an x,

two variables on either side of an equation.

What operator will join them?

Less than / greater than, they both know  
from experience. Copulation is her investment,  
his technology. Monkey in the tree,  
camel in the needle, can they find  
an equal? Standing on either side  
of the copula, naked as numbers,  
foregoing powers and multipliers,  
only when  $Y = X$   
can they leave the bar together  
making Laurel safe for love.

*We are proud to premiere these poems in this edition.*

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