

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*.

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.

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.

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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