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## Lee Rossi: "Space Walk With Turkeys"

Lee Rossi · Wednesday, May 30th, 2012

Lee Rossi's latest book is *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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## Space Walk With Turkeys

Motel sex, no matter how good with your own wife,
is better with someone else's, the ghosts
of all those horny strangers, a cheering section
of lingering sweetness, infecting the sheets.
30 minutes north of the Johnson Space Center,
I was watching football and thinking of the Mrs.
back home. Outside, the interstate
vibrated with the hum of livestock trailers.
The other woman, angry now, was also out there
in the sauna of South Texas.
I could've followed her but how could I face
the weather, drenching the plains with brutal light.
News flash—guys in spacesuits were performing
an EVA in a giant herd of turkeys.
Some alien strain had gotten into one
and so they all had to die. I turned off the sound
and tried to imagine every inch of the thousand
miles that separated me from my vows,
all the sagebrush and motels,
that turkey farm almost across the road.
I wondered if it would be better to wait
and see which of the offended spouses
would burst through the door
and fill me with enough lead to open
my own ammo dump, or should I stroll
under the overpass to witness the death
of 10,000 innocents,
whether by gas, lethal injection, or machine gun?

Not since Antietam would so many die
so quickly on American soil.
When I was a kid, I fed the chickens—
a lesser species, I'll admit, than the noble turkey—
but they died singly, honorably,
my mother's hands wringing their throats.
Somewhere beneath the sorghum
stretching in every direction, a couple
of Air Force uniforms manned radar & red phones,
the Phi Beta key of destruction dangling from their necks.
Meanwhile their Russian counterparts crouched below
the wheat fields of Ukraine. I was tired
of ignoring them, tired of pretending
that tomorrow I might be alive.
I wanted to say something rude to the hucksters
of honorable death. But this was Texas,
where justice comes flying at you like an ICBM.
I swear, I could almost hear the groan
of those death row turkeys
as they watched their executioners,
men suffocating in rubber suits,
wading across that rapidly evaporating sea of birds.

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