

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## 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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