



Romer

Robert Eastwood

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Inspiration. Elusive stuff. Find it where you can—ideally, not from a bottle. Robert Eastwood found it Dante's *Purgatorio*, and went so far as to use the Italian master's three-line stanzas. Consider us impressed. Twice a Pushcart Prize nominee, his first collection, *Snare*, was published in 2016 by Broadstone Press.

Canto XXIII - Old Poets

While I peered up through that green foliage...

*Romer met a poet who was soon to die.
Her fourteen-line poems, like leaves in autumn,
settled on musty shelves & forgotten.*

*Though her root's been cut, her children
still hear her count feet, thump lines
on the kitchen table's oilcloth.*

*She learned to write sonnets one rainy day
after she'd spanked her daughter
for teasing. Her son had wet his bed.*

*She took a blunt pencil & sought relief from
yowl & din in rhyming & iambic rhythm.
Her mind loved the order of sonnets.*

*The volta with the shock of winter sun.
The painterly accuracy of rhyme.
The gut-satisfaction of an ending couplet.*

*Her friends, the old poets, know the body
follows a willful arc, reverses its reach
one day to a slow curl from the sun.*

*But they believe as well
that poems breathe as live offspring,
they have an iron-sluice of blood.*

*Some poets die young, some live to see
their beloveds go before them.
Some watch their dogs take the circle*

*to death with cavernous eyes, a dun silence—
the quiet way God answers us—embodying
the unsayable each poet would want to write.*

*Her friends gave tribute at her dying—
garments cinched, soft genitals snugged,
toes growing cold—a hum, ice-like,*

constant in their ears.

*A true company,
which cherished holy meld, its unlikely
weld of petals & dough.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (May/June 2018)

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