

Two Poems by Charles Baudelaire

Translated from the French by
[Jennifer Reeser](#) (November 2018)



Portrait of Baudelaire, Emile Deroy, 1844

Neighbor, I Can Still Recall

Neighbor from the village, I can still recall

The white house where we lived, at peace, though it was small;
Its old Pomona, and its Venus effigies
Hiding plaster limbs in puny stands of trees;
The evening sun, magnificent and dripping, too,
Behind the window, where his sheaf was breaking, who
Appeared to contemplate, with great and widened eye,
Our long and silent dinners, from the curious sky,
To spread the lovely light of candles in a swath
Across the drapes of serge and frugal tablecloth.

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville

Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville,
Notre blanche maison, petite mais tranquille;
Sa Pomone de plâtre et sa vieille Vénus
Dans un bosquet chétif cachant leurs membres nus,
Et le soleil, le soir, ruisselant et superbe,
Qui, derrière la vitre où se brisait sa gerbe
Semblait, grand oeil ouvert dans le ciel curieux,
Contempler nos dîners longs et silencieux,
Répandant largement ses beaux reflets de cierge
Sur la nappe frugale et les rideaux de serge.

The Owls

Beneath the shelter of black yews,
The owls keep tidy, each some odd,
Extraordinary, red-eyed god.
With darting looks, they muse.

There they will stand, and never stir,
Until that hour of discontent
In which, the sun pushed at a bent,
The darkness will occur.

Their attitude towards the wise
Communicates necessity
To shun this world's activity,
The fall, the sink, the rise.

The man made drunk by passing traces
Of shadow pays a penalty
For having wanted to trade places.

Les Hiboux

Sous les ifs noirs qui les abritent
Les hiboux se tiennent rangés
Ainsi que des dieux étrangers
Dardant leur oeil rouge. Ils méditent.

Sans remuer ils se tiendront
Jusqu'à l'heure mélancolique
Où, poussant le soleil oblique,
Les ténèbres s'établiront.

Leur attitude au sage enseigne
Qu'il faut en ce monde qu'il craigne
Le tumulte et le mouvement;

L'homme ivre d'une ombre qui passe
Porte toujours le châtiment
D'avoir voulu changer de place.

Jennifer Reeser is the author of five poetry collections. Her sixth, *INDIGENOUS*, is forthcoming from Able Muse Press. Her poems, essays, literary criticism, and translations of French, Russian, Cherokee, and various Native American Indian languages, have appeared in venues including *POETRY*, *The Hudson Review*, *First Things*, *RATTLE*, and the Rockford Institute's *Chronicles*. She has been a regular poetry contributor to William F. Buckley, Jr.'s magazine, *The National Review*,

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