

# 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.

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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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