



Pble MUSE

a review of poetry, prose & art

TRANSLATION

Anthology Issue

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17 summer 2014

Ned Balbo

Adapted from the French of

Charles Baudelaire

1821 – 1897

The Dispossessed

—A variation on Baudelaire's "*La Vie antérieure*"

I had it all. A mansion was my home—
seaside, of course: you should have seen the view,
waves crashing under cliffs, the sky deep blue
at dawn, sun-tinged and endless. Tiresome

with awe, guests wore me out, extolled my taste
in china, cellists, chattel, chef's preserves,
fine wine and art that everyone deserves
but I possessed. *Let everything they praised*

vanish for good! Take it!—but sense prevailed.

Time passed. . . . But on those days I woke in sun
and luxury, I looked past everyone

who labored for my profit yet recoiled
when I drew near, smiling: the squire they tended
dazzling, smug, and easily offended.

Ned Balbo

Adapted from the French of

Charles Baudelaire

1821 – 1897

Don Juan in Hell

—A variation on Baudelaire's "*Don Juan aux enfers*"

Don Juan, it's time. The caverns fill with light—
It's always dim light through which Charon rows,
the quiet water urging you through night
that lasts, and is, forever. Dangling toes

in dreadful waters, women watch from shore.
You knew them: some were suicides for you.
One waves, and smiles. How many nights before
you said you'd meet again—and now, it's true.

The servant, Sganarelle, you never paid
stands with your father, curiously calm,
now recompensed. They're undeceived and dead:
They see through every lie and stratagem

that served you in seduction or betrayal.
Your wife is waiting, too. Don't think she's stood
silent on shore, not sharing every detail—
And yet, to see you here calls back the flood

of hope, desire, and grief that we call Love. . . .

Is it from her you turn away, Don Juan,

or one who runs to greet you, sword in glove—

husband and knight, long-patient murdered man?

Ned Balbo

Adapted from the French of

Charles Baudelaire

1821 – 1897

Winter Bell

—A variation on Baudelaire's "*La Cloche fêlée*"

It's bittersweet on winter nights to listen
to a fire we're certain cannot last.
It twists and tears—but what fuel does it feed on?
Bells toll in fog. This fire contains the past—

Where does it go, set free? Church bells ring praise
to heaven and to anyone who hears,
though one bell's flawed, old veteran who'll raise
his voice to prove there's nothing that he fears.

I'm like that bell, but it's my soul that's flawed—
On nights so cold no sound could fill the void,
whatever cause it damns or celebrates,

my soul is mute, or worse: a cough that fades,
hopeless, half-heard beside a bloody lake
where dead men lie entangled, and I speak.