

LAVENDER REVIEW: LESBIAN POETRY & ART

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Ned Balbo

Bronze Tableau

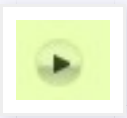
A variation on Valéry's "Viol"

The joke lies in reversal: that the rape
is one that she commits against the boy
abducted, still so young he can't enjoy
her terrifying kisses. For us, the trap

is to believe the lie, the sculptor's wish,
the touch that coaxed these figures out of clay
to make the mold, the hands that fell away
and cast these replicas of naked flesh

in bronze that's centuries old, which we view now.
As staged (the scene suggests), rape augurs love,
desire unleashed—inflamed, devouring—

that's consummated only through some show
of force and eros—if the boy would give
in as he should instead of panicking.



A Giant of Ages Past

A variation on Baudelaire's "La Géante"

I don't know how it happened—if it did—
but when, in some primordial time, I stumbled
on her private beach to find her, head
to toe unclothed, I'm sure I must have trembled

at the sight, excited and afraid:

a woman’s shadow overshadowing all.
Alone and languid, unashamed, she laid
her gentle hand upon me. I stood still—

I must have, out of fear—stroked like a pet;
and then she lifted me to where she let
me wander helplessly over her yielding

lush terrain of flesh, wet sand and salt
of sea abrading skin, her face withholding
some—not every—pleasure that she felt.



Ned Balbo's third book, *The Trials of Edgar Poe and Other Poems* (Story Line Press), was awarded the 2010 Donald Justice Prize by judge A. E. Stallings, and the 2012 Poets’ Prize. His other books are *Lives of the Sleepers* (U. of Notre Dame Press; Ernest Sandeen Prize and ForeWord Book of the Year Gold Medal) and *Galileo's Banquet*. His version of Baudelaire’s “Le Mort Joyeux” is co-winner of the 2013 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, and his variations on the work of French and German language poets are out or forthcoming in *Able Muse*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Evansville Review*, *String Poet*, and *Unsplendid*. He is the May 2013 Poet of the Month at PoetryNet.

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