

also by Beverley Bie Brahic

POETRY

White Sheets

Against Gravity

Unfinished Ode To Mud by Francis Ponge (translation)

The Little Auto by Guillaume Apollinaire (translation)

The Present Hour by Yves Bonnefoy (translation)

The Anchor's Long Chain by Yves Bonnefoy (translation)

SELECTED PROSE TRANSLATIONS

Rue Traversière by Yves Bonnefoy

Twists and Turns in the Heart's Antarctic by Hélène Cixous

Hemlock by Hélène Cixous

Hyperdream by Hélène Cixous

Manhattan by Hélène Cixous

Dream I Tell You by Hélène Cixous

The Day I Wasn't There by Hélène Cixous

Reveries of The Wild Woman by Hélène Cixous

Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a Young Jewish Saint by Hélène Cixous

Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius by Jacques Derrida

This Incredible Need to Believe by Julia Kristeva

OTHER

the eye goes after

(limited edition artist's book of digital images by Susan Cantrick

accompanying twenty poems by Beverley Bie Brahic)

Beverley Bie Brahic

HUNTING THE BOAR

Beditions

for Michel and the kids, with love

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The description of fig tree varieties in 'Two Varieties of Common Figs' was plucked from the website www.galgoni.com/ENG/Fotos_Maxi/016.htm.

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HUNTING THE BOAR

Arrivals

Let's unpack the rental car
we scratched backing into the old stable –
fit for a nag, that door.

Let's make the bed –
here's the wardrobe
lode of sheets that Tantine mended,

drenched in thyme and naphthalene,
darns palpable
as scabs on kids' skinned knees.

Let's drag those chairs out
to the garden, *hortus now conclusus*
figs fermenting in the dirt

(don't for god's sake track them in),

let's ponder dust
on emptied bottles,
maman-belle's unfinished canvas,

the antic anti-heroes – *Tintin, Lucky Luke* –
let's uncork
this green bottle of last year's *Cave Saint Marc*,

and wind the clock
that doesn't work
– but first, come on, I made the bed.

Found, in the Mailbox

'We'll be in Marseilles
when you arrive, but
you know where the key is.
The pears are ripe – eat
or the wasps will:

cup each pear in the palm
of your hand, and squeeze
gently. If it comes
it's ripe. If not, wait
a day and try again.

Don't let them go to waste.'

Continuities: Gifts

Claude pounding on the front door.
Scrabble-board click of the eternal tile
as two by two
you lope downstairs. Key chatter. Hinge grumble.

Claude bagged a blackbird
he's plucked and skewered for lunch
A few eggs from my yard,

*a nugget of black truffle
to perk up your omelet . . .*
Traffic continuo up to the castle

where German soldiers marched
villagers yesterday
years ago the road is dirt

Claude's dad bangs on the door
a bucket of almonds, the wife's Picholine olives . . .
maybe even
a portion of Meleager's boar.

A Recipe

In the XVIIIth century two brothers from Italy, the Picholinis, settled in the Gard region of southern France. They devised a recipe for making green olives fit to eat:

'Pick the olives, still green, in September. Wash them, discarding stems and leaves. Soak them in a solution of ashes and water for 5 or 6 hours; then rinse them morning and night for a week: the water should stay clear for at least 4 hours. Prepare a brine of salt, thyme, rosemary, a bay leaf and some fennel, and strain into an earthenware jar. Add the olives. Wait at least 5 days before eating.'

Hunting the Boar

'He was proud to be a peasant,'
Claude keeps saying.
'He never aspired
to anything else.' With the butt
of his pocket knife
Claude tamps his pipe. This afternoon

they packed his cousin
off to Carpentras hospital,
ambulance's blue light darting
through vineyards and orchards.
'*Come and visit,*
his wife'd say – but I don't know,

him in that chair, the Parkinson's,
do you think he'd want to see me?'
It's New Year's Eve.
Claude's transistor squats
on worn red oilcloth,
a small Bakelite god

coughing up static
pensions, health insurance,
fresh graves in the Balkans.
It could be 1940,
the wireless reassembled
from its cache in the loft,

which still has a stall
for the draft horse, meat,

a row of hutches
for his mother's rabbits, a trap
to let out the ghosts
to graze on the threshing floor.

It could be the year the Germans
herded villagers
to the riverbank, and Louise Raymond,
'the Alsacienne', told them
they had old men; the maquisards
withdrawn to the cave-riddled hills

Petrarch climbed, returning
by moonlight to Malaucène,
'The day was long,
the air was mild, the Alps far off
covered in snow.'
Instead they torched the castle.

It's 1999, President Chirac
on the radio. Wind whines
in a stovepipe elbow,
worries a warp in the shutters.
Claude toasts almonds
from the rickety tree out back

whose white bloom
is winter's wager of spring.
We crack and eat
and listen to the mistral
trying to come in.
Shells mound in front of us.

'Tell us about the boar –'
So Claude lights up, blows
a scrim of smoke: 'We were posted
below the dam,
in Roger's vines. Suddenly
the boar appears – she –

c'est une femelle – stops
and sniffs suspiciously' –
as Claude takes aim
and fires, once. He shows us
the caliber shell. 'A young one
who'd never had babies – !'

His eyes crinkle
like the sparks that leap
from the firebox when you toss in
your handful of shells –
'You'd never believe
how tender her flesh was.'

Shyly he lifts his cap,
rakes his hair back, ducks
down cellar and returns
wiping dust off a bottle:
old wine
to toast the New Year.