August 15th. We’re a ghost town—just us
And the standoffish widow,
Her jangly terrier and vintage Peugeot.

Haven’t seen them street-side in—how long now?
But at bedtime
I see her television screen flicker

And these sultry nights with windows
Open to whatever is out there
Watching with us, and the neighborhood

Quiet as a grave, I can hear the sound—
A dialogue,
One voice quavers, the other threatens.

I can picture my neighbor: spine straight,
Her fingers knit in her lap,
Pooch curled up at her feet . . .

A Western, by the frantic whinnying
And clatter of hooves,
In which Virtue talks back to Villainy,

From a position of weakness
It goes without saying; and her roses
Hold their sweet breath at the window.

—Beverley Bie Brahic
Beverley Bie Brahic’s latest books are *The Hotel Eden* (Carcanet Press) and *Baudelaire: Invitation to the Voyage* (Seagull).