

CAITHLEEN BRADY

Xray

Dedicated to those who are just beginning their fight against breast cancer.

Lumpen,
she shuts both eyes.
Anemones, poppies, sunflowers
blaze and pulse in time
while prudent fingers—
prod and poke—
add only coolness to warmth.

Cinnamon, intimate gloves
come with a deep belly breath.
Scents conflate in earnest competition
and briefly she wonders why
his breath smells of rubber.

Images of closets and drawers
displace the flowered ground.
Now wool and string
and stray paper clips
Cling to hungry lids.

A discarded list of things
to do
A tangible memory of things
undone

laundry
letter to mom
**photos—doubles
iron skirt, blouse
key—Sarah

A rumbling through walls
cause wool to tangle key with clips

again

she coughs
understanding word escaped where key
could not.

Time withdraws and
a violence takes her over
so she counts
to bring it back—
crab apples hurled at fence stumps—
to make it pass.

And it does.
But she keeps counting,
lanky arms wild at her side,
pulp apple yeasty in sunlight,
wood mottled, rich
—generations of young lust.

Sticky fingers squeeze forgotten fruit
and see the mash and pips and tuft of wood.

A heavy weight fastens to her chest
it releases
and comes again.
It is only words.

She collects them with eyes now open
but they overlap and shift
and feed wildly, one on the other.

Empty, but for a
single word.

Body Language

A thickening tongue
fastens flesh to flesh
and mutes
the divisive phonetic rhythms
of my personal alphabet—

a textured and redolent host
bruised and burdened by too much remem-
brance.

Still, there is something sensuous
when weighted body melts
languorous
into silent landscapes.

But even now in this empty heaven
words come

resilient guardians

joining me on this journey that will never bring
me home.

Caithleen Brady lives and writes in Cambridge, England.