

## Equinoctial

When we make love you follow a road across  
my breast and I remember  
the new jaggedly dark path

clear-cutting my mother's right breast. I  
want to turn back more than anything I've wanted before  
this moment. Too many candles illuminate

windy midnight and I translate  
time where she is, the way we measure  
dogs' years as seven times greater than our own —

every minute for her must become seven, she must stretch  
day and night as much as she can now. I can only imagine  
the burgundy sweater with stripes running level

left to right, her favourite pullover  
I bought for Christmas five years ago when  
breast cancer was the sun's declination

we didn't give a second glance to — these days  
the sweater's tone-on-tone chenille stripes collapse  
diagonally across her cut-open chest.

The heart's still there, still whole, I  
assure terrestrial darkness as you kiss where  
mine should respond tonight —

her heart hiding safe from the knife, the bloom that was  
cancering through her body, a body like mine  
during the equinox when we could be anywhere, days and nights

equal, and anything after a bottle of wine, but I'm  
the house I grew up in  
that can't help

watching my mother bathe. Scars  
remind us keep going, don't stop until,  
like the lake just outside, each latitudinal step is sand

with no rocks cutting. I wish  
I could love you — I wish  
she wore the burgundy sweater last week or today

for no reason and not because she's afraid  
of stripes. I wish language were simpler and even more  
I wish the sweater lines went straight

across her chest the way they always did  
rather than, on her right side, down  
towards the earth. I want

her to be the sun's crossing and you and I to be only  
vernal seconds from where life is as we've known it  
and better — water, a temperate climate, and enough

food for forever, but more than anything, I really want forever  
as the length of lovemaking's celestial equator and how long  
my mother is wearing the sweater she chooses.

—Lesley-Anne Bourne

