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For Those Still Living

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For those still living.

It should not be a burden to breathe, and yet...
 some days the down trod,
 the over draft fees,
 the simple drag of getting out of bed,
 yes, we all know,
 so please, open the flood gates
 and let oxygen pour life back in.
 Lovers leave & money & sometimes whole lives,
 but here we are, together.
 Consider the mother of seven,
 left with four,
 one in the cradle
 one bullet hole in the neighbor's floorboards
 a heart attack after the kidney took,
 and a husband passed there too.
 Consider my grandmother,
 dark eyes that constantly look wet,
 fixed on the Sox game,
 trying to look away from what's coming
 for all of us.

Or the 18 year old refugee,
 Congo to Nigeria to South Dakota.
 Imagine the running in her blood.
 Safety taunts her like a school yard bully,
 and the first sunlight cracks open over her
 every morning like gunfire, but
 there, look, the movement of the lungs,
 a hand on her shoulder that wishes
 it was an embryo of healing.
 We all survive something
 if we're still here.
 I don't like to use the word miracle,
 but our language affords us little else
 for the pushing that happens between
 birth and obstacle after obstacle after...
 sometimes it is easy to forget
 that our bodies are the spastic
 joyous noise of sunshine.
 When the suicide note goes to the mortgage company
 and Tuesday morning finds the train cars filled with
 women in tears at the headlines, the grimace glides in
 from all the dark crevices in our marrow

but let us not forget the movement which propels us
 and cease to condemn our own velocities.
 It would be too simple to stuff
 fear like hay in to shirt sacks.
 Scarecrows without mind enough
 to understand how belief is built
 into each and everyone of us.
 In what rubs the nerve endings raw
 and the soft patter of infinite molecules.
 The fingernail tapping at the glass
 of your pulse, it's happening.
 If we did not believe that we were
 congregated and passing
 carbon dioxide amongst us,
 we would be awash on the rocks of
 a sunless place, alone.
 Sometimes we've felt this way,
 the dismal sound of bile in our bellies,
 head empty of all else but ugly
 confusion and I know
 that some of us have been to the edges,
 but now, make a noise, any noise.
 and here, know that you are present
 and accounted for.
 Consider this a sermon,
 and you're the choir,
 and you look great!
 Your fingers are singing!
 and your eyelashes!
 and your voices, please,
 lend them to a simple song,
 don't be bashful.
 Scarecrows and slipper keepers
 let us breathe
 together.

Casey Rocheteau was the 2016 MCTE featured lunch speaker. She was the 2014 winner of the Write A House permanent residency in Detroit. For more of Casey's poetry, or to learn more about Casey, visit caseyrocheteau.org.