For Those Still Living

Casey Rocheteau
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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 per-
manent residency in Detroit. For more of Casey’s poetry, or
to learn more about Casey, visit caseyrocheteau.org.