

JUST BREATHE

A solo scrub-jay perched on a wrinkled orange tree
calls out dawn like nails
on a chalkboard.

I can still remember mornings like symphonies
and plump oranges
on glossy green.

Oakland wakes to a grey brew
of pollution and soot.
My sister can't stop coughing —
A wheeze planted its rusty roots in her
once pink lungs.

Pesticides drift,
settle on a withered hibiscus.
Birds fall, bees die.

Monsanto — Not my saint!
Monsanto dances with the devil
on a bed of crushed wings,
dollars jingling in its pockets.

I recycle, reuse, reduce, but what can I do
to curb corporate cravings
that shoot up towns and rainforests,
greenhouse gases spurting
from exit wounds?

Who would imagine we'd take to the streets and march
for air to breathe
for water to drink?

Thousands strong, our chants rising like ravens, we march
for a future
for this sacred Earth.

We march in the too hot sun
so sweetgrass may always grow.

We march lest we leave our children
a fractured sphere
and to our grandchildren, nothing
but prayers.

by Susana Praver-Pérez