

# Ode to a Crow

*by* AMTL

I.

You watchers of the predawn,  
warming tree branches in late fall,  
calling outside my window,  
“Come and see.  
Come see the moment of gray  
both dark and light forgot,  
the morning's dizzying breath  
that rolls over us like mist,  
the purposeful howling of sirens,  
car tires treading damp streets.  
Come see the world we prey  
upon from red-shingled church tops  
with silent bells —  
they too sleep,  
but to you awake,  
come.”

II.

Winter turned my sheets cold  
fogged my windows  
slammed my wind chimes against my house,  
scattering their music  
to pieces of shell and rope.  
Summer's flame  
smoldered beneath a pile of ash  
then hissed  
as though shocked  
the rain was frozen.

III.

All day the crows circle the city,  
collecting its whispers  
in their shiny black backs,  
wings spread like feathered parachutes.  
I tiptoe outside,  
careful not to make a sound.  
I don't slam the door,  
but the foundation of my house  
trembles.  
The crow,  
into whose otherworldly eye  
I cannot stare,  
caws without invitation.

IV.

There are ghosts inside my chest,  
stuffed in there like a closet.  
They rattle my ribs like prison bars;  
their breath is a flutter at my throat.  
Sometimes they leak out in tears  
or escape in a gasp.  
Drown them drown them drown them  
in rum, flood them out  
at three in the morning  
to ashen glass-eyed faces.  
Circling, the crows  
swooping, the crows  
pluck pieces of my ghosts  
like silver thread  
and swallow them,  
their bellies swelling.  
I think they might burst.

V.

We walk in silence.

We water our plants.  
We don't eat as well as we should.  
We try to love.  
We try to forget.  
When someone looks us in the eye,  
we glance away.

VI.

The crow's cry bends  
like a tree branch cased in ice  
down to touch the earth.  
The crow knows —  
he rattles  
it from rooftops.

