

CROWS

Crows startle the clouds
with grievances never resolved
and warnings blurted into thin air.

Once in a while, the cries of all those who tried to survive
pour from the funnels of their throats.
No wonder we never really listen.

Like most animals, crows tell the truth:
working hard to penetrate our tiny tubular ears,
they cackle on telephone lines while we watch TV.

Once I did listen to a crow, but even when I had heard
his whole story, there was nothing I could do.
Next, I thought, I'd have to listen to squirrels and coyotes.

I like to think I deal with my share of rotten truths
but I couldn't bear to kneel down in damp grass
and listen to the hedgehog or the mole.

- Judith Barrington from *Long Love:
New & Selected Poems 1985 – 2017*
(Salmon Poetry, 2018)