

THE CROWS

Lord, when the meadow has gone cold,
When in tumbledown hamlets,
The languid Angelus no longer tolls...
Over nature bereft of blooms,
Make the crows, my darlings and delights,
Swoop down from soaring heights.

Strange army with such austere cries,
The bitter winds your nest attack!
You, along the rivers' yellowed track,
Across roads with an old wayside cross,
Across pits, above trenched ground,
Scatter and rally wheeling round!

By the thousands, over the fields of France,
Where the dead of yesterday sleep,
Whirl round, won't you, in wintry noise,
So that each passer-by may remember!
Be, then, our call-to-arms,
O dear funereal black bird!

But saints of heaven, at the high oak top,
Flagpole lost in the magic evening's close,
Forsake May's warblers, turn to those
Who in the wood's deep places stop,
In grass from which there is no retreat,
Chained in a futureless defeat.

Arthur Rimbaud, from *Premiers Vers* (1870-1872)

Translated by Salvador Ortiz-Carboneres