

## C. R. Gardener – A Murder of Crows Artist Statement

I floated the idea of putting an ‘unfinished story’ into the International Woman’s Day NEA exhibition and was greeted with the response of ‘absolutely’ and ‘you could put it in and then finish it for the 2021 exhibition’.

So, if I was going to finish it for March 2021, then I would have to pick something that I could actually feasibly finish in time for next year!

I didn’t have to think or search too hard through my unfinished manuscripts to find *A Murder of Crows*. Being as I file things alphabetically, it was near the top.

I started *A Murder of Crows* in 2016 using the prompt ‘Death to All Humans’ as my starting point. What story could I write with this theme? Did I really want to kill all the humans? Below are the various ideas that began swirling around in my tumultuous mind.

- People destroy people, environments and wildlife.
- What does the wildlife of this world think of humans? Would they consider humanity a virus that needs to be destroyed? There are times when I feel hard pressed to disagree!
- The sadness and anger I’ve felt at what my/our ancestors did to the indigenous peoples wherever white man appeared. How terribly we treated them, exploiting them for our own gain, and the horror I feel at knowing this still happens and the despair I feel at knowing that I too, with my ‘western lifestyle’ are part of the cause.
- How annoyed I get when the “civilised” west throws its morality around, using it as the reason to go to war against them, but when you look at this history, it was generally “us” who caused the problems in the first place...
- The anger I feel at the wars we fight in far off countries under the pretence of helping them and freeing them from the oppressors, when the reality is we’re only there because of the resources we want access to
- The horror I feel at how casually we destroy the homes and lives of the innocent and the terrible destruction we cause.
- Which flows on to my anger at how we treat the refugees fleeing war and terror and coming to us for help and protection, especially when it is our actions that have forced them from their homes in the first place!
- My concern at how much of human industry is detrimental to the environment and the people, but it doesn’t matter as long as a profit is being made.
- Questions I have about how we do our darndest to extend life, but treat people like trash, especially if they are different to us!
- How a flock of crows or ravens is known as a murder. How cool is that?
- Could a murder of crows murder all humans? What kind of story would that be? But then, they are evil, they hang around with witches and frequent places of death and decay.
- The fascination I have with myth and mythology and the part crows and ravens play. And how wonderfully intelligent these beautiful birds are – when you drive along the road you are far more likely to see bodies of other birds, but a crow or a raven is unusual.

And that is how, with a reasonable amount of research, that the story *A Murder of Crows* started to take form over a few months in 2016. Why haven’t I finished it? To be honest, I can’t remember why... it was four years ago. Partly it is because I have several projects on the go at once and hop from one to another as the mood and inspiration takes me, as well as a needy family, the inability of saying no to new projects, things and events, a collection of animals that need looking after, a small “farm”...