

## **Parakeets, Longford Park**

No need to ask if they are here,  
they screech their presence across the park,  
compete with skidding skateboards on concave, concrete slopes,  
and the grey roar of city roads ribboning-in this green space.  
Under the willow's beaded-lampshade cascade,  
flitting acid-green feathers skittish through the weeping leaves.

Soon their screams seem to echo:  
“non-native species,” “invasive,” “threats to local birds.”  
Some words we've heard in different contexts,  
of others also seen as strangers.

They never asked to be so far away from home,  
in the exact middle of a temperate land.  
So, at 35 degrees - sweltering for humans without a breeze -  
they bask, and squark at us, a climate tease.

Ali Rowland

## **Our Dog and the Rook, War Memorial Park**

He only goes playfully towards the bird,  
not knowing it is young, defenceless.  
It makes a desperate noise, tiny but shrill.  
We are in the wooded part, trees surround us.

The fledgling's defenders arrive without pause,  
shriek for their little one, encircle it, while it escapes,  
following their dark wings, out-embraced.  
He looks confused at us.

We make for the open green space,  
but two of the pack are back,  
giving chase, after our boy.  
The parliament has judged him.  
We all gather pace,  
the sound and dark flaps alarming him,  
we wave our arms to cover him,  
but they take turns to dive low,  
as if to peck the shining fur,  
heedless of our defences.

Even when he's in the boot,  
they perch on the high car-park lights,  
still loud in their complaint of us.  
Their menace and their pace has made us breathless, on alert.  
Such is the price for invading another's space.

Ali Rowland