

# CORVID MUG

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Like many, I have a fascination with corvids. Wikipedia describes them as a “cosmopolitan family”—what a great phrase!—that includes crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, jays, magpies, treepies, choughs, and nutcrackers. How can a writer not love such naming?

We have both crows and ravens nearby, and sometimes we get the treat of a trio riding the updrafts in a wide-wing ballet or a large-bodied raven spiked atop a cupola calling out in syllables of caw.

I have a couple of coffee mugs from the now-defunct Monroe Salt Works of Monroe, Maine, spring-mud-brown in color with their distinctive salt glaze and, burned in, a silhouette of a crow sitting on top of corn cob.

I like to think the combo of corvid and coffee is potent and protective.

In fact, I think that must be true because one of the larger mugs has a hairline crack on the outside and inside. I can’t tell if the crack runs through the side of the mug or is just a splitting of the glaze on both sides, but so far, the mug has held up through repeated heatings and coolings and washings and bumpings.

Why do I keep using the mug? Why not? If it breaks, it breaks. But if it breaks, I want it to break in a way that I can repair, so that I can have the honor of saying that I have mended the broken, I have not disposed of the disposable, that I have helped hold back for a moment an iota of entropy and the dissolving of the world.

Because, frankly, the mug also reminds me of myself—aging with fissures and doing what I can to keep things intact through my repeated heatings and coolings and washings and bumpings, keeping a close eye on dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.

What a rickety, rickety system we sport—no wonder we want titanium exoskeletons to relieve our jury-rigged bone-bucket from the pull of gravity and the pelting of the world.

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But then there is that black corvid blazened into the salt glaze—inquisitor of the world, unknotter of problems, rider of thermals, dark heart of dark tales, trickster creator. Take heart from that, I think as I drink. I must take heart from that, I think, or else all in me on the verge of dying (as it is always on the verge of dying) will die—life now is as much the careful shepherding of the fine crack as it is the exuberant pouring-in and downing and quickening of the morning's dark heat.

Each morning the mug and I face the challenge together. Crack? Still sealed. Coffee? The aromatic volatiles do their work. Words? Still coming, still good—life still has meaning, with trickster and thermals at full throttle.