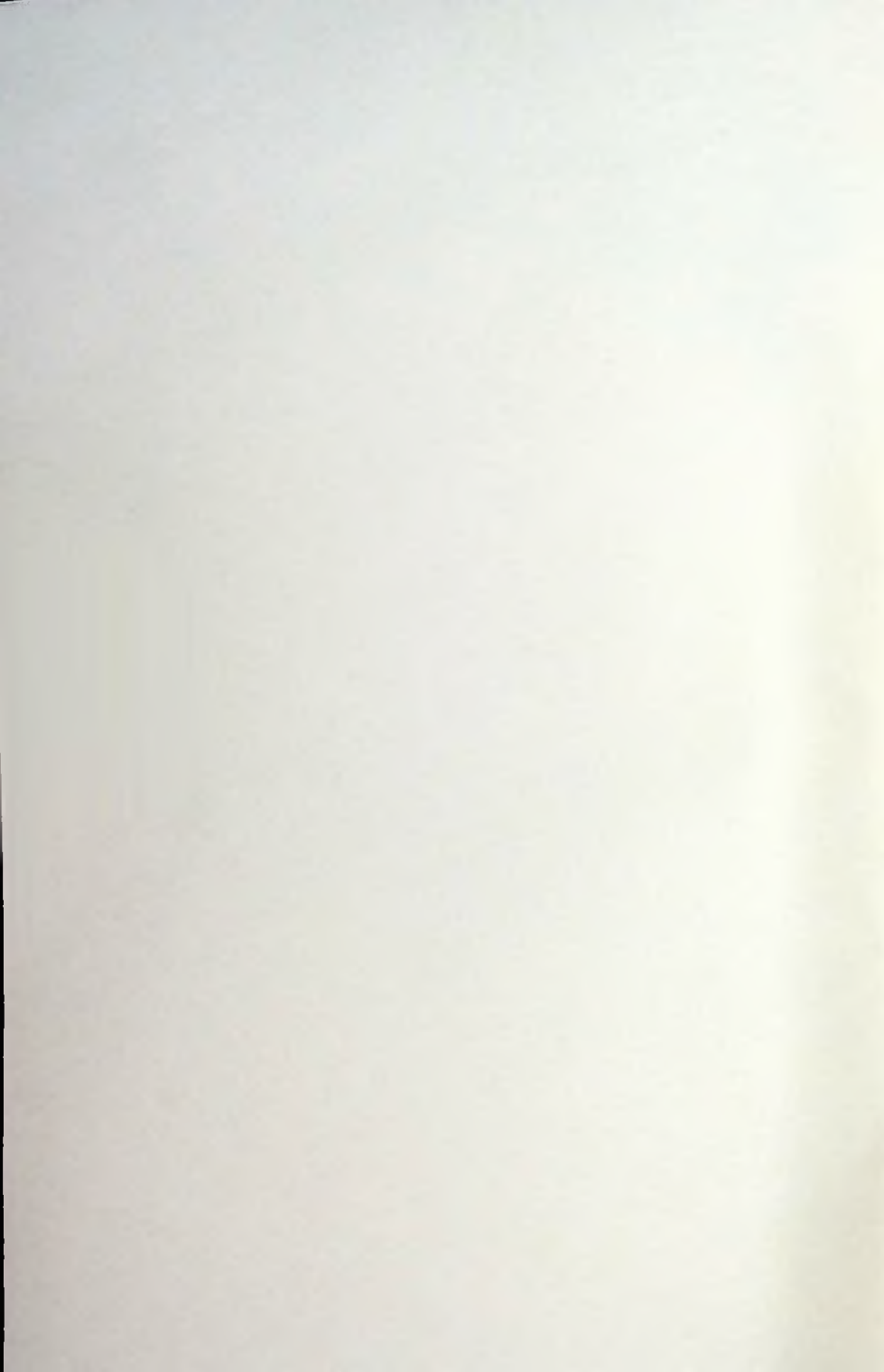


BIRD QUIET

Ronald Baatz





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Ronald Baatz

For
Jim

Ronald

Yggdrasil Press
Troy, NY

RONALD BAATZ is the author of many books of poetry, including: Afternoon Plums Rising, Bird Effort, In a Clay Pig's Eye, On the Back Porch, The Elephants and Everybody Else, White Tulips, Devouring Birds, Bird Shadow, Lucky So Beautiful and Snow Tea

baatzu555@gmail.com

for William "Dew" Campion

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
5708 SOUTH ELLIS AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

REPORT OF THE DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Dawn
of ants
in sink

Sheep-
some mornings I wake
counting them

Filling this house without walls
the aroma of steamed
mustard greens

Swarm of black flies-
one with a
missing eye

Oh such a long drive
to the cricket farm
on such a muddy road

Old man ironing pants-
knuckles look as though
pulled out of the ground

At my most ambitious
shaving a peach with
knife and hot butter

Still with me-
the last songs heard
before leaving the sanctuary

Children
like to talk to bugs that
look like poets

Sunlight leaving the porch-
I pick tiny thorns
from her sweater

Prophesizing
the pleasures of evening-
the robin takes more time than usual

My unfinished memoirs
picked apart by nesting mice-
who cares

Twilight-
fleas chewing on
the last of sunlight

With another woman
enjoying the wonders
of the Ferris wheel

Kitchen empty
except for some
moonlit bananas

Rowing across the lake-
at the bottom of the boat
a small fire to keep me warm

In desert and bed
in idleness and passion
be poised be teeth be tiger be lily

Reading newspapers in old age-
just a habit leftover from when
the world knew I was here

What a day!
listen to how loud
those dead leaves are

Lingering perfume
and maybe a bug
bugging a bulb

Sugary abyss
of winter stars-
the smallness of her hands

Ants dream of the stars on their way
stars dream of the ants in their hills
both dream in darkness

Bad night's sleep
which I take out to the back field
to feed to morning's wild clouds

From a monk's deathbed
one last haiku
one with powdery wings

Necklace of
black ink birds which
she shouldn't have worn in the rain

Adopted cat
pawing a
purse

Wet hills-
this drizzly chilly evening
of no ants

Standing on the roof
I can see as far as
the crowded cemetery

Candle in the shape of the Buddha-
breeze messing with
the flame on its head

Perhaps her ravishing calmness
was to be expected-
my bicycle leaning in the rain

Silk pajamas-
little by little having
dreams of their own

No rain-
bird bath like
a begging bowl

Mattress stuffed with branches-
what is there to do but drink the gin
the landlord left in the barn

Morning finally grows near
but first
dawn's yawning flies

Let your spoken existence
be in accord with the
worm's vow of silence

At breakfast
telling stories about
an emotional farmer

Eyes closed-
she buttons my coat
lips pressed fully against mine

Monday-
the shadow
of cold milk

Moon slowly crumbling
and that mosquito
it looks as though it's on crutches

A bend in the silent river
where fish weep
for their missing

Those ants-
they look as though they are walking
through the silence of a flute

Toothless pudding-
the way pudding
is supposed to be

All that rain brought in by the dog-
such a burden for an animal
so along in years

I feel like every idiot and beggar
I see in the streets today
but they want nothing to do with me

What better way
to end a parade than with
an ice cream truck

Among loitering birds
a small house swaying
in the breeze

Empty boat
drifting away from the shore-
I bump into a child

Avoid all Japanese proverbs
that fall like monkeys
from trees

Early morning-
some blue jay with a stick up its ass
wakes me

Cat never goes out in fog
as though it were afraid of
a softness greater than its own

Firmly grabbing the rope
and madly swinging from it
but not getting the bell to ring

Invisible fly
dreaming of buzzing
as loud as invisible thunder

Kneeling woman-
old eyelids
translucent

Bugs
staring at the sun
ignoring me

Other languages
carrying tongues
from other cages

The great shadow
of a watermelon
just as sweet and just as wet

Crossing the bed
the fragrance of
her crouching pussy

Doll creations
boneless and swimming
in dirty bathwater

My hands holding leaves-
exchanging
veins

Oh sacred beautiful dark-
I piss
in your night

Evening rain
writes its own haiku
in a spoonful of dust

Walking on dead grass
like walking on holy relics
and breaking them

Elephant among the ants
rain making them
all blink

Mourning precisely
what evening's birds
suggest I mourn

In this small motel room
whatever is that mosquito going to do
with my blood?

Lightning
looking for the dirt roads
the boys made under the porch

Skipping sorrows
across the cold pond
before going in for the night

Unbewildered fish
swimming to a piano lesson
above the cat's sleeping world

Dawn-
little pagans
coming for seeds

Having strayed far from the house
the dog returns with fleas
that are strangers to us

A cave deep in her heart
where I find paintings
of wounded animals

After telling my mother she can die
I see one of her fingers
jump

Countless hidden
shivering little heavens
in that sparrow's chest

Like monkeys scared of a big black cat
mourners scurry
to get out of the rain

My soul baggy now
like pants worn by a buffalo
long roaming the earth

As though sympathetic to dead leaves-
falling snow
turning to ashes

Just before the new year
the mimosa bush bursts into flames-
another source of haiku gone for good

Warring ants
miss a cloud
giving birth

Some of my mother's ashes
spread over the grave of
the dog she made fat

Whereas I have sinned
with gladness and dance
from plum to plum

Time running out-
I read only those poets
I'm already familiar with

Better when I was alone and miserable-
now my love for you
has me fearing death

As I play the melody
slowly as it can be played
it starts snowing out

Twilight tip-toes past the bedroom-
my overcoat will
outlive me

To amuse
the ghosts of loved ones
I stand on my head in deep snow

Flight of owl
so close to snow
wings leave tracks

Briefly together
they sang longingly-
my soul and my soul's shadow

Remembering all the birds
buried in the yard
I close the back door

In your
deepest sorrows
breathe deeply in

I spit in death's face
it spits in mine
its spit is sweeter

Like socks
prayers rolled up in balls
waiting to be said

Lavish kisses
of goldfish
wasted

With particular intimacies
which perhaps are even
less durable

A breeze more delicate
than the leaves will
ever remember

Worthless rain
falling in the boat
the lake around me on fire

Flowers grow old
and most never hear
the sound of a trumpet

It feels good going home
after standing on the bridge all day
in cold shoes

Before the fog lifts
sparrows like penniless children
hiding

An ant walking in circles
carrying something
with wings

A turbulent whisper-
the last prayer said in
the shadows of thin dogs

Modest seasons-
not like in childhood when
the seasons confessed everything

Rotting flowers
which I finally walk away from-
death is just another dream

Feeding crows
my old mother walks on snow
as though on water

I will miss the peonies
their fat shadows
the dew

Bird quiet
as a dead leaf
in a snowy tree



colophon

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ronald Baatz', followed by a long horizontal flourish line extending to the right.

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