Bird Effort

RONALD BAATZ

KAMINI PRESS

FOR
JIM
WITH
GRATITUDE

RONALD

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RONALD BAATZ

Ronald Baatz lives and works
in New York, in the foothills of
the Catskills.

for Debo

Where the stream overflowed
the long grass
is combed close to the earth

You sing to the bird in me
I sing to the bird in you–
an effort
we love to face
each dawn

Bad enough
sleep is so difficult
now dreams of my dead father
have come to
spend the winter

O lord
let me
stay drunk somehow
without all this drinking
now and forever, amen

Winter sun
or is that the moon
or is my brain
just turning into
an old melon?

Crows in fog–
their backs turned to me
ignoring me as though
I were just another
leafless birch tree

Leave me bread
at least a few slices
leave me your voice
at least a few words
to go with the bread

Snow this morning
when I part the curtains
after getting out of bed
one rib
at a time

To hold
winter's white shoulders
is to realize
just how beautiful and cold
they really are

Old three-legged dog
chasing after
a winter sun
that's cold and
hobbling on one leg

A bitter wind
coming up the road–
the same road I use
when coming home
late at night

As though miraculously
fattened on frost–
the sparrow that lands
in the gray
apple tree

February wind–
it seems to know
how to work
the zipper
on my pants

Don't dog
don't go dying on me
don't go dying
on this cold day
in this field hard as rock

Through leafless birches
the rising cold white sun–
if it had petals
they'd be
falling

Dawn–
and already I feel
the need for wine
to soften the blow
of twilight

Finally
winter is losing its grip–
in my sleep
I hear the pond's spine
cracking

Receiver
hanging off the hook
in a phone booth
hanging off
the earth

Digging
her canary's grave
she catches the reflection
of lovely orange feathers
in the spoon

The old die old
sometimes the young
die young
and the little we know
the harsh winds blow

Even if it takes
carving wooden ants
thousands of them
taking me all summer long
just to impress you

You can't even begin to
discourage those tiny flies
from walking
on our melon's
sweet water

Unwritten poems–
so many of them
hanging like bats
inside the darkness
of me

On a gorgeous summer's day
I walk between the dark shelves–
all the books in the library
smelling like
old girlfriends

Her bones like
the bones of a sparrow–
my mother rakes where
the hothouse used to be
when my father was alive

That is not
a little god
hanging there
it is a light bulb
naked and burning

In the middle of the night
I come upon loneliness
in the kitchen
eating the last
of the expensive liverwurst

So much light
so much darkness–
the earth crying out
like a clarinet
left behind

Being an insomniac
has made me an expert
in psychological time
the sound of rain
old proverbs

I cry
we all cry
we all cry
because we all die
much like the summer fly

Blue wildflowers–
perhaps part
of my blue period
which so far
is lasting a lifetime

The wind–
the only messenger
to make it this far
and now drunk
in the willows

Orange peels–
the shadows of them
as I remember
the shadows of them
curling in childhood

I thought with age
I'd develop a hard shell–
instead I've grown feathers
that are soft and yellow and
prone to falling out

Wild roses loving the earth
longing to roam the earth–
she remembers
picking cotton
for her doll's pillow

When I am
ancient and crazy
and birds have lost fear of me
and ants pick up my rocker
and carry me to the hill

Hammered all night
by the rain–
in the morning
the bicycle is
a shiny stranger

Dogs chase pigs
pigs chase dogs–
the pussy willows
going nowhere
in ecstasy

Overnight my eyes grow old–
first women comment on them
then men do
then evening's
last bird

They come back in dreams–
the dead and those
who are just gone
gone from your life
you gone from theirs

I have to play
like a child
stay outside
like a dragonfly
drink like a fish

After scrabble in bed
I see a vowel
stuck to her tailbone
as she turns to sleep
facing the wall

So many crows–
as though the earth
is turning black
from so many bones
buried in it

Can't blame the crickets
for crying out hour after hour–
summer having lied about
how long
it'd stay

The stars over the lake
so old and brittle looking–
I stop rowing, rest my back
and think of how soft
my ashes will be

The dog–
i wish i could be that happy
just being let in

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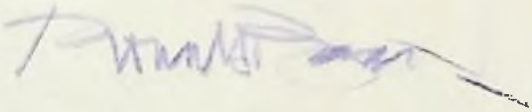

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