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Along Erie Canal

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Along Erie Canal



Dr. Nicolae Babuts is an Associate Professor of French and Associate Chairman in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Syracuse University. His articles on Baudelaire have been published in the United States and France. Currently he is doing research in literary criticism. Poems by Dr. Babuts have been accepted for *Blue Unicorn* and *Poet Lore*.

Killdeer take note of my walk in the path,
 But pretend to have other things on their minds.
 They'd deny they have seen you,
 And it's your word against theirs.
 Reluctantly they stretch their pride,
 Take wing and let me briefly see
 Their rings, their golden skirts.
 Juggler of the high maple, a cardinal begins
 With two long whistles;
 Then, his profile rippling in the sun,
 He tosses his notes with urgency,
 As if his life depended on it,
 One after another till the air is brimming over,
 And drained he comes to a paid-up halt.
 Pause. The foliage hides his timing.
 Suddenly a change of heart, a mistrust,
 Makes him lift his wings, cut short the act.
 A cantankerous gull grips the vault
 With her prolonged, frosty catmeowing.
 A crow strives against a stubborn breeze;
 His dark bobbing signal flares
 With far-flung memories of wild geese.
 I am now a man with a walking stick
 Poking his way on the return path
 To the rehearsal stage of paradise.
 A lowly song sparrow nestles fearfully
 Among the shrubs of the stony bank.
 When I steal closer he gives up,
 Skims away across the water.
 A few blundering steps farther
 The same huddling among dead branches,
 The same sleight of wing,
 The same skimming.
 Another and another . . .
 This is how the first children must have learned
 How to perform feats of counting,
 How to tell fear.

—Nicolae Babuts