



The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans

Bill Knott

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Author : Bill Knott

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From Reader Review The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans for online ebook

Ryan Broughman says

I turned the page to read the next poem to find a blank page, and then another and I experienced a longing for more in the realization that I so casually experienced the last. The unwanted finality of the last interaction with the living settling in upon news of their death.

An exceptional poet whose voice was a haunting ghost in life and is still there "under our closed eyes growing black..."

DCW says

The book reminded me of how great short poems can be. Saint Geraud is fearless and writes his own page. He gets poems to talk to each other, mocks titles, and never resists falling in and out of sense as it pleases him. I respect that a lot. While a few of his poems stand out for me, to be honest he felt stuck under the shadows of Ginsberg and the tropes of the 60s and 70s.

His obsession with Naomi is a pretty flat premise that does not sustain the work. I couldn't care less, despite his LSD hair and blood insistence that I should. His topics and handling of them were pretty dull, though his line is good.

I'd read After the Burial 20 times and leave the rest.

Larry says

When this book was first published in 1968, it knocked my English major socks off. Some of the short poems are still spectacular, but the anti-Vietnam War poems that were then so compelling now seem dated. Nonetheless, it's still a marvelous collection.

Daniel Crowley says

This is one of the most electric books I've read.

Zach says

The best of Knott? Sooooo good.

Vicky says

good stuff, man, good stuff

"

To read the future,
gaze in your future asshole

"

and

"

GOODBYE

If you are still alive
when you read this,
close your eyes. I am
under their lids, growing black

"

Chezzie says

The two stamps on the envelope says that I was the first person to check this book outta the school library since 22 May 1972. It's believable in the envelope itself, the absolutely ancient dried glue of which quickly let it come detached.

It's apparent in many of these poems that this Saint Geraud (aka Bill Knott) was quite opinionated about the Vietnam war. If that was my era I think it would have had a bigger impact, but it wasn't. I still really like how he wasn't afraid of being crude or brusque. His writing has an edge.

tortoise dreams says

The first book by American poet Bill Knott (1940-2014).

The Fall 1966 edition of Epoch, Cornell University's literary magazine, announced, with black borders, "the death by suicide on March 2, 1966," of "St. Giraud [sic] (the pen-name of William Knott)." The announcement mentioned that the suicide note stated that he had killed himself because "I am a virgin ... No girl has ever returned my love ... I am already dead of starvation." The announcement also noted that St. Giraud's literary executor had "edited a posthumous volume of the ... poet's work for publication." Under the heading, "Some Posthumous Poems of St. Geraud," Epoch published a generous 25 poems. Some of those poems appear in The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans, published in 1968 as by "Saint Geraud (1940-1966)." St. Geraud was indeed the pseudonym of Bill Knott, and his next three books, Aurealism (1970), Auto-Necrophilia (1971), and Nights of Naomi (1972), were published as by "Bill Knott (1940-

1966)." At least by 1976 he had stopped appending the dates "(1940-1966)" to his name. For, in fact, it was all a surreal hoax and there was no suicide and neither St. Geraud nor Bill Knott had died in 1966. As noted above, Bill Knott died a couple of years ago in 2014. This was his first book, published in 1968. The Naomi Poems is very much a product of its time, the author rages repeatedly against the early specter (much worse was to come) of the Vietnam War, but it is also timeless in its love poems and moments of wisdom, tenderness, and genuine sentiment:

Your eyelashes are a narcotic.

Many of the poems are quite short, and I believe these are the most successful pieces:

The only response
to a child's grave is
to lie down before it and play dead

There are also longer poems, which tend to embrace a more surreal, angry, political, and contemporary feel. There are poems of "sleep, death, desire," but also vulgar and iconoclastic poems. He will condemn other poets as defending the War, and write the least "poetic" poems possible:

To read the future, gaze into your crystal asshole.

No rules or manners prevent him from saying his piece. Even the poems that may not work well, still work because of their reach, because they tried and if they failed on some level they failed gloriously. And even the poems that seem opaque (my personal adversary), I trust in Knott that they are not simply words thrown together, but do contain a deeper meaning capable of discovery. He works that hard at his poems. There are three themes that arise and explode throughout: there is the political, the world created by the war in Vietnam; there is death, whether from Knott's childhood as an orphan or the war, or both, death is a constant refrain; there is Naomi, his muse, his love, both real and fantasy at the same time. This is a passionate and striking book, incredible that it could've been written in 1966, and also inevitable that it was written in 1966. In later years, Bill Knott made all his work available for free on the internet, where I believe it may all still be found. [5 Stars]

Helly says

Love Bill Knott...brilliant poet.

Bill Kerwin says

"A good poet is someone who manages, in a lifetime of standing out in thunderstorms, to be struck by lightning five or six times; a dozen or two dozen times and he is great." —Randall Jarrell

"If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These

are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?" —Emily Dickinson

These are two of my favorite statements about poetry, and, if they are any guide, Bill Knott's *The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans* deserves to be considered as a first-class book. Sure, the contents are uneven (the longer the poem, the weaker it seems to be), the presentation is sensational (Knott claims the poems were written by "St. Geraud," whom he describes as "a virgin and a suicide"), but lightning strikes here, the top of the reader's head is taken off, *at least six, maybe a dozen times* in the sixty page book. They are almost all *small* lightning strikes (I mean the poems are short), but they are real, devastating lightning strikes nonetheless.

Here are six of my favorite lightning strikes. Get the book and find some of your own:

POEM for Maria Helz

*When our hands are alone,
they open, like faces.
There is no shore
to their opening.*

* * * * *

GOODBYE

*if you are alive when you read this,
close your eyes. I am
under their lids, growing black.*

* * * * *

POEM

*The only response
to a child's grave is
to lie down before it and play dead*

* * * * *

AFTER THE BURIAL

After the burial I alone stood by till a workman came to shovel the dirt back into the hole. There was some left over, the dirt she'd displaced, and they wheeled it off. Drawn, not knowing why, I followed at a distance. Coming to a small backlot, they dumped it, then left. I walked over. It made a small mound. And all around her, similar mounds. Pure cones of joy! First gifts from the dead! I fell to my knees before it, and fell forward on my hands into it . . . to the elbows, like washwater. . . . For the first time, I became empty enough to cry for her.

* * * * *

DEATH

*Going to sleep, I cross my hands on my chest.
They will place my hands like this.
It will look as though I am flying into myself.*

* * * *

SLEEP

*We brush the other, invisible moon.
Its caves come out and carry us inside.*
