

self / failed" (359). And a line in *Love & Fame* (from *Purgatory*): "And if *you* can carry on *so*, so maybe can I."

Other quotations from this dear and masterly poet flood to our badly needed comfort now. "I hope that in my dying hour / nobody will be ashamed of me." (No. Proud, grateful, filled with wonder.) "Henry must desire / aplomb / at the temps / of the tomb." (He waved—"a final jauntiness in despair, an act of style," John Ciardi called it.) The last line of the last poem in this last book (Berryman as King David) reads: "All the black same I dance my blue head off."

WILLIAM MEREDITH

## DEADLY MOMENTS

*Auto-Necrophilia*, Bill Knott. Big Table. \$4.95.

Legend may, after all, be correct for one time and attribute the beginnings of the Aurealism Poetry movement to when Bill Knott said something to someone and received the reply, "Oh, really?" There is no depth to Knott's disguises. His poetry is a costume that momentarily covers the naked limbs of disappointment. But by disappointment, I mean in fact an unending skein of negative emotions.

Thus, he is also the founder of the Posthumous Poetry School and the author of *Auto-Necrophilia* in which the poem *Whimsical Tears or? the Theory of Posthumous Poetry* explains "I invented a new school of poetry which I shall call 'posthumous poetry' / But I gave it up it was too / Boring and reminded me of a woman I'd met once / Screeching love . . ."

The poems are askew even when beautiful. They move against the grain of expectation. Something is always palpably wrong about the images or transitions. A great sorrow is disguised, but we sense that it is a disguise because no loyalty to the disguise—the metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech—is shown.

## WE CAN LIVE HERE CRISTINA

A breechbirth of the waves raises the tiara of dreams  
From the blindfolded precipice your hands  
Lit by aurealism calm the shore  
When the sweat booms we'll be there

You slash your throat with a butterfly  
Which is the face

POETRY

Carefully tattooed around love's  
Wounds to bathe you in a poisoned windshield garden

Seas surround you and murmur your pores  
Your divining-ray goes crazy  
This last word  
Has been overgrown by the bones of your handkerchief

And despite all of Knott's clowning, the reader knows that he is serious. I believe that the authority of Knott's voice stems from the way he treats adversity as a gift. Events take place to him, and throughout their course he is more passive, more neutral than language allows us to define. His presence is that of *another* who takes part by encouraging others to inflict more damage. The person who receives the injury, Knott himself, does not, in the sense that we understand existence, still exist.

One whole poem is a reference to a blank page in another poet's book. The inference is private: Knott once told us that the other poet, a woman, had never displayed her affection for him, and the proof of that was the complete absence of references to him in her book.

Knott claims to have died in 1966. More accurately he undertook a suicide of his will. Afterward he joined the side of his tormentors.

TO MY ENEMIES

I will ruin you  
By leaving my fingerprints  
On all your crimes

Or the lines "Love, my everybody, / Dying in attempt to embrace the wakes of ourselves in each other . . ."

In his commitment, Knott is as serious as a child. His handling of language has a child's intensity of effort; it ignores the precedences of usage: "Your rapturous disembody," "lyrical tremens," "In broad dream she crosses to you," "Into your clairbuoyant eyes," "You speak Babeloins," and "Loving you for the foreverth time."

Beyond that point Knott has not strayed. How can he? After one's own funeral where, indeed, can we go?

WILLIAM HUNT