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Corpse and Beans, or What Is Poetry?

Bill Knott

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THE UNIVERSITY ABANDONED OVERNIGHT

This is the university abandoned overnight.
A few years ago they all left one night, students,
Faculty, administration. No-one knows why,
And it has remained a mystery. People
Keep away, with rumors of being haunted, et cetera.
I like to walk here at night,
The complete echoes between the science plaza,
The practice-fields, dormitories, classrooms, the millions
Of books in perfect alphabetical
Order. Everything is intact and repastful. This
Could be the night before the night they left.
I keep walking,
Maybe I was a student or teacher here but it doesn't matter.
Memories, even if true, would be out of place here.
This is the university abandoned overnight,
A perfected and necessary legend.

CORPSE AND BEANS, OR WHAT IS POETRY?

I sit at my table and sometimes the question of poetry crosses
my mind
For example
    The man who one night ate a big plate of beans
Then got tired
    Of everything and killed himself
Next day at the burial
Everyone said, What's that noise?
Was it poetry?

28  Bill Knott (1940-1966)