

written his first novel for Black Sparrow, *Post Office*.

Many know Bukowski only as the screenwriter for *Barfly*, a film that misfired as often as it connected. (More interesting is Bukowski's novel, *Hollywood*, an account of the deal-making and production that went into making of the film). For the uninitiated, I'd recommend *Burning In Water Drowning In Flame Selected Poems 1955-1973*, and the novel *Factotum*, an account of a string of terrible jobs broken only by benders and unemployment. This subject matter, in most writers' hands, would founder in self-pity and unrelenting despair. But Bukowski, through resilience and humor, is transcendent. He manages to hold the high moral ground — clad only in soiled boxer shorts, drunk on cheap wine, smoking a cigarette from a pack swiped from the dash of a parked car.

*we have everything and we have
nothing —
days with glass edges and the
impossible stink
of river moss — worse than shit;
checkerboard days of moves and
countermoves.*

For all the contempt for society that Bukowski's work expresses there is an obvious love for others — those who haven't succumbed to mediocrity, numbness, or cruelty. A love for the natural world — whether it's the sun, the moment of soaping a woman's belly in the shower, or the sight of a cat crawling under a car with a mockingbird in its mouth to 'bargain it to another place.' In his later work there is less lyricism but there is also less

anger and more subtlety. Like an experienced boxer, he slips punches and conserves his strength. He's exhausted the raw material of his past and has turned to the metaphysical:

*and then
as I look up
and into
the kitchen
I see a bright
portion
under the overhead
light*

*that shades into
darkness
and then into darker
darkness and
I can't see
beyond
that.*

Bukowski will be missed. He will undoubtedly enter the ranks of those writers (Henry Miller, Kerouac) who continue to renew their audience as each new generation comes of age. Charles Bukowski's most recent works are *Screams From The Balcony* selected letters 1960-1970, and the upcoming *Pulp*, Bukowski's excursion into the hard-boiled genre. These are available from Black Sparrow Press. John Martin wrote in a recent fax to *Street News*, "Bukowski was able to finish his very funny new novel *Pulp* and passed on with a feeling of having accomplished everything he set out to do in 1966 when we met and joined forces." ■