

March 28, 2010

LETTERS

## Getting Down to Work

To the Editor:

I very much enjoyed Jennifer Schuessler's essay "Take This Job and Write It" (March 14). Schuessler discusses several American writers who have considered the place of work in their characters' lives. However, there is one major omission in her survey: Charles Bukowski. Bukowski (1920-94), the Los Angeles poet and novelist, devoted a great deal of his titanic literary genius to work and its discontents. To single out only novels — the focus of Schuessler's article — Bukowski's "Post Office" (1971) and "Factotum" (1975) are both classic tragicomic visions of the American blue-collar experience.

Indeed, although [Raymond Carver](#) is frequently identified as an example of "blue-collar misery," Bukowski had already prepared the way for Carver in his earliest writings from 1944 (when his first fiction appeared in *Story* magazine), and in his column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*, which began to appear in the underground press in 1967. Bukowski should not be marginalized in histories of American literature: the French, Germans and Italians are still ahead of us in according him the major status which is his proper due.

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To the Editor:

In "Take This Job and Write It," Jennifer Schuessler bemoans the dearth of workplace novels. But in fact, workplace-centric novels have abounded in the last decade plus, in a little subgenre known as chick lit. But to be aware of that, one would have to be open-minded and willing to look beyond the novels of men; in fact, the only female writer cited in this essay is Mary Gaitskill. One thing Schuessler does get right? That "the work of just being a novelist is a lot harder than it looks." This has always been true of all novelists, no matter what we write.

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