



# The Continual Condition: Poems

*Charles Bukowski*

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“The Walt Whitman of Los Angeles.”

—Joyce Carol Oates

“He brought everybody down to earth, even the angels.”

—Leonard Cohen, songwriter

Arguably the most imitated and influential American poet of the previous half-century, Charles Bukowski remains a counter-culture icon more than a decade after his death. *The Continual Condition* is a collection of never-before-published poems by the inimitable Bukowski—raw, tough, odes to alcohol, women, work, and despair by a rebel author equally adept at poetry and prose. Charles Bukowski lives on in *The Continual Condition*, a godsend for admirers of his previous collections *Slouching Toward Nirvana*, *The Pleasures of the Damned*, and *Love is a Dog From Hell*, as well as his novels *Factotum*, *Ham on Rye*, and *Pulp*.

## The Continual Condition: Poems Details

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# From Reader Review *The Continual Condition: Poems* for online ebook

## **ej cullen says**

Bukowski has what only the best writers have: Voice. What he's missing is range and felicity, but it goes to show that, in literature, a true and unique Voice keeps us reading and ultimately trumps all else.

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## **Zack says**

<http://www.examiner.com/books-in-denv...>

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## **John Defrog says**

I've been a fan of Bukowski for decades, but for some reason I've always been a bit wary of his posthumous books – there's always the worry that unpublished works won't measure up. Which is silly, I know. And this collection (which is a mix of unpublished poems and previously published but never anthologized poems) proves it. Here, Bukowski covers all the usual bases – drinking, horse racing, crazy women, low-lives, writing, misanthropy, alienation, loneliness, the perils of success, wry humor – to the point where I'm amazed that he was able to cover the same ground for 50 years and still make it seem fresh. That said, not everything here works, but even average Bukowski is better than the best work of many, and there are a number of real gems that shine through here. When he nails it, he nails it hard. It's been ages since the last time I read Bukowski – it was a pleasure to read him again.

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## **Danny Daley says**

My relationship with Bukowski's writing is a strange one. On the one hand, I am continuously struck by how, despite his massive popularity, his writing is really quite dry and lifeless. And on the other hand, I constantly feel drawn to read more of it.

The poems themselves are hardly poetry, but for the fact that they so look like poetry. In fact, they look almost too much like poetry, as though Bukowski was looking to constantly exaggerate the form. But the language is as anti-poetic as it gets. Often he is simply rambling random thoughts he must have been having at the time, seldom all that insightful or illuminating, as though he had been drinking too much and sat down and scribbled some things in a notepad and sent it off to be published. Much of it is narrative, but without a clear point. Some quick lines about seeing a person walking and he noticed something strange, so it became a poem.

And yet, there is a sense in which this is precisely his charm. To most poets he is a "regular" guy, and yet to most regular people he would be quite strange. In the end, I would say I only like, maybe, 1 out of every 10 Bukowski poems I read - not a good percentage. Usually I would give up on a poet in those circumstances, and yet I keep reading Bukowski.

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## Carlos Pelay says

This also is one of my favorite lines: “3-year-olds will have computers/and everybody will know everything/about everybody else/long before they meet them/and so they won’t want to meet them” (“This Flag Not Fondly Waving”).

This line seems prescient - I was trying to track down when this particular poem was written but wasn't successful. [this line also resonated because at the same time I was also reading "The Machine Stops" by E.M. Forster (written in 1903?) - a dystopian tale where everyone lives in a kind of "hive", isolated (even from family), and physical contact is unnecessary. All needs are provided by the "machine" (technology/internet/the state?).]

Anyway, although I had read a poem or two by Bukowski in anthologies this was the first book of his that I've read. While I thought there was some unevenness in the quality of the poems (a few seemed trivial) there were others that stopped me cold. As a fan of Raymond Carver, I also appreciate his spare, direct language. I plan to read a lot more of Bukowski.

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## vi macdonald says

In one of these poems Bukowski invokes Catullus, which feels weirdly appropriate since after reading this collection (and 17 of his others in what has quite possibly been the most atrociously painful marathon read I have ever put myself through) I feel like I have indeed been on the receiving end of the now infamous "Catullus 16".

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## Cathleen says

I knew Bukowski was a macho asshole when I bought this collection. I bought and read it anyway. There are some gems here, though, mostly the poems dealing with a mortal's grudging acceptance of the ticking of the clock and his regrets and triumphs in the face of that. I wonder if he'd cringe at some of the poems published here, which perhaps aren't ones he would have wanted public. Definitely a mixed bag.

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## Tuck says

2.5 but i liked this one for its true-to-life  
the strange morning

it had never happened before and one doesn't  
know why such things  
happen.

it was about 11 a.m. and I had stepped  
outside the bar for some air.  
Danny walked up and I started talking  
to Danny.  
then Harry walked up and joined us.

then two other men started talking  
to each other a few feet away.

“let’s go back for a drink,” I said to  
Danny and Harry.

“no, it’s nice out here, said Danny,  
“let’s gab a while.”

so we did.

then I noticed some other men  
standing about.  
some were talking, others were  
just standing there.

it all happened slowly.

more and more men arrived  
and stood  
at the corner.

it was getting crowded.  
and it was getting  
humorous.

There was something  
strange in the air,  
you could feel it.

there were many voices  
now.  
and more men arrived.  
I don’t know where they  
all came from.

they stood around  
talking,  
laughing,  
and smoking  
cigarettes.

Jim the bartender stuck

his head out the door  
and asked,  
“hey, what the hell’s  
going on out here?”

somebody laughed.

Jim went back inside to  
the empty bar.

it began to feel very  
odd

as if the world had  
decided to be transformed,  
all at once.

There was a feeling of  
joy and gamble in  
The air.

I believe that everybody  
felt it.

A great energy was  
let loose and working  
on everything.

Then Jack the cop  
walked up.  
“hey, you guys,  
break it up!  
what the hell is going  
on?”

we all knew Jack,  
we drank with him  
at night.

soon Jack was standing there,  
talking and listening  
to the others.

Danny grinned, “Jesus,  
this is very strange.”

“I like it,” I said.

the whole corner was

crowed with  
humanity  
finally cut loose and  
free,  
laughing.

cars stopped and the  
drivers looked out  
wondering what was  
happening.  
we didn't  
know.

finally I said,  
"I can't stand this  
anymore, I'm going in  
for a drink."

Danny and Harry  
followed me  
in.

Soon a few others  
followed.

"lot of guys out there,"  
said the bartender.

"yeah," said harry.

"where are the  
women?"

"the women don't  
want anything to do  
with bums  
like us."  
said Danny.

we each had a couple  
of drinks.  
It took maybe 15 or  
20 minutes.

then I went to the  
door and looked  
out.  
everybody was  
gone.

I came back and  
sat down.

“wonder where they  
went?”

“strangest morning of  
my life,” said  
Danny.

“yeah,” said  
Harry.

We sat there thinking  
about it.  
then Danny started  
talking about how his  
family was going to  
throw him out for  
not getting  
a job, etc.

Jim the bartender  
stood there polishing  
glasses  
and things were back  
to normal,  
even to wondering  
who was going to  
buy the next  
round.

Bukowski “the continual condition”

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## **Jon Cone says**

This isn't great Bukowski, but even mediocre Bukowski is worth looking at and he continues, even in death, to give substantial pleasures to those readers who are open to his brand of unadorned, plainspoken poetry. (Is it even poetry? Who cares.) If you are new to Bukowski or if you find yourself within the turmoil of an early Bukowski infatuation, you should skip this book for now: there are many other collections, especially from the early 70s, that provide the reader greater examples of Bukowski's distinctive furies. Combine those magnificent poetry collections with a few choice prose works (Post Office, Factotum, Ham On Rye), toss in volume one of his collected letters, and you have an incredible amount of writing that is breathtaking in scope, style and power. Bukowski was one of a kind, in spite of the legions who would imitate him in his wake, and it is hard to imagine another writer like him coming around anytime soon. Here's to you, Hank, wherever you are, with gods, women, symphonies, cats, the horses, the good boxing match, the bulls, Celine,



and wine, sweet sweet wine.

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## **James Goertel says**

I had not read Bukowski in some time after reading him intensively for years - he is a Rosetta Stone for me in terms of my introduction to poetry. He showed me not what poetry was, but what it could be. This collection stands up with the best of what I have read by Charles Henry Bukowski. Most striking are the poems scattered here and there which reference his mortality. "Moving Toward Age 73" and "Bayonets in Candlelight" are stunners.

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## **Reuben says**

I've never been a fan of poetry, but damn. I might be now.

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## **Kelly Thompson says**

Bukowski's newest collection is one that dwells in the mind of an aging man, even though the poems span his career. While the bitter genius that lends itself to the poet's reputation is still very much present in *The Continual Condition*, as a set of poems, it also speaks to Bukowski's ability to provide deep philosophical musing in just a few words — whether about his own particular bad habits, or of those around him. The longer poems, such as "This Flag Not Fondly Waving," and the reflective and simplistic "as Buddha smiles" reveal that one of poetry's most beloved dirty old men was, at the same time, a man of deep thought and observation.

With a cover featuring Bukowski's sparse depictions of himself (drinking and smoking, as luck would have it), a devoted reader might be put off at the prospect of repetition in *The Continual Condition*, as some of the poems have been previously printed in other collections (namely, *War All the Time* and *Bone Palace Ballet*, to name a few). That is an issue where, in my humble opinion, the Black Sparrow editions of his work tend to fare much better than the Harper Collins, which came later and tend to give the feeling that Bukowski's name is being thrown onto new volumes for money-making, and not for the sake of a reader's admiration. Overall, the collection can not be called better or worse than the earlier, thicker volumes, although as a longtime reader of his poetry, it *feels* at times like a good mixture of poems composed when Bukowski was younger, and also when he was aging. The themes of women and drinking, sex and dirtiness are ever-present, but the larger theme seems to be one of death - an approaching, smiling face, perhaps "the continual condition" itself. The abrupt, chopped-off-but-somehow-complete style of writing that is definitively his lends itself to this feeling, a foresight of mortality that has a biting clarity to it. For readers coming to his work for the first time, it would be a wonderful introduction, but it might disappoint Bukowski fans or collectors of his work for the simple fact that it reprints many poems that were already published.

Overall, *The Continual Condition* stands up nicely next to his other posthumous collections, including much thicker volumes like *The People Look Like Flowers at Last* (2008). However slim it might be, it resonates in its bitter kind of love for the ordinary grime of life and gets away with it, as Bukowski usually does, with the everyman language that helps him to remain one of the best American poets of the 20th century. I'll end with my personal favorite line, as an example of his genius regarding the future he (somehow) already knew about: "3-year-olds will have computers/and everybody will know everything/about everybody else/long before they meet them/and so they won't want to meet them" ("This Flag Not Fondly Waving"). This is an

unlikely but welcome prophet of our century speaking, to be sure.

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### **monika says**

svět je horor a to  
zadarmo.  
neexistují odpovědi, jenom  
otázky.  
vzduch pí falešným  
smíchem.  
není co zapomenout a  
není co si  
pamatovat.

---

teď je to všude samej kompjútr  
a zanedlouho bude mít každej svůj vlastní  
i tříletý děcka budou mít počítače  
a všichni budou o všech  
všechno vědět  
dříve než je potkají  
takže proť by se s nimi setkávali.  
nikdo se s nikým nebude chtít  
už nikdy vidět  
a ze všech budou  
samotáři  
tak jako já.

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### **Sydney says**

This book opened up the poetry world to me. I've never been interested in it, just because of the different ways you can interpret it. Then after reading if I had a conversation with someone about it and they have a different view, I feel cheated and wrong.

But upon reading this, I felt like that was okay. The way these poems and stories made me feel, it didn't matter anyone else's opinion.

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### **Kacey says**

Actual rating more like 3.5 stars. Good of course but not as impressed as I was with his other works.

**"contentment between agonies is the elixir of existence."**

