"SUNLIGHT COMING DOWN": THE EARLY CHAPBOOKS OF CHARLES BUKOWSKI

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ABSTRACT

While Charles Bukowski's early chapbooks (1960-1968) were instrumental in turning him into a popular figure in the alternative publishing scene, their relevance in Bukowski's early career has been largely overlooked. As Basinski accurately noted, it "remains an immense arena to explore." Chapbooks showcased Bukowski's best work to date in little magazines, which were the ideal outlet for his ever prolific output. This previously uncharted territory is here illustrated by means of a critical journey through both Bukowski's published chapbooks and failed projects, highlighting the author/publisher feedback.

KEY WORDS: Poetry, magazines, chapbooks, biography, bibliography, literary criticism, Charles Bukowski.

RESUMEN

Si bien los primeros libritos de Charles Bukowski (1960-1968) fueron clave en su camino hacia la fama en los círculos literarios alternativos, apenas se ha estudiado la relevancia de los mismos en su carrera literaria. Los libritos servían de escaparate para los mejores poemas publicados anteriormente en revistas alternativas, que constituían la válvula de escape idónea para su inagotable producción literaria. Este "territorio inexplorado", tal y como Basinski apuntara con acierto, se ilustra aquí mediante un recorrido crítico tanto por los libritos publicados como por los proyectos inconclusos, haciendo especial hincapié en la interacción entre Bukowski y los distintos editores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: poesía, revistas, libritos, biografía, bibliografía, crítica literaria, Charles Bukowski.

Charles Bukowski's first periodical appearances in the 1940s, such as *Story*, *Portfolio* or *Matrix*, after a four-year period when his work had been constantly rejected by *Esquire*, *Harper's*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker* and other well-established magazines, were to pave the way for his slow transition into acceptance during the mid to late 1950s. That transition period, in turn, would be instrumental in encouraging Bukowski to increase his already prolific output and submit his work to the emerging little magazines that were trying to topple the Modernism-

influenced journals and quarterlies that still prevailed upon the literary scene. By the very late 1950s, Bukowski began to bombard the "littles" unrelentingly, and, despite the customary rejections and his dissatisfaction with most editors' approach to publishing, his hunger for exposure was finally rewarded by the mid 1960s, when the so-called mimeograph revolution reached its peak and his work was featured in so many alternative publications that he was eventually hailed as "a spiritual leader" (Fox 57) and "an American legend" (Katz 1848).

The little magazines constituted the most logical outlet for Bukowski's incessant creative process because, unlike the subsidized academic journals, they allowed and encouraged experimentation and originality. The "littles" fearlessly promoted new authors while quarterlies and journals were restricted to publishing well-established writers. This pattern worked to Bukowski's advantage, who submitted to the little magazines on an almost daily basis during his lifetime. Editors and publishers alike began to discover his work in the "littles" in the late 1950s and, realizing the potential of this supposedly new voice, they contributed to his burgeoning popularity by printing his material so frequently that he would become the most published author of the 1960s.

Some editors were so taken by Bukowski's poetry that they not only championed him in their little magazines, but they also published Bukowski-only chapbooks in an attempt to consolidate the unequivocal value of his work. One such editor was E.V. Griffith, who first printed Bukowski's poetry in *Hearse* (1958), a key periodical in his early career because it featured his work from 1958 to 1972, and its editor also published Bukowski's first chapbook, *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* in October 1960. Bukowski had first submitted old material to this little magazine; "Some Notes of Dr. Klarstein," a poem published in the February 1958 issue, had been rejected by *Accent* in 1954. Presumably, the short-stories that *Hearse* did not accept in 1958 had been written in the early 50s as well. Yet, Griffith sensed that Bukowski's work had a unique quality to it and solicited more material from him. Bukowski gladly complied, and Griffith would publish him regularly in *Hearse* in the 1960s and early 1970s, as well as in over fifteen *Poetry Now* issues from 1974 to 1983, including a special 1974 issue showcasing an interview with Bukowski, several poems, and his photograph on the front cover.

Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail, published by Griffith under his Hearse Press imprint after a painful thirty-month long gestation, was undoubtedly Bukowski's most important publication in 1960. Shortly after having printed Bukowski's material in *Hearse* in 1958, Griffith decided to release a chapbook of his best work to date, culling the poems he considered more accomplished from several little magazines. Bukowski would express his disagreement over Griffith's selection in his correspondence, claiming it was not representative of his best poetry, but he was nonetheless pleased with the idea of having a chapbook published. The exasperatingly slow process which ensued would infuriate an otherwise patient Bukowski, used to the inefficiency of most little magazine editors, who would, on many occasions, accept his poetry and publish it several years later.

Apparently, Griffith was so plagued by financial difficulties that Bukowski decided to split the cost of the publication with him and sent him "between 30 or

40 bucks" (*Screams* 24); growing increasingly restless, Bukowski even suggested Griffith that he could keep any profit from the sales. He would convey his uneasiness in a letter to editor Jon Webb: "Still nothing on the Hearse chapbook ... This thing has been going on for over two years ... Also he has a batch of accepted poems and stories he has had over 2 years and never published" (McCormick, 30 Sept. 1960). A week later, he would confront and threaten Griffith with making public his apparently editorial slovenliness: "I am going to wait a short period longer and if no results are achieved I am going to write [to] *Trace*, the San Francisco newspapers and the editors of other literary magazines of the whole history of this notorious and impossible chapbook nightmare. I can not see it that sloppy and amateur editorialism ... cruelty and ineptness go unchallenged" (*Screams* 24). It is not known whether Bukowski's threats were effective or the chapbook had already been mailed to him, but he received the first copies of *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* on October 14, 1960, barely seven days after he had written the last letter to Griffith.

He would describe on several occasions the joy he experienced when he finally saw his first chapbook of poems, as he expressed in an essay written in the early 1990s: "The package of books had arrived in the mail and I opened the package and here were the little chapbooks. They spilled on the sidewalk, all the little books and I knelt down among them, I was on my knees and I picked up a *Flower Fist* and I kissed it" ("My Madness" 335). In a letter where he would apologize to Griffith for the menacing tone of his last missive, Bukowski's words were tinged with a similar elation: "I opened the package right in the street, sunlight coming down, and there it was: *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, never a baby born in more pain, but finally brought through by the good Doctor Griffith—a beautiful baby, beautiful! The first collected poems of a man of 40, who began writing late" (*Screams* 25). Two months afterwards, Bukowski would insist on the fact that the painfully long gestation of his first publication, a most "notorious... nightmare" (*Screams* 24), had been worth the wait: "I am awfully pleased about the clean and fresh little job done with these poems here, the chapbook, I mean, and it was worth all the agony-waiting and delays" (Delaware, Dec. 1960). As a matter of fact, Bukowski would soon forget that "agony" and he would enthusiastically discuss with Griffith the details of a new chapbook of poetry, even suggesting him two titles: *Trinkets for Whores, Gamblers and Imbeciles*, and *Our Bread Is Blessed and Damned*. Though Griffith would publish several of his poems in *Hearse* and in *Poetry Now* in the 1970s and 1980s, the projected second chapbook never materialized.

Bukowski's eloquent, ecstatic reaction when he first saw a copy of *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, kneeling down on a sidewalk and kissing the chapbook, stands out in stark contrast with Ciotti's assessment of the publication: "a poetry aficionado in Eureka, Calif., published Bukowski's first book of poetry... It was 30 pages, mimeographed. Only 200 copies were made, and few people saw it" (17). It could be argued that Ciotti's view is somewhat more realistic in that the limited circulation of the chapbook did not bring about a noticeable increase in popularity, but Bukowski was certainly entitled to believe that the publication was relevant, especially because Griffith would claim, almost two decades later, that "seventeen [chapbook] titles were published under the Hearse Press imprint, the most signifi-

cant of which was Charles Bukowski's *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*" (142). Bibliographer Al Fogel places this publication in the sixth place in his "Top 20 Bukowski Rarities," and sets its value at 2,500 dollars (215), but copies are extremely scarce and whenever they are made available to the general public their price easily exceeds Fogel's estimate by several thousand dollars.

While *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* was in gestation, there were other chapbooks projected, but they were either aborted or discarded. However, the fact that several editors considered publishing those chapbooks attests to Bukowski's growing popularity in the alternative literary scene. The first one was to be released by Carl Larsen in late 1956 or early 1957 as a special *Existaria* issue. In a 1960 letter to Webb, Bukowski explained to him that Larsen had planned to "bring out an edition with nothing but Charles Bukowski" (McCormick, 30 Sept. 1960), but Bukowski had the audacity to reject a group of poems that Larsen had submitted to *Harlequin*, which Bukowski was co-editing with Barbara Fry at the time. Larsen was obviously hurt by Bukowski's editorial decision and he cancelled the scheduled chapbook. As Bukowski remarked to *Trace* magazine editor, James Boyer May, "*Existaria* returned a whole mass of poems that were to be published as a special edition" (Fullerton, 1 June 1959). To Larsen's credit, he would eventually publish a Bukowski chapbook in 1961, *Longshot Pomes for Broke Players*, and he would print several of his poems in *Existaria* in 1957, and in *Brand "X"* and *rongWrong* in the early 1960s.

Clarence Major, who would be one of the first reviewers of Bukowski's work, was the editor of *Coercion Review*, a little magazine published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Bukowski probably found it listed in *Trace*'s directory and proceeded to submit several batches of poems to Major in 1958 and 1959. As Major would put it in 1961, "I remember when I first read Bukowski... when I was editing a little magazine myself in Chicago... We planned in a big way to boost Bukowski... We wanted to publish 'all' of Bukowski's works" ("4 (Book) Reviews"). Apparently, the customary financial issues that most "little" editors had to face during that period hampered Major's willingness to promote Bukowski's poetry; hence, the special *Coercion Review* issue exclusively devoted to Bukowski did not crystallize: "I had a ton of his poems on hand at one time with the hope of publishing a special issue of his work but he got tired of waiting and asked for the poems back and I returned them" (Major, "Coercion Review"). Most little magazine editors would keep submissions for several years before publishing or rejecting them. Bukowski was used to such an annoying practice and he seldom complained in that regard, though he would occasionally criticize those editors in his correspondence; Major seemed to be aware of the discouraging effect that the return of previously accepted material had on authors such as Bukowski: "The little magazine world was notorious for keeping mss. for long periods of time, usually not returning them, not answering queries. I apparently became one of the usual" (Major, "Coercion Review / Existaria"). Major did not publish any of the many poems that Bukowski had submitted to the *Coercion Review*, but to his credit he favorably reviewed *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* in the *Anagogic & Paideumic Review* in 1961.

Incidentally, the two Bukowski poems that appeared in the first *San Francisco Review* issue (1958) were later collected in *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*. Two

months after his first chapbook had been published, when Bukowski was discussing with Griffith the details concerning the second chapbook that did not materialize, he explained to Griffith that "The *San Francisco Review* has taken a handful—he [Roy Miller] speaks of a 'multi-page spread of what we feel is the best of Bukowski'" (Delaware, Dec. 1960). Miller, co-editor of the *San Francisco Review*, was as overtly enthusiastic as Clarence Major about the prospect of publishing a special issue of the little magazine featuring Bukowski's work. As in Major's case, however, the initial eagerness seemed to dwindle in time. Even if Miller published three Bukowski poems in the March 1961 issue of the *San Francisco Review* and he was still considering "8 or 10 poems" for the aforementioned "multi-page spread" later that year (McCormick, Nov. 1961), the project was finally aborted. Major argued that financial difficulties prevented him from publishing the special *Coercion Review* with Bukowski's poetry; in the *San Francisco Review*'s case, given the rather negative opinion of Bukowski's work held by co-editor George Hitchcock, who claimed that Bukowski was a "terrible" author (Hitchcock), it seems common sense to believe that the editorial disagreements over the value of his poems were the probable cause of the cancelled multi-page spread.

Professor William Corrington became one of the earliest supporters of Bukowski's work after he discovered it in a 1958 *Quicksilver* issue. They corresponded extensively in the early 1960s, and Corrington would suggest to Bukowski several outlets for his prolific output; in July 1961, he mentioned a little magazine named *Choice*, co-edited by Marcus Smith, a friend of Corrington, in Madison, Wisconsin. Two months later, Bukowski duly sent over twenty poems to Smith. Upon receiving them, Smith was so impressed that he decided to publish a joint chapbook of Bukowski and Corrington poems: "Marcus says we've got us a book. He's got the poems picked, and only the title is slowing him down," Bukowski explained to Corrington (Centenary, 10 Oct. 1961). Over the course of the following months, both authors tried to come up with a title that represented their styles convincingly; thus, they considered *Double Shot*; *The Professor and the Horseplayer*; *Jawbreakers for People Who Drive Tanks in Berlin*; *Plug This in Your Bathtub When You Turn Out the Lights*, or *Snake Eyes*, but they were not entirely satisfied with any of those titles.

In November 1961, after several letters to Smith, Bukowski realized that the supposed joint chapbook had become a special section with their poems in *Choice* because Smith had mentioned to Bukowski that he would place adverts in the publication to subsidize it. Nonetheless, in early December 1961 Bukowski sent Smith a further group of previously rejected poems for the magazine, sensing that the chapbook had been definitely discarded. Indeed, by early January 1962 Bukowski suggested to Corrington that he request Smith to return his poems so he could submit them to other editors. A year later, Smith eventually admitted his not being able to produce the chapbook and asked Bukowski if he wanted his poems back (Centenary, 20 Jan. 1963). Smith did publish Corrington's poems in the third and fourth issues of *Choice*, but Bukowski's work was conspicuous by its absence. That Bukowski would occasionally lose his "famed patience" (*Screams* 24) seemed entirely justified given the large number of examples of editorial slovenliness such as this failed joint chapbook with Corrington.

After *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, and the chapbooks and special sections in little magazines that did not materialize, Bukowski's second chapbook, *Longshot Pomes for Broke Players*, was published in October 1961 by Carl Larsen under the 7 Poets Press imprint—bibliographies and biographies claim that the chapbook came out in early 1962, but Bukowski's correspondence with Sheri Martinelli confirms the October 1961 date (*Beerspit* 254-62). The Bukowski/Larsen editorial and epistolary relationship dated back to late 1956, when Larsen considered a group of Bukowski's poems for their inclusion in *Existaria*, and Bukowski rejected Larsen's poems when he was co-editing *Harlequin*. Bukowski would subsequently submit large batches of poems to the other little magazines edited by Larsen, *Brand "X"* and *rongWrong*. By March 1961, Larsen had so many Bukowski poems that he decided to publish a chapbook of his best poetry to date. As Bukowski explained to Corrington, "Larsen said he had 150 poems to pick *Longshot* out of" (Centenary, 10 Oct. 1961). Out of the 26 poems that Larsen eventually chose for the chapbook, only three of them had not been previously published in little magazines, which evidences the importance those alternative publications already had in Bukowski's burgeoning literary career.

Larsen would stress Bukowski's prolific output and the significance of his work when reminiscing about the inception of the chapbook: "Although the invitation was quite casual, I did tell him we would consider a chapbook. Shortly thereafter I received the whole manuscript, illustrations and cover art included... Everyone I knew recognized his obvious talents and energy. He was generous with his work, both written and drawn... I believe it was the best book we ever put out" (Larsen). Like E.V. Griffith, Larsen considered that Bukowski's chapbook stood out from the other publications he had been involved in as an editor. Interestingly, as in the case of *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, Bukowski was not satisfied with the poems Larsen had chosen, as he explained to Martinelli in late November 1961: "I did not select the poems that appeared in *Longshots*. Many of them I do not care for either but I let the editors have their head and it looks as if their head were not so good, but I cannot be bothered because those poems are behind me" (*Beerspit* 260). Except for *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard* (1965), Bukowski never selected the poems that appeared in his chapbooks, hence his somewhat uncalled-for criticism; Bukowski's output was so massive and uneven in quality that editors were faced with the arduous task of choosing the "right" poems; not surprisingly, according to Bukowski, they erred more often than not.

Dissatisfaction with editorial choices notwithstanding, Bukowski kept submitting his work in ridiculously large quantities. Bibliographers and biographers alike list *Poems and Drawings,* an *Epos* extra issue published by Evelyn Thorne and Will Tullos in March 1962, as his second chapbook (Krumhansl 19; Dorbin 15). However, *Poems and Drawings* was actually released in late 1962, preceded by *Longshot Pomes for Broke Players* in October 1961 and by *Run with the Hunted* in June 1962. The latter, dedicated to his friend William Corrington, and published by R.R. Cuscaden as the first Midwest Poetry Chapbook, was indeed Bukowski's third chapbook, as he remarked in a letter dated June 1, 1962 to Martinelli: "Cuscaden writes that my 3rd. collection of poems *Run with the Hunted* will be out in about 2

weeks" (*Beerspit* 274). Similarly to the previous chapbooks, the 20 poems that made up *Run with the Hunted* had been already published in several little magazines. As Griffith and Larsen had claimed, Cuscaden also believed that Bukowski's chapbook had a special relevance in his editorial career, as he would maintain almost three years after its publication: "Frankly, I consider the book one of the most significant things I've published" (Davidson, 6 Feb. 1965). Indeed, Cuscaden had been one of the most ardent supporters of Bukowski's work; he had printed Bukowski's poetry in his *Midwest* magazine as early as 1961, and he had penned the first lengthy review of Bukowski's work for the British magazine *Satis* in 1962. He would later publish his poems in several other *Midwest* issues in the early to mid 60s, and a review written by Bukowski in September 1961 about Diane Di Prima's *This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards* (1958) was slated for *Midwest* #5 and then *Midwest* #8, but Cuscaden finally discarded it because he found it too long for that little magazine.

Bukowski's fourth chapbook, *Poems and Drawings,* edited by E. Thorne and W. Tullos, was released in late 1962—and not in March 1962. Bukowski expressed so in a letter to Corrington, where he also stressed his discontent with most editors' incompetent approach to publishing as opposed to Thorne's admirable efficiency: "Thorne took 14 of my poems which will come out in a special edition of *Epos*, I'm told, sometime before next Jan [1963]... I do not care for most of the stuff she publishes but her method of operation is refreshing and is a good lesson to those slow, haphazard, pretentious, slovenly, siffed-up jackoffs who piddle dwadle yawn sleep upon our own dwindling time" (Centenary, June 1962). Thorne would corroborate the date in an October 1962 letter reproduced in the third issue of *The Outsider* (1963), where many of the editors who had previously published Bukowski congratulated him on having received the magazine's "Outsider of the Year" award: "*Epos* is honoring him too with an all-Bukowski issue this Fall (1962). As this is the only one-poet issue we have done in all our 14 years you will understand we thoroughly agree with your choice" (McCormick, 7 Oct. 1962; Thorne 59). While Bukowski praised Thorne's editorial skills, he considered *Poems and Drawings* to be the least accomplished of all his chapbooks to date, as he confided to Jon Webb in early 1963. In all probability, the subject matter of most poems was the main cause of his disapproving assessment: "The *Epos* thing is mostly poems on the Art and Writing thing, which I am now pretty tired of doing," he would confide to Corrington (Centenary, 8 Oct. 1962). However, it could be argued that Bukowski was partly responsible for his own dissatisfaction since he deliberately submitted his most "fancy" and "classical" work to *Epos* (McCormick, 29 Aug. 1960). Indeed, Bukowski would directly send such material to Thorne, and the fact that the 14 poems published in *Poems and Drawings* had not previously appeared in the "littles" evidences this pattern. Whereas the other chapbooks could be taken as a culmination of the work printed in alternative publications in that they collected poems from the "littles," *Poems and Drawings* stands on its own as a *rara avis*.

While *Poems and Drawings* contained new poems only, Bukowski's next chapbook, *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*—released in 1965, although Bukowski had begun working on it shortly after the publication of the *Epos* Extra Issue in late 1962—had poems directly taken from the "littles"—much like his first three

chapbooks. In the summer of 1965, when *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard* was eventually published, Bukowski was still edging his way through the literary turmoil of the mimeograph revolution. Jay Robert Nash, who "published the venomous *Literary Times* in Chicago, a sporadic experiment in bringing journalism, literature and pugilistics together" (Fulton 29), had printed Bukowski's work in several issues of the newspaper from 1963 onwards, partly prodded by its literary editor, Ron Offen, who had previously printed Bukowski's poetry in his little magazine *Odyssey* in 1959. Nash and Offen "offered to put out another chapbook under their Cyfoeth Publications imprint. Bukowski agreed, on the condition that *he* select the works" (Baughan 42). As in the case of *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, the gestation process was agonizingly long, as if it were a fierce boxing match between Nash and Bukowski. Bukowski mentioned the chapbook to Neeli Cherry as early as April 1963: "*Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*, Cyfoeth, Chi. Lit. Times, out in May, I'm told" (*Screams* 69). Two years later, after many a bitter, reproachful letter to Nash, the chapbook was finally released: "Nash has been slow in getting this out," Bukowski would stoically confide to poet Steve Richmond (Richmond, 27 July 1965). By the mid 60s, he was so used to the slap-dash approach of most small press editors that his complaints were no longer vitriolic.

As Baughan noted, Bukowski selected the poems for *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*, which would have the dubious honor of being the only book that he ever edited in his long career. Significantly enough, he chose to print previously rejected poems instead of new material, hence the title; Bukowski considered those poems his own abandoned "dogs." He explained the selection process in the foreword to the chapbook: "These are the poems the editors didn't want for the earlier books. So, I went through the magazines looking for the turned-away poems. I found 20 poems I wish I had never written, 20 I didn't give a damn about one way or the other. The others you will find in here" ("Foreward" (sic) 3). He concluded the foreword with a condescending statement that revealed that his editorial decision to include previously rejected material was not entirely accurate: "And Jon, Rob, Carl, E.V., I forgive you—this time" ("Foreward" 3). To fully understand this apparently innocuous comment, a recapitulation is called for: Jon [Webb] had published *It Catches My Heart in Its Hands* in October 1963, Rob [Cuscaden] *Run with the Hunted* in the summer of 1962; Carl [Larsen] *Longshot Pomes for Broke Players* in late 1961, and E.V. [Griffith] *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* in October 1960. An analysis of the 13 poems printed in *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard* indicates that Jon Webb was the only editor who could have rejected all of them. The other three editors could have discarded four poems only, the ones published before 1962, namely, "Layover" (1957), "The Death of a Roach" (1959), "It's Nothing to Laugh About" (1960-61), and "Face While Shaving" (1961). Two other poems had already appeared in *Poems and Drawings* (1962); since those two poems had not been rejected before, editors Tullos and Thorne were spared Bukowski's accusations in the foreword to *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*. Webb was the only editor who could have turned down the remaining seven poems.

Therefore, Bukowski's comment was misleading since only four out of the 13 poems published in the chapbook could have been rejected by Webb, Cuscaden,

Larsen or Griffith, and Webb was the only editor who could have discarded the bulk of them. Furthermore, two of the poems did not even qualify as "cold dogs" as they had never been confined to the "courtyard." Bukowski was dissatisfied with the selections made by Griffith, Larsen and Cuscaden for his earliest chapbooks, and *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard* was the ideal vehicle to take revenge on them. However, chronological information and empirical evidence show that, as in the case of *Harlequin* (1957) or *Renaissance* (1968), Bukowski's editorial decisions and comments could be deliberately deceiving, error-inducing and controversial.

Bukowski's next chapbook, *Poems Written Before Jumping Out of an 8 Story Window* (1968), had been planned by Jan Kepley and Mel Buffington, editors of the little magazine *Blitz*, as early as May 1965, that is, before Nash had published *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*. As per custom, Bukowski had submitted to Kepley and Buffington a large batch of poems in early 1965, and they were so impressed by the material that they not only printed seven of his poems in the first three *Blitz* issues (1965-66), but they also persuaded him to put out a Bukowski-only chapbook with his poetry. The book was even advertised in *Blitz* #1 (Summer 1965) and in the *Wormwood Review* #18 (July 1965) as being published later that year by Mad Virgin Press. In a July 1965 letter to Canadian poet Al Purdy, Bukowski would corroborate this: "Mad Virgin Press to bring out some poems of mine—mostly those Webb didn't want for *Crucifix* and I didn't feel like throwing away—to be called *Poems Written Before Leaping Out of an 8 Story Window*" (*The B./Purdy Letters* 89). Interestingly, as in the case of *Cold Dogs in the Courtyard*, and as it would happen two years later with At *Terror Street and Agony Way*, the poems selected for the chapbook had been previously rejected by other editors.

Nevertheless, in yet another instance of editorial carelessness, the book was apparently discarded halfway through. Kepley and Buffington had abandoned the project, but a friend of them, Charles Potts, who had recently discovered Bukowski's work in *Grande Ronde Review*, a little magazine edited by Ben L. Hiatt in Oregon, was so taken by the poem "The Hairy Hairy Fist, and Love Will Die," that he decided to revive the aborted chapbook and release it with the help of yet another editor, Darrell Kerr, under their Poetry X/Change imprint. Kerr had been eagerly corresponding with Bukowski in 1967, and he was so captivated by his work that he had convinced David Laidig, editor of *The Flash of Pasadena*, to reprint Bukowski's essay "A Rambling Essay on Poetics and the Bleeding Life Written While Drinking a Six-Pack (Tall)" in his little magazine. Potts, with Kerr's enthusiastic support, finally published the chapbook in the summer of 1968; he recalled its inception quite vividly: "I didn't 'edit' *Poems Written Before Jumping Out of an 8 Story Window*, so much as rescue it from Jan Kepley... It was already put together. Kerr printed it; I paid for the paper and the cover. The reason I did it is for the poem, 'The Hairy Hairy Fist and Love Will Die.' This is a great poem. As far as I know, the best one he ever wrote" ("Charles Potts / Bukowski"). Curiously enough, while the poem was reprinted the following year in *A Bukowski Sampler*, and Potts would publish it again in his little magazine *Litmus* in 1971 as well as in the anthology *Pacific Northwestern Spiritual Poetry* in 1988, it has not been collected to date. A second printing of *Poems Written Before Jumping Out of an 8 Story Window* appeared in 1975, in-

cluding "a dozen letters Bukowski wrote to me during the first time of the printing, back in '68" (Potts, "How I Came" 97), which shows how relevant Bukowski's correspondence was to most editors, who repeatedly reproduced his letters in their periodicals.

The fact that editors such as Griffith, Larsen, Cuscaden, Thullos and Thorne, Nash, Kepley, Buffington, Potts, and even Miller and Smith, planned—and published—several chapbooks of Bukowski's poetry definitely attests to his relevance as a key author in the alternative literary scene. Not only did they consider that his poetry merited chapbook publication, but they also believed that Bukowski's work unquestionably stood out from the other publications released under their imprints, which undoubtedly enhanced his ever-growing popularity and stature as a cult figure in American letters.

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