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Mrs. Childress

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Charles Bukowski, Eccentric Phenomenon

Henry Charles Bukowski, born August 16, 1920 in Germany as Heinrich Karl Bukowski,

is not your typical poet. (www.poemhunter.com) Bukowski is a poet that has seen life from all

angles because he had come from a poor, abusive, alcohol induced immigrant family. He used

his personal perspectives to advance into the well-known, liked-by-most poet and short story

author that he became. Charles Bukowski is the most eccentric phenomenon in the poetic world,

with his three major loves that he had consistently and most often times wrote about: booze,

women and the racetrack. (Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute)

I chose to write about Charles Bukowski not only because of his eccentric writings, but

for the reason that he had the ability to write about life from his own minds perspective. He has

written in the form of a poor, drunken, abused and sex crazed bachelor by the name of Henry

Chinaski, his alter ego. Growing up as the pimply, foreign, poor kid that was excluded from all

of the reindeer games made it impossible to be accepted into the community. It didn’t help that

he was dyslexic either, but that did not stop him from proceeding on to college and becoming the

famous author of bizarre poems and short stories.

Bukowski’s writing has always inspired me. His poems and short stories whether

uncanny and inappropriate or sincere and just a little off the charts; has shown me that no matter

where you come from, how rich or poor you are, how horrible or glamorized your life may be,

you can easily release your feelings or thoughts through writing. Charles never had any problems

producing drunken ballads without a care in the world. It takes a lot of courage to be able to

write some of the things that Charles Bukowski had written. Some critics concluded that his

erotic poems of the multiple women he had bedded, or even some poems of love from a distance

and other subjects he had written about was offensive, while others enjoyed laughing and

ridiculing his past experiences of sex, booze, gambling and drunken ramblings.

(Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute)

“2 Flies”

One of my favorite poems from Mr. Charles Bukowski is the epic “*2 Flies*.”

(Kemp=Mag ) He puts into standpoint a human’s mental state about flies when they are in our

presence. When I think of flies buzzing annoyingly in their dazed, drunken stumbles in the air, I

simply wave them off and that’s that. Bukowski on the other hand, takes it to the next level. The

poem in a nutshell, discusses how he thinks the flies feel; miserable, sad and angry. Bukowski

also ponders the fact that other men have more intense situations to overcome rather than

worrying about two measly flies harassing him. The big fly had its life tragically cut short after a

short love affair with “Henry’s” rolled up paper. I have a habit of enjoying off the wall writings

and poems like this one that include unique examples and in depth descriptions that Bukowski

uses in poem.

“A Smile to Remember”

“*A Smile to Remember*” is another poem of Charles Bukowski that I thoroughly enjoy.

The life that Charles and his mother lived was a hard one. I guess I should technically say

“Henry” instead of Charles. Henry is Charles alter ego that was previously noted. Being

punished multiple times weekly by the alcoholic father for minimal wrong-doings or sometimes

for nothing at all caused pretty glum home situation for Henry and his mother.

(www.poemhunter.com) Henrys’ mother always tried to make him smile even though there was

hardly a thing to smile about. This poem is about the family’s pet goldfish and the crazed father,

as well as the abuse Henry and his mother had to endure and the lack of happiness in the

household. Trying to keep a positive outlook on life for the sake of Charles, his mother was

always attempting a smile and asked Henry to always try to smile. A Smile to Remember is not

one of the extreme, explicit poems that I have read of Bukowski’s. To me, it is a more emotional

type of poem with an ending that left a smile on my face after I finished reading it.

The moods of Bukowski’s poems changed throughout the years. In 1986, Time magazine

called Bukowski a “laureate of American lowlife” (www.poemhunter.com). When he was

diagnosed with a bleeding ulcer, he quit drinking for ten years and started writing again. He

wrote more than just poems. He wrote short stories, articles, newspapers and novels. He had

teamed up with other well-known authors to do writings as well. When he was diagnosed with

leukemia, his once humorous, drunken detailed poems became more tragic filled and less

frequent. He passed away March 9, 1994.

Poetry affects people in many ways, whether it is good or bad. To me, poetry is a perfect

way to let out stress or allow one to express their feelings without having to speak what they

want to say. Writing something down tends to be easier than speaking for me because I am more

likely to clam up or stutter when I am in front of a crowd. I have heard the saying, “Actions

speak louder than words,” well then, in that case my action is my pen moving across the paper!

To me, poetry is a good way for me to relax. Poetry is not long, so a person cannot use

that as an excuse not to read it. Most people when they think of poems, they think of Robert

Frost, Shel Silverstein, E.E. Cummings, Edgar Allen Poe and Emily Dickinson; which all have

their own special ways of writing poems. It is hard to choose one poet that I enjoy the best,

because my mood will help me decide what I want to read. The good thing is, is I have endless

possibilities to suit my very needs at that time.

When it comes to poetry versus short stories, it is a hard to make a solid decision on

which one I prefer. I like poetry because it is short and intense like a bomb exploding filled with

details. I like short stories because it gives the author a chance to write a little more information

for the reader to connect to and help understand the story better. Sometimes more details and a

little more of a story line is better for me. I like to read short stories as long as they have a

significant ending to the story and do not leave it open at the end. I cannot stand a short story that

does not have a good closing that has been “buttoned up” by the author. So, in conclusion to

which I prefer more; poetry versus short stories, I would have to choose the short stories. Most if

not all of the poets I previously listed above have written poems as well as short stories.

When I was younger, I loved writing poems, haikus and short stories. I had always

wanted to write a book about my life from birth until the current time I was writing, but have

never gotten the time dedicated to doing so. Instead, I would go ahead and settle on writing a

short story. I think that it is important to try and include all of the correct information and details

because I feel that more information is better than not enough. If a person can get the sufficient

amount of details in a short amount of writing, such as a poem, then they are meant for writing

poems. Some people have that one special niche, to be able to express as much feelings and

imaginations as possible in such a short amount of writing.

March 9, 1994 we lost a great artist, poet and short story author. He was disliked by some

but liked by most. When you are looking for some crazy off the wall poetry or short story to take

your mind off of the then and now, Bukowski is what you want to read. Charles Bukowski is the

most eccentric phenomenon in the poetic world, with his three major loves that he had

consistently and most often times wrote about: booze, women and the racetrack.

(Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute)

# Works Cited

Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute. *poetryfoundation.org*. 2010. Web. 24 October 2012.

*Kemp=Mag* . Ed. Michael Leenaars, Susan Read and Hanneke van Kempen. n.d. Web. 25 October 2012. <http://kempis.nl/mag/charles-bukowski-2-flies>.

*www.poemhunter.com*. 2010. Web. 24 October 2012.

**Poems by Jessica Kennon**

**Ride to Live, Live to Ride**

They say the grass is always greener on the other side,

But if you aren’t happy where you are, then where is your pride?

When you tell the truth, you have nothing to hide

I can tell when you lied, the moment you cried

When you are in doubt, to a friend you can confide,

Ride to live, live to ride.

**The Cycle of Life**

When I first saw your face I knew it was real,

For me to become your mother, that was the deal.

When I held you in my arms and counted your toes

Every second my hearts love for you grows.

As you grow older and think you know all,

I start to remember when you were the size of a doll.

You graduate school and you start a new life,

Next comes the marriage and you become a wife.

As I sit in my chair rocking from front to back,

My hair now gray, skin slowly starting to crack

I anxiously wait as my mind starts to whirl,

The door slowly opens,

“Well, Grandma—it’s a GIRL!!!”