

L.A.

Charles Bukowski, I never met you
though I've lived in L.A.
cut classes to walk
miles across Hermosa Beach
seen the girl with uncombed hair
sweatshirt backwards
take it off
turn it round on Pier Avenue
I too cool to look
was 19, had a forged I.D.
I've been to Santa Anita
Ben told me on the way his wife was frigid
he lost a hundred bucks, went home
drunk to her and 3 kids
in West Covina

I never met you but I've read your poems
seen Music City full
at 4 a.m.
thought about Allen Ginsberg
thinking about Walt Whitman, then
about those faces
bobbing
to silent music behind the glass

I think of you
behind
your glass

throwing up
Hollywood

-- Roger Holdstock

Burnaby, B.C., Canada

To Charles Bukowski

I

It's 3:40 a.m., Buk, and I've been reading your
stuff and the TRIBUTE to you from all the ass-
kissing lit folk who congregate at your door,
breaking in;

Congratulations on keeping that knife taped behind
that door,
and tip-toeing in the dark through the night to finger it --
Fear, and it makes sense too.

II

Old-timer Lester Cohen, once a Liveright star, long forgotten, gave a talk at NYU before he died -- a big hulky man, big stomach, mountain of white hair. A paranoid, true talk about how his book about Liveright was butchered by the publisher, cut into snippets. He flailed his arms -- he loved Liveright, he was forgotten as a novelist, now his last book was butchered.

Later (after he died, after the reviews never appeared) I saw the remaindered copy for 59¢ at Marlboro Books and didn't buy it. (The title of Cohen's novel, by the way, was WRAPPINGS, and I want to set it down here.)

III

Then there was Joe Gould's oral history of the world, which when he was dead and the notebooks examined, turned out to be just as he said: oral. The notebooks were empty.

IV

Last month Lester Cohen popped up again, naturally in an out-of-print old mag. A memoir of Dreiser in the thirties: a picture of clumsy, remote, black-suited Dreiser in his hotel room apartment with five male secretaries sorting out his mail, his life.

V

Bukowski, at the writers' colony there are all these names of writers carved in wood on scrolls above fireplaces, and almost all are forgotten. Most of them were probably not very good.

VI

O'Neill hated kids. Dickens, Mann liked them. O'Neill's hands trembled so he couldn't eat in public. He drank a lot when he wasn't writing. So do you, you devil you, and get thrown in the drunk tank for putting your fist through a glass door. For every O'Neill, a hundred carbons drinking, fighting, growing moustaches, long hair, and dark brooding visages. They're prowling the streets around City Lights, sneaking an Orange Julius. 18 of them are working with Timothy Leary on his comic book.

VII

Buk, Allen Ginsberg was in Vancouver this week for his 47th birthday sitting behind his harmonium chanting, chanting, fat and bald, while the bland blondes 15-18 sat at his feet waiting for the dirty jokes. Allen's commercials for Buddhism rhymed and his New York, Jewish voice was mellow. (He once wrote a poem: KADDISH.)

VIII

So Bukowski, keep it up, none of it matters, none of it ...
Dreiser was just as crazy, Dickens died in a paroxysm of
excitement acting out his murder scenes on stage, O'Neill
drank as much ...

You are no carbon.

-- David Evanier

Santa Monica CA

DOGS, A CONQUERING-HERO DAYDREAM

This spring my dog pretends hip displasia.
The huge fool drags his ass up the porch
and begs for a cortisone shot. I love him,
but I know when something is out for sympathy,
and I kick him onto the lawn. But he won't rise.
He offers a limp paw, trembles, makes his eyes
glassy and rolls them back in his head. Finally,
so that he won't die just to get my attention,
I push him onto a blanket, pick up the corners,
and heave him into the back of my station wagon.
He moans the whole twelve twisting miles to the vet
and then, when we get there, hears all the dogs,
forgets he is sick, leaps over the tailgate
and starts a fight with a Pekingesee. The vet stares
while I insist that my dog was completely crippled.

So I take the cortisone shot, get into the back
of the station wagon, and my dog cheerfully drives
us home, barking and waving at other dogs,
stops once to run over and shit on the fire chief's lawn,
while carefully my face elongates, my ears and teeth
sharpen,
hair grows all over my arms, and when we get home,
before he can try any more tricks, I leap at him
and easily finish him off there in the driveway.
Then, after carefully weighing the alternatives,
the probable taste of dog food, the short life span,
the effect on my wife and department chairman, sleeping
under the porch, the chance of distemper, I argue
myself back onto two legs, shake
the fur off and walk over to my mint julep,
my other dogs and my cat laughing affectionately,
my own hips rolling oilily on their sockets.
I ease into the sofa of my options.