

Denisa Ághová

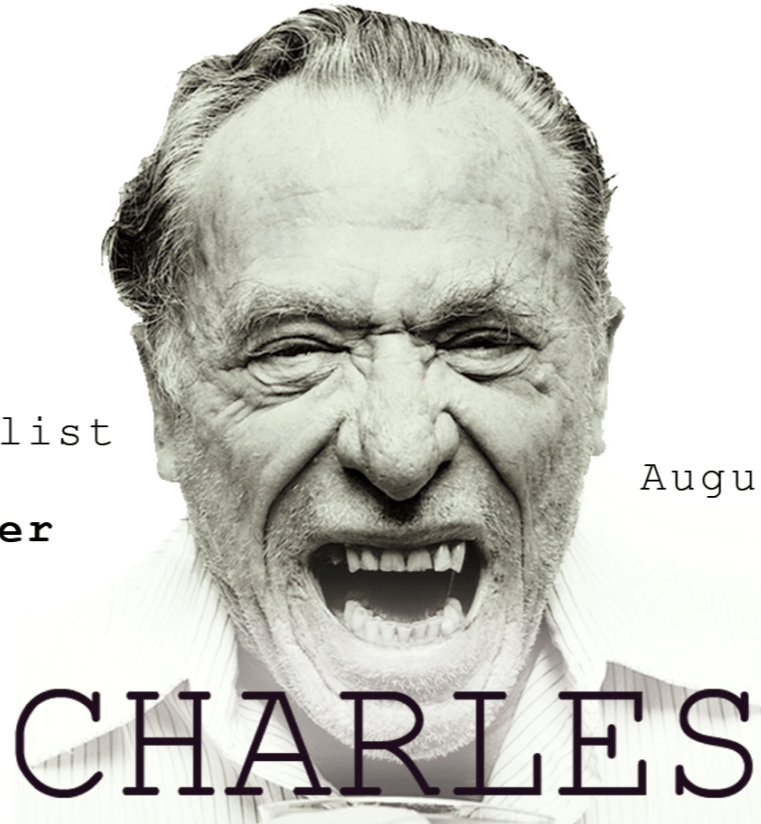
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QUOTES

MICROSITE ABOUT  
poet, novelist  
and short story writer

August 16, 1920  
- March 9, 1994



CHARLES  
BUKOWSKI

# CHARLES BUKOWSKI

## Guide

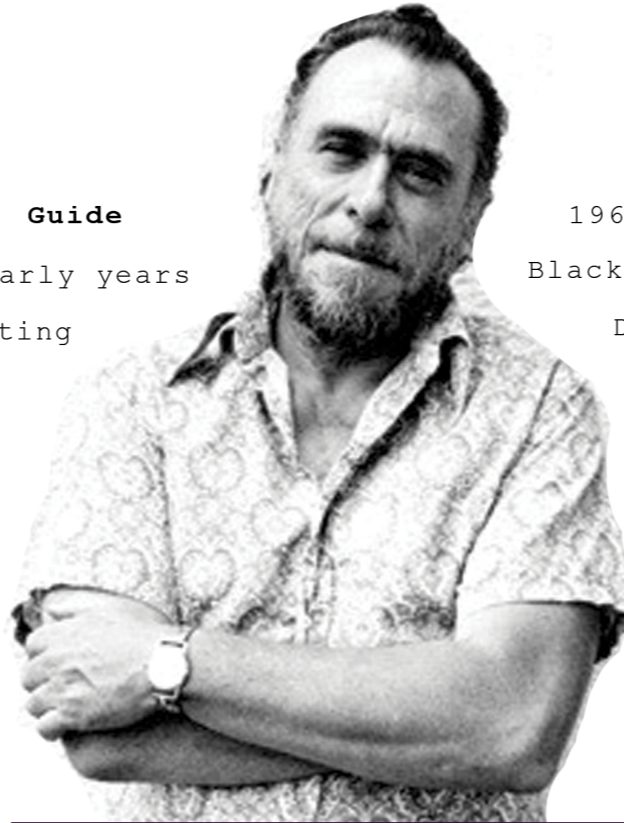
Family and early years

Early writing

1960s

Black Sparrow years

Death



## LIFE

Henry **Charles Bukowski** (born Heinrich Karl Bukowski. August 16, 1920 - March 9, 1994... was a German-born **American poet, novelist, and short story writer.**

His writing was influenced by the **social, cultural, and economic ambience** of his home city of **Los Angeles.**

His work addresses the ordinary lives of poor **Americans**, the act of writing, **alcohol**, relationships with **women**, and the **drudgery of work.**

Bukowski wrote **thousands** of poems, **hundreds** of short stories and **six** novels, eventually publishing over **60 books.** The FBI kept a file on him as a result of his column, Notes of a Dirty Old Man, in the LA underground newspaper **Open City.**

In 1986 Time called Bukowski a "**laureate of American lowlife**". Regarding Bukowski's enduring popular appeal, Adam Kirsch of The New Yorker wrote, "**the secret of Bukowski's appeal. . . [is that] he combines the confessional poet's promise of intimacy with the larger-than-life aplomb of a pulp-fiction hero.**

WORKS

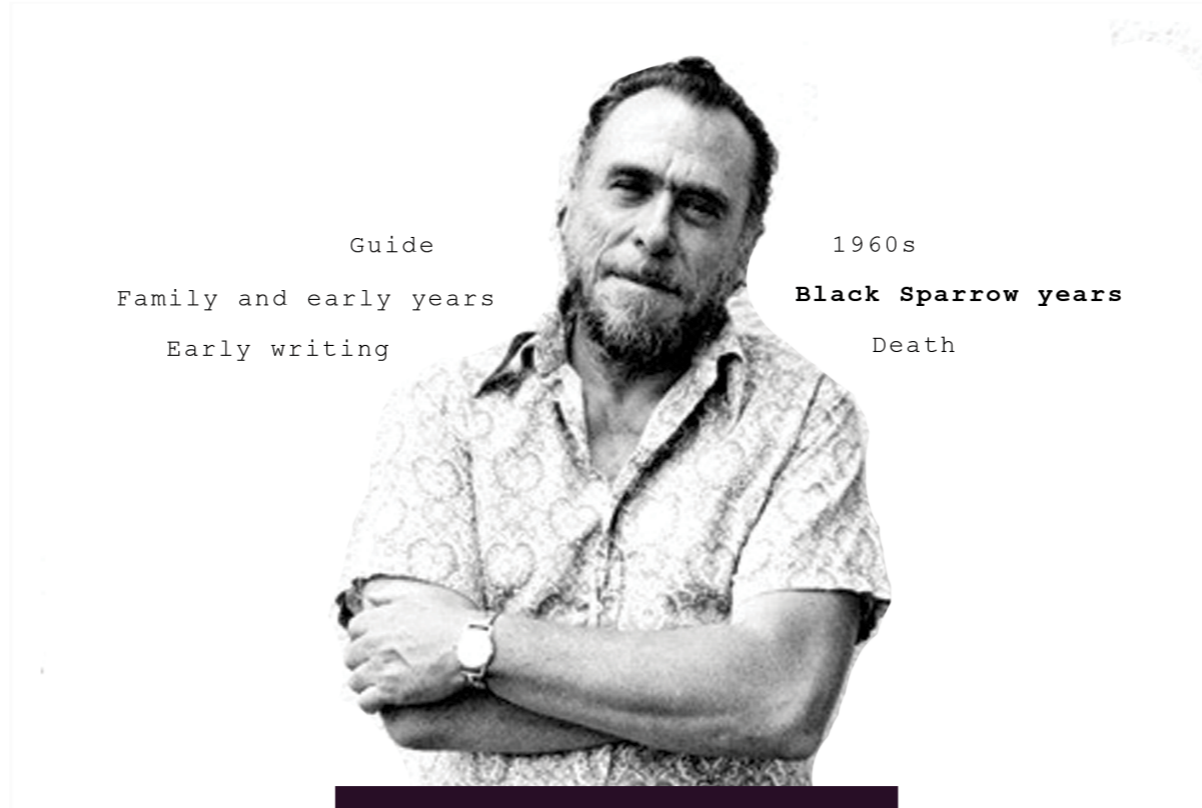
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Black Sparrow  
years

In 1969 Bukowski accepted an offer from Black Sparrow Press publisher John Martin and quit his post office job to dedicate himself to full-time writing. He was then 49 years old. As he explained in a letter at the time, "I have one of two choices - stay in the post office and go crazy ... or stay out here and play at writer and starve. I have decided to starve."

As a measure of respect for Martin's financial support and faith in a relatively unknown writer, Bukowski published almost all of his subsequent major works with Black Sparrow Press, which became a highly successful enterprise owing to Martin's business acumen and editorial skills.

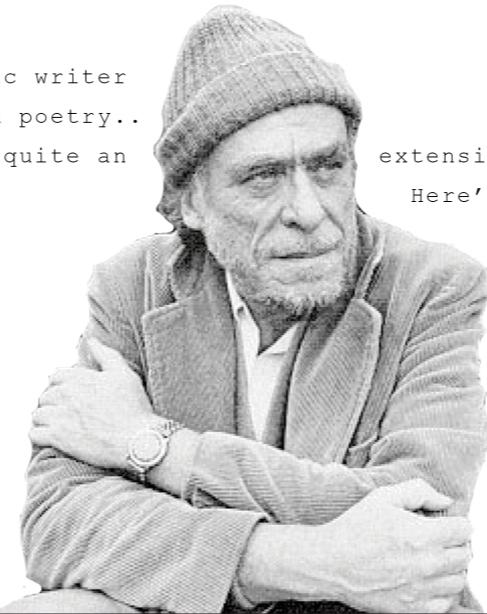
His various affairs and relationships provided material for his stories and poems. Another important relationship was with "Tanya", pseudonym of "Amber O'Neil", described in Bukowski's "Women" as a pen-pal that evolved into a week-end tryst at Bukowski's residence in Los Angeles in the 1970s. "Amber O'Neil" later self-published a chapbook about the affair entitled "Blowing My Hero"

In 1976, Bukowski met Linda Lee Beighle, a health food restaurant owner, rock-and-roll groupie, aspiring actress, heiress to a small Philadelphia "Main Line" fortune and devotee of Meher Baba. They were eventually married by Manly Palmer Hall, a Canadian-born author and mystic, in 1985. Beighle is referred to as "Sara" in Bukowski's novels Women and Hollywood.

# BUKOWSKI

LIFE

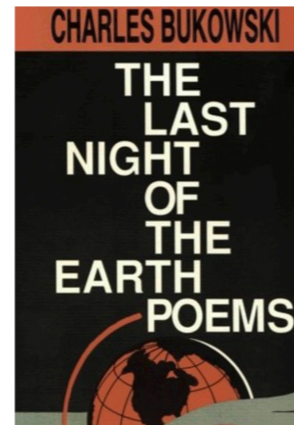
As a prolific writer of both prose and poetry.. Bukowski left quite an



extensive body of work. Here's where you should start.

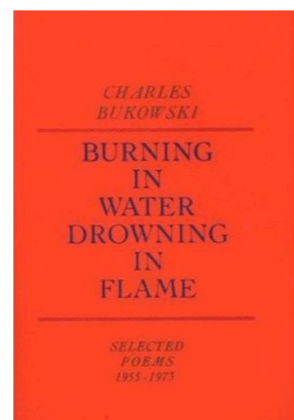
QUOTES

## WORKS



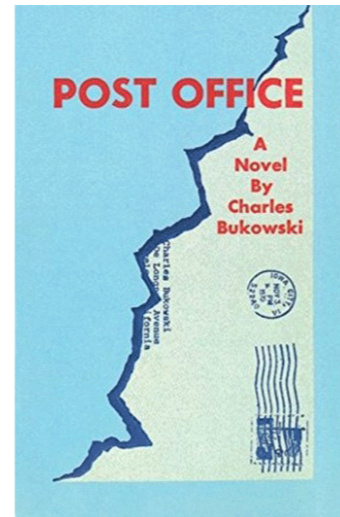
### The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992)

The Last Night of the Earth Poems is one of Bukowski's most successful collections of poetry. Written near the end of his life, it reflects the dead-end jobs, disappointments, and hardships of his youth. Poems such as 'Young in New Orleans' describe the adversity suffered by people living on the fringes of society. The old man's perspective is movingly understated; readers are not overwhelmed by tragedy, but this subtlety in fact makes the effect on the reader even more compelling. The tone throughout is also punctuated with ironic humor.



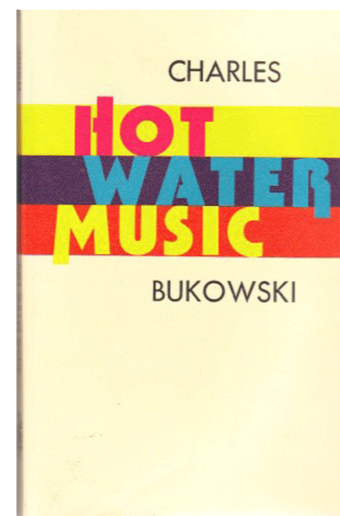
### Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame: Selected Poems 1955-1973

When it comes to Bukowski's poetry, the writer's first, great anthology collection is without doubt the place to start. Not falling for the form's usual traps, Bukowski's free verse doesn't obscure his gritty message and harsh truths. On the contrary, the effect of his indenting and unusual spacing is extraordinarily profound. Bukowski's free and somewhat abstract form is in fact used masterfully to highlight the poems' strong images, ensuring that they always pack a punch: "next time take my left arm or a fifty / but not my poems: / I'm not Shakespeare / but sometime simply / there won't be any more, abstract or otherwise; / there'll always be money and whores and drunkards."



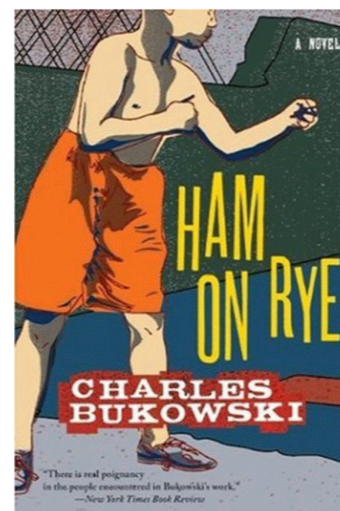
#### **Post Office (1971)**

Bukowski's first novel, published when he was 50 years old, is an autobiographical account of his life, roughly from the years 1952 to 1969. We follow Henry Chinaski, drifting from woman to woman, and postal service job to unemployment (to postal service job again)—a gutter rollercoaster of a life peppered throughout with alcoholism and dark humor.



#### **Hot Water Music (1983)**

Another short story collection, another record of obsessions for all things drinking, gambling, women and writing. Yet what perhaps sets this book apart is just how much it abounds with wit and cynicism. 'The Death of the Father' parts I and II, and their harrowing, yet side-splitting, depiction of the aftermath of his father's death, are prime examples of Bukowski's style. The stories in this anthology not only represent what the world can do to people, but, in their debauched and cruel actions, what people can do to the world. The stark honesty of his writing is reflected in the brutality of the phrasing in *Hot Water Music*: 'Not Quite Bernadette,' for instance, features the lines: 'I wrapped the towel around my bloody cock and called the doctor's office'.



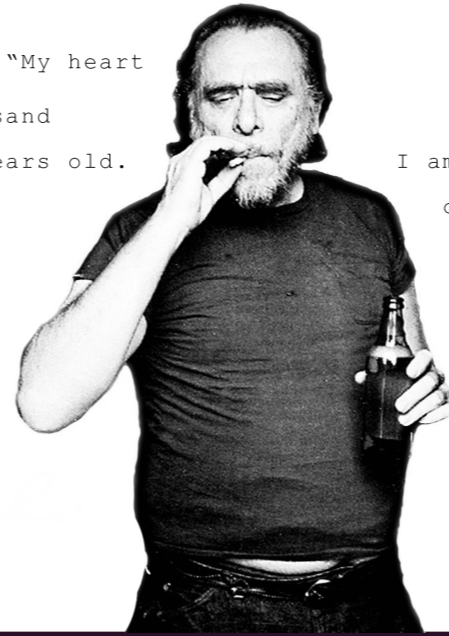
#### **Ham on Rye (1982)**

Widely considered his best, Bukowski's fourth novel is a coming-of-age story. Its main character, Henry Chinaski, recounts the crude brutality of life growing up under the Great Depression; scarred by abuse and isolation, Henry comes to reject society and mainstream culture. Though tragic, the book is blessed by the fantastic wit and irony that Bukowski is renowned for, and is at times a savagely funny reflection on life. Its narrative is yet again semi-autobiographical, and much of its suffering reflects true events undergone by Bukowski. "I had noticed that both in the very poor and very rich extremes of society the mad were often allowed to mingle freely."

BUKOWSKI

"My heart  
is a thousand  
years old.

I am not like  
other people."



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## QUOTES

"We are like roses that have never bothered to bloom when we should have bloomed and it is as if the sun has become disgusted with waiting"

"We don't even ask happiness, just a little less pain."

"If you have the ability to love, love yourself first."

YOU JUST CAN'T GIVE  
A MAN A NEW GOVERNMENT  
LIKE A NEW HAT AND  
EXPECT A DIFFERENT MAN  
INSIDE THAT HAT

"and love is a word used  
too much and  
much  
too soon."

"The problem with the world is that  
the intelligent people are  
full of doubts. While the stupid ones  
are full of confidence."

"If you're losing your soul and you  
know it, then you've still  
got a soul left to lose."

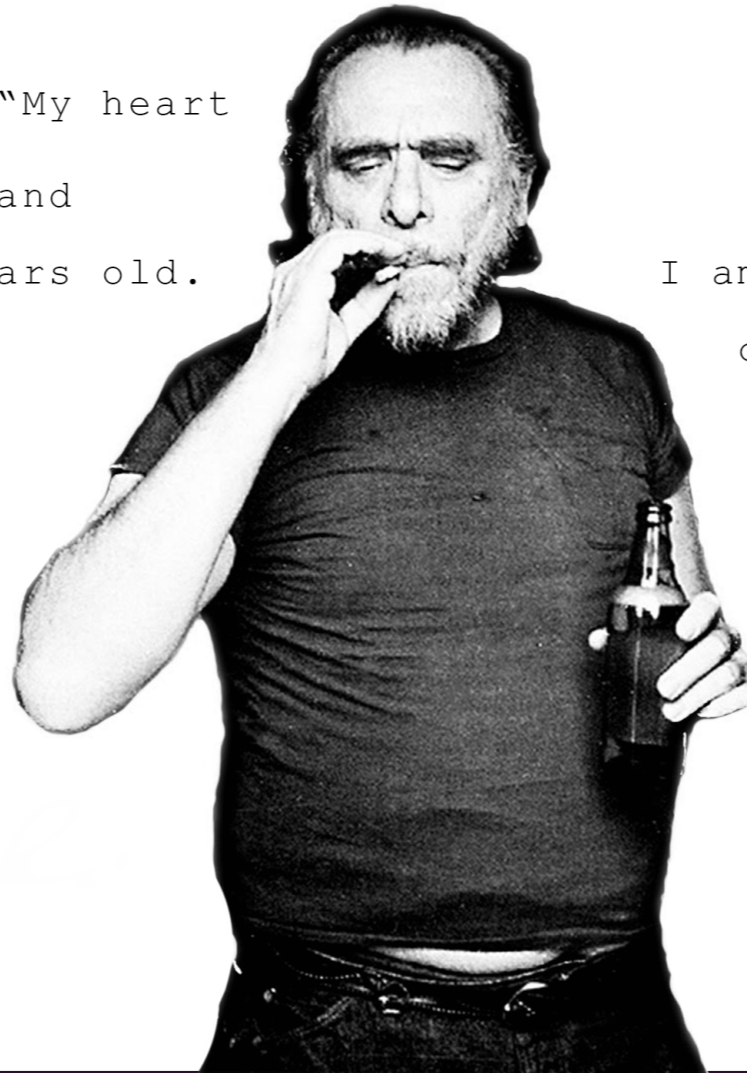
"Find what you love and let it kill you "

*Charles Bukowski*

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