

# Bukowski and the Greyhound Bus

*by* Jerry Ratch

It's a grey and stormy day naturally  
We're crowded into a tiny bus shelter  
as it pours 57 varieties of cats and hounds

They keep hitting the pavement around us  
with the splatting sounds those animals make  
when falling out of the heavens

When the Greyhound Bus finally pulls up  
and the door opens, we can see it's  
Charles Bukowski driving the bus, even though his nametag  
reads: Noah

His face is pock-marked and the bus  
smells like a barroom, a cigar butt hanging from  
his mouth. *"Sorry,"* he says, jerking his thumb behind him

*"It's standing room only. You can ride into Santa Rosa  
standing, or sitting in the wet aisle like some of them  
or you can stay here at the roadside, it's your choice*

*There's no other bus till tomorrow morning  
Well, what's it gonna be? We ain't got all day"*  
Bukowski chomps on his old unlit cigar butt

but at least he still has some teeth  
We peer into the bus load of people  
It's all the old poets from the Great San Francisco

Poetry Wars. They keep looking at me without saying  
a word. You can tell some of them don't write  
anymore, and they look like the dead. They just

stay on the bus for old time sake, or for the memories  
of self-torture, because they enjoy it  
And it's only wet on the floor of the aisle

So we get in, of course, with the rest of the herd  
and sit down in the water on the floor, back to back  
so we can at least have a backrest

The cold and wet seep up my pants  
and we grow used to it. I face my peers  
and after awhile begin reading some of my

funny poems. *"Read them the good stuff!"*  
yells Bukowski from the front of the bus  
looking in the rear-view mirror

*"Quit fooling around. Read them Puppet X*  
*This may be your last chance*  
*Go ahead,"* Bukowski growls, *"start reading"*

And he settles back and keeps driving the bus  
around the curves, following the river  
beside the road, until we pull into Santa Rosa

where most of the passengers get off, weeping  
and take busses heading in any other direction  
in their complicated, unsettled lives

