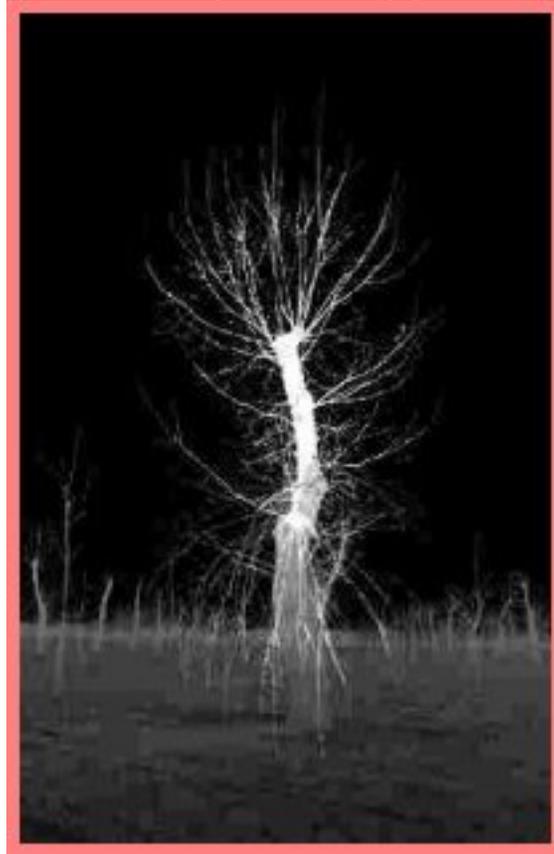


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## Everybody Wants to Be Bukowski

My friend J was just fired  
from her job teaching philosophy  
at a small Catholic university  
for not wearing her mortarboard,  
for defending the rights of prostitutes,  
for drinking Cuervo in the beds of pickup  
trucks in the shadow of the Alamo,  
for kicking out the jams, for taking  
young guitar players and old professors  
as lovers.

I tried to tell her months ago, once  
you join the tweed brigade and hang  
letters from your ass, that's it --  
no more scromping in the dirt,  
no more rockabilly stomp,  
no more flights to Amsterdam,

Huntsville, Toronto, New York,  
no more busking in the subway,  
no more lean taut dreameyed  
poet boys, no more manufactured  
grief.

Everybody wants to be  
Bukowski, but nobody wants  
to pay for the poetry. We all  
want to be drunken heroes,  
call ourselves angels and saints  
and scoundrels, but we want it  
delivered to our doors, no muss,  
no fuss, no pain, no blood,  
no damage.

It doesn't work like that.  
It never has.

You can't be Byron without  
Augusta and the clubfoot;

can't be Yeats without the fairies  
swarming like mosquitoes;

can't be Wilde without treacherous  
boys and the Black Maria;

can't be Burroughs without shooting  
junk and your wife in the head;

can't be Ginsberg without the boobyhatch,  
or Vonnegut without Dresden on fire,  
or Hemingway without the War,  
or Fitzgerald without Zelda screaming,  
or Sexton without screaming  
yourself;

and you can't be Bukowski  
and teach philosophy  
at small Catholic universities,

and you can't teach philosophy  
at small Catholic universities  
and be Bukowski.

It doesn't work like that.  
It never has.

## A Lizard Girl He Knew

She had all the things  
he wanted: beauty, brains,  
a flawless sense of timing,  
and a positive mania  
for the old switcheroo, yet  
there was something

that called to mind the lizard,  
perhaps the jeweled eyes  
that never blinked, or  
the pink darting tongue  
that teased but never twined  
with his, but in any event,

it was enough for him to search  
her skin for emerging scales  
to peel one  
by one.

## John Nettles

John Nettles teaches English at a small college in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and loves the view from his porch. He lives with his wife Shari, a wonderful poet, and their two children, both of whom excel at the extemporaneous rant. His work has shown up in various publications and websites, including *The Cafe Review*, *Recursive Angel*, *Gravity*, *Conspire*, *Moveo Angelus*, *The Dead Mule*, *Maelstrom*, and *The Astrophysicist's Tango Partner Speaks*.