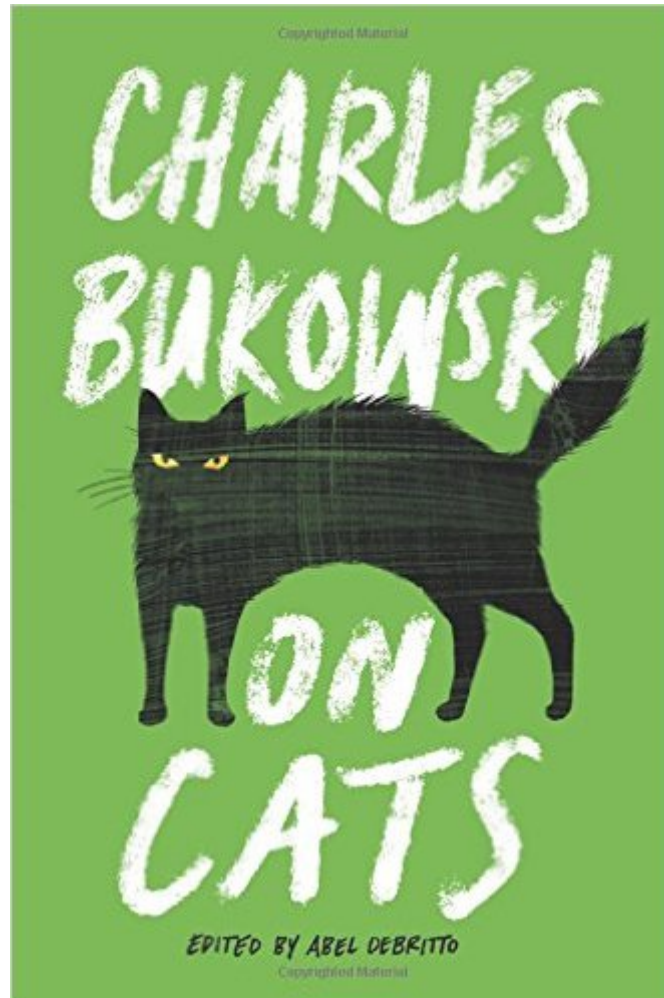


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# On Cats



## Synopsis

A raw and tenderly funny look at the human-cat relationship, from one of our most treasured and transgressive writers. "The cat is the beautiful devil." Felines touched a vulnerable spot in Charles Bukowski's crusty soul. For the writer, there was something majestic and elemental about these inscrutable creatures he admired, sentient beings whose searing gaze could penetrate deep into our being. Bukowski considered cats to be unique forces of nature, elusive emissaries of beauty and love. *On Cats* offers Bukowski's musings on these beloved animals and their toughness and resiliency. He honors them as fighters, hunters, survivors who command awe and respect as they grip tightly onto the world around them: "A cat is only ITSELF, representative of the strong forces of life that won't let go." Funny, moving, tough, and caring, *On Cats* brings together the acclaimed writer's reflections on these animals he so admired. Bukowski's cats are fierce and demanding—he captures them stalking their prey; crawling across his typewritten pages; waking him up with claws across the face. But they are also affectionate and giving, sources of inspiration and gentle, insistent care. Poignant yet free of treacle, *On Cats* is an illuminating portrait of this one-of-a-kind artist and his unique view of the world, witnessed through his relationship with the animals he considered his most profound teachers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bukowski and cats being two of my favorite things in the world, I actually found this little volume to be a bit frustrating at first. Most collectors and fans know that Bukowski loved cats and owned many of them, from poems like "one for the old boy", chapters from "Hollywood", and the documentary

footage where he's playing with them, talking to them, and scooching over on the sofa to give them enough room as he reads poems or does interviews. But Bukowski didn't really come out as a cat person or start writing about cats until the 1980s, and this book is more or less a chronology that begins decades before, when Bukowski was a very different kind of artist. So roughly the first half of the book is packed with scraps of early work that feel a little scattered and off point--or at least lacking in the kind of magic of those better known moments. From the mid-point of the book on, though the material may seem more familiar, it also becomes more engaging and moving and memorable, and this builds up right through to the end. Nothing too cutesy or flowery, just nailing in his inimitable way, why these animals mean so much to us. If a casual reader picks this up, maybe even suggest they read it back to front, which is actually possible with the scrapbook style of the book.

I have not read much of Bukowski's work, but when this popped up in my Kindle recommendations, I thought I'd give it a go, and I have to say that this is the most honest, unpretentious work I've seen from him. Mostly poems about cats he had, this collection also has a few humorous sketches and photographs of Bukowski and his feline family. Bukowski clearly loved and respected each of his feline companions and appreciated their complexity, integrity, independence and sensibility. Reading the poems about them reveals a lot about our own humanity. I've come back to purchase a hardcover copy for my sister, a fellow cat lover, as a Christmas present. I think this would make a wonderful gift to your literate, feline loving friend or for yourself!

If you're a Charles Bukowski fan you should own this. Otherwise don't bother. It's a collection of very short essays and poems centered around cats. None are exceptionally noteworthy. My guess is that Bukowski fans (and I'm one) are as interested in his personal life as in his writings. As such, this provides a bit of a glimpse. However, if you're just looking for something to read, you can easily do better.

A book of Bukowski's short pieces and poetry all about his love of cats? Admittedly I was sold before I cracked a page. Bukowski's love and admiration for his feline friends shines through every page and it's easy to see why. His rough-and-tumble group of strays share so many of the writer's traits it's no wonder they gravitated toward one another. It was wonderful reading from this softer side of a man who is widely remembered as a gruff, alcohol loving womanizer. I thought I couldn't love the man anymore than I already do and then suddenly he's a sweet, feline lovin' softie! I hope

in the end Bukowski got his wish and moved on from his human life and into his next as a cat.\*Thank you Ecco and Edelweiss for this review copy\*

Charles Bukowski (1920 -- 1994) was once an underground, cult figure but his reputation has grown since his death. His poetry, novels, and stories continue to be read and a steady stream of his writings has been published posthumously. "On Cats" is part of a trilogy of recent Bukowski books, together with "On Writing" and "On Love" edited by Abel Debritto, a Fulbright scholar and the author of the study "Charles Bukowski:King of the Underground". It is a good addition to the large body of Bukowski's writing. The book consists of poems and short prose works.. Many of the works have been published before in other forms, but the specific texts in this book are each published for the first time. Debritto gives a useful list of sources at the end of the volume. For example, one of the best works in this collection is a poem called "The Mockingbird" which is about a mockingbird which receives an unhappy comeuppance after taunting a cat. This is one of Bukowski's best-known poems and appears in a collection titled "Mockingbird Wish Me Luck." The version in "On Cats" is basically identical to the published version, but it includes two words that were deleted when the poem reached its final form. Some of the works in this book, however, are published for the first time. The book also includes photographs of many of the cats Bukowski and his wife owned and loved over the years who are the subjects of some of the poems in this collection. Readers familiar with Bukowski will not be surprised at his love for cats. In this book, cats are not sentimentalized and portrayed as furry, sweet little creatures. Many of the works, such as "The Mockingbird" show the hard, cruel side of cats as they pursue and kill birds. Cats are fighters, as was the author. The book sometimes emphasizes cats as loners who come off the hard life of the streets searching for a home. These traits too they share with Bukowski. "On Cats" also suggests that cats are comfortable with themselves, feel no guilt, and know how to relax by sleeping -- often as much as twenty hours in a day. In the book's concluding poem, Bukowski states: "I study these/creatures./they are my/teachers." One of the prose entries in the book is an excerpt from a 1960 letter Bukowski wrote to Sheri Martinelli. Bukowski says "[t]he cat is the beautiful devil." He continues his discussion of the cat;"There are no spirits or gods in a cat, don't look for them, Shed. A cat is the picture of the eternal machinery, like the sea. You don't pet the sea because it's pretty but you pet a cat -- why?-- ONLY BECAUSE HE'LL LET YOU. And a cat never knows fear--finally -- he only winds up into the spring of the sea and the rock, and even in a death-fight he does not think of anything except the majesty of darkness." With this posthumous book Bukowski joins poets including T.S. Elliott who have written a volume devoted to cats. This book will interest the growing group of Bukowski readers. It will also

interest lovers of cats who are willing to hear a unique, tough-minded voice about their favorite animal. Robin Friedman

I saw this and thought "cats and Bukowski, two things I love. I can't go wrong." Unfortunately, it wasn't as amazing as I'd hoped but still well worth a read. Some of the poems are brilliant, classic Bukowski, others are pretty terrible and Buk even admits it, but mostly they're middle of the road. Still, I found myself thinking of the wisdom he found in his relationships with and appreciation of cats. It's made me look at my own cat with a new appreciation, not that I didn't already love her to pieces. This might be the start of some new cat-centric meditation practice. Who knows? It might catch on and make us all more well balanced, calm, brave and "cool."

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