

“the bluebird” Charles Bukowski

STANZA A

1. there's a bluebird in my heart that
2. wants to get out
3. but I'm too tough for him,
4. I say, stay in there, I'm not going
5. to let anybody see
6. you.

STANZA B

7. there's a bluebird in my heart that
8. wants to get out
9. but I pour whiskey on him and inhale
10. cigarette smoke
11. and the whores and the bartenders
12. and the grocery clerks
13. never know that
14. he's
15. in there.

STANZA C

16. there's a bluebird in my heart that
17. wants to get out
18. but I'm too tough for him,
19. I say,
20. stay down, do you want to mess
21. me up?
22. you want to screw up the
23. works?
24. you want to blow my book sales in
25. Europe?

STANZA D

26. there's a bluebird in my heart that
27. wants to get out
28. but I'm too clever, I only let him out
29. at night sometimes
30. when everybody's asleep.
31. I say, I know that you're there,
32. so don't be
33. sad.

STANZA E

34. then I put him back,
35. but he's singing a little
36. in there, I haven't quite let him
37. die
38. and we sleep together like
39. that
40. with our
41. secret pact
42. and it's nice enough to
43. make a man
44. weep, but I don't
45. weep, do
46. you?

Student video of “the bluebird” (Charles Bukowski)

Foregrounded tension across poem between 2nd person (“you”) & 3rd person pronouns (“he” / “him”) in persona’s discussion of “bluebird”

Stanza A: “I” x3; “you” x1; “him” x1

First person (x3) predominates over **second person pronouns (x1)**. This transfers to the visual mode with character dominating bathroom shots and camera angle giving character power by being below eye level → he is in charge of his bluebird.



but I’m too tough for him (3)

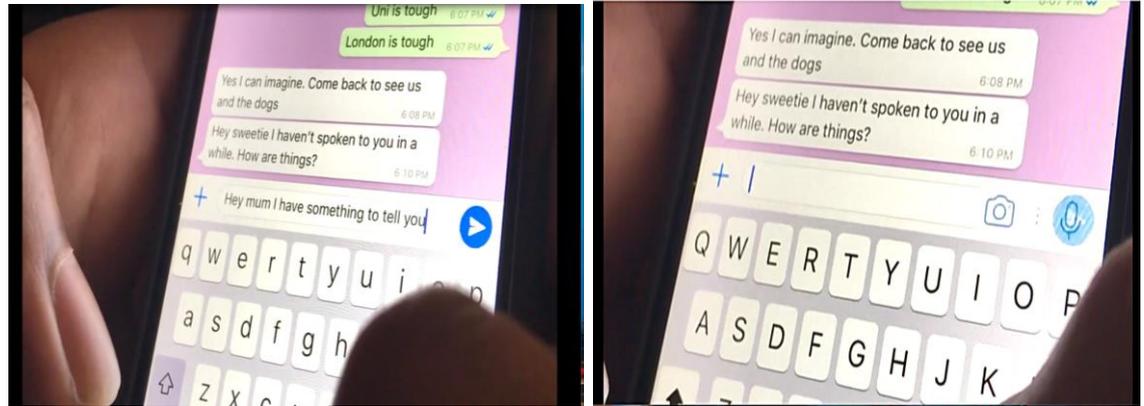


Doesn’t use towel to dry face - all well with his relationship with the bluebird?

Stanza B: “I” x1; “you” x0; “he/him” x2;

3rd person (x2) distancing predominates over **2nd person pronouns (x0)** direct acknowledgement of bluebird

→ he quashes telling mum about bluebird in text msg.



1st person (x1) predominates over **2nd person pronouns (x0)**. He is still in control of bluebird, but less powerfully so since **1st person** instances have declined from Stanza A (**x3 → x1**).



Unlike Stanza A, he doesn't dominate first image; camera angle is above character suggesting less power. While second image suggests he is back in control, in third image the buildings in the background dominate him, implying power to suppress bluebird is weakening.

Stanza C: "I" x2; "you" x 3; "him" x1



IMAGE

PARALLELISM



2nd person (x3) predominates over 1st person pronouns (x2). He has lost control of the bluebird. Camera above character reflects loss of power.

'but I'm too tough for him' (3).

'but I'm too tough for him' (18).

STANZA A

STANZA C

Half-exposed window behind head. What he suppressed (at "back of mind") is escaping.

Do + 'you want to'? (x 3)
(20, 22, 24).

Only repetition of three-word expression in poem.

Warrants emotional and physical intensity of Stanza C shots



Stanza D: 'I' x4; 'you' x1; 'him' x1;



1st person (x4) predominates over 2nd person pronouns (x1).

Character back in control, letting bluebird out on his own terms.

Reflecting pronoun quantities, character dominates shots again from top to bottom.

Return to predominance of "I" over "you" is again reflected in lack of violence and palpable emotion.

Stanza D develops window device from Stanza C.

Large uncovered, well-lit windows and shooting outside suggest release of bluebird.

Videoed poem blends Stanzas D & E

This blending is motivated by structural deviation within the poem. Unlike all the other stanzas,

"There's a bluebird in my heart that wants to get out..."

is absent from start of Stanza E.

Stanza E: “I” x3 & “we” x1; “you” x1; “he/him” x3;

Predominance of **1st person (x4)** over **2nd person pronouns (x1)**, as well as of **3rd person (x3)** over **2nd person pronouns (x1)**, suggest character can once again suppress his bluebird. But further deviation of Stanza E from poem implies all is not what it seems...

Stanzas A-D: “but I...”

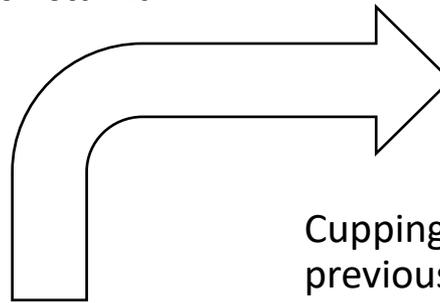
3rd line of each stanza

Stanza E: “but he’s...”

2nd line

“weep, but I...”

11th line



Cupping of hands on face links to previous images suggesting despair. As in Stanza A, he doesn’t dry face.

This **INTERNAL DEVIATION** creates tension with suppression of bluebird being straightforward: “then I put him back” (34); “we sleep together like that with our secret pact”, (38-41)

Open door suggests bluebird can’t be contained. He will have to battle his bluebird again.

Stanza E of video links “do you?” (45-46) to emotional trouble, in Stanza C of video, associated with repetition of “do you?”



When voice-over utters “do you?”, half smile changes to no smile. He is still emotionally troubled.

