An Introductory Approach to the Reception of Charles Bukowski's Performance Poetry, Reperformed Online

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Abstract

Charles Bukowski meant his poetry to be performed. In the 1960s and 1970s his editor, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, among others, organised public poetry readings where Bukowski was the star. Some recorded his performances, which were later found on compact disks or in documentaries released after his death. Some shows were retold in books by his friends or scholars. His voice was deep and melancholic, adding value to his words. The purpose of this article is to discuss the transfer of Bukowski's poetry performance skills online. Indeed, readers of Bukowski have invested time and effort to "remediate" (Bolter and Grusin 1999) Bukowski's poetry, using a new medium to create new ways of performing poetry. Using the example of the poem "The Crunch" selected from a corpus of 30 YouTube videos created by amateurs and a selection of video excerpts, and studying the use of image and audio within these videos, I will discuss the remediation of Bukowski's poetry in a new medium and how this can affect its reception. The goal of this article is to decide which methodologies and tools could be practical in such a study. The voice is not the only tool that is used when performing online, sound and images are also taken into account. This article is introductory and reflects on the reception this new form of poetry performance, as we can either read, listen to, or watch poetry independently, or all of the above, using the `ImageJ` processor and `Praat` to study the videoed poems.

1   Introduction

Bukowski's poem "The Crunch" first appeared in the magazine Second Coming (Bukowski 1977b). It was published in the same year by Black Sparrow Press in a book of poetry entitled *Love Is a Dog from Hell* (Bukowski 1977a). Bukowski, a Californian writer of prose and poetry, worked during the day and wrote prose poetry using long free verses at night. He is quoted in memes online, and readers use his texts to create videos which they share on platforms such as YouTube. This author's texts translate well into moving images since his poetry was written to be spoken. The rhythm mattered more to the writer than verses or quatrains. He used to write while listening to classical music, such as that

by Bach, which affected his writing and made it possible for him to become a successful reader of poetry on stage. Indeed, Bukowski performed his poetry regularly from the end of the 1960s until 1980. He started onstage readings with the poet and owner of the City Lights book shop and publishing house Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who brought Bukowski to San Francisco to perform. One of his first poetry readings was recorded and made into a documentary movie directed by Taylor Hackford (1976) for a cable channel in the US, and is available online.[1] Even though Bukowski's poetry readings were successful in venues as varied as university lecture halls, theatres, or the City Lights, he abhorred the exercise and eventually quit the poetry reading circuit. His readings were a success in part due to the audience-response and the pace and tone of his voice. His poetry would become alive on stage, with a constant back-and-forth with the public described by some as rowdy, electric, eclectic, etc. (Smith 2012, pp. 46–50) Bukowski would present his work in a melancholic and reflective tone. One can hear his voice in preserved recordings or from recordings on compact disks made available on Soundcloud by Bukowski.net, a website of readers.[2] His voice was and still is highly recognisable. He would, in a way, leave his words hanging in mid-air. He would sit on a chair facing the audience. The show involved Bukowski drinking, burping and conversing with the spectators, but this did not detract from the strength of the poems uttered through his lips. The poems he read flowed effortlessly to the public, who listened and appreciated his art. His last poetry reading occurred in 1980;[3] he would pass away fourteen years later.

The author is dead; long live the author. The goal of this research is to access how Internet users read and understand poetry and how they make it their own by re-performing it, when making videos, for instance. Tony Tran (2016, p. 196) explained: "YouTube's immense popularity has created various forms of public and informal collections and archives that have allowed us greater access to overwhelming amounts of moving image media and data, including materials that extend beyond YouTube." Today, the audience response to Bukowski's poems takes a new form when they are re-performed online by Internet users. I use the word 're- perform' as the YouTube videos of Bukowski's work are what Bolter and Grusin (1999, p. 273) would consider "remediations", i.e. "the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms". The poems have taken on a new medium in the form of YouTube videos. Some researchers have coined the term "deformance" (Samuels and McGann 2020) to define how one could reinterpret poetry. However, the corpus of videos studied below cannot be considered this as they do not fundamentally change the construct of the poem nor deform it by altering or reordering (Samuels and McGann 2020, p. 36) the text, which stays constant in all videos, although performers instead add to it through image and sound. Even though "adding" is the third mode of "deformance" mentioned by Samuels and McGann in their article, the videos

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[1] It was first shown on KCET, a local Californian channel before being released on PBS' Art-bound series.

[2] Some examples can be found on Bukowski.net. Charles Bukowski works database. Accessed December 30, 2023.

[3] The poetry reading happened at the Sweetwater music club in Redondo Beach, close to his hometown of San Pedro, California.

do not add to the structure of the poem, to the text, but to the context, to how the poem is staged online. These videos, or videoed poems, offer us a glimpse into how the reader responds to a text, a peculiarity we didn't have access to before the Internet, except through sociological studies involving interviews and polling.

2   Method and Corpus

2.1   Method

Reyes and Manovich (2020, p. 418) expressed their wish to move "from basic technical skills to the design of innovative and reflective visualization models" in their approach to cultural analytics and cultural visualisation. Media visualisation would allow the study of the videography of the poem from a new perspective. However, the approach chosen here is much more modest, closer to the study of Michelle Phan's videos and discussion boards by Tran (2016). I employ a basic study of a set of cultural data, a corpus of videos selected from YouTube, a user-generated video streaming site, to assess the use of poetry by Internet users and try to explain their interpretive work through similarities observed or, on the contrary, through the uniqueness of the videos. I will also explore the reception of the selected poem by the audience at large.

This study is a preliminary approach, particularly concerning computational studies. This article considers how the poem "The Crunch" has evolved from being read on stage or in a documentary by its author, to being uploaded to YouTube by Internet users. The study starts with a general overview of the videos taken as a whole, a "distant reading" of the videos presented online and their receptions, with a look at the comments sections for each video. This is followed by a closer reading of the videos, with a more in depth study of a set of three videos at a time for each close study using image and audio analysis. The idea behind this organisation is to "divide and conquer" the study of a corpus that involves both text, image and audio. The aim is also to demonstrate how users remediate this poem to make it their own and how varied their interpretation of the text is. As a result the analysis is threefold.

The first objective is to detail the reception of the reperformed poems using a distant reading of the videos and the comments they attracted. Distant reading taken as a whole will provide an analysis of the reception of the videos by a wide audience. This distant study is accomplished through a statistical analysis of the videos, and text-mining of the comments using `Voyant-Tools.org` (Sinclair and Rockwell 2016), an open-source, web-based application, to perform text analysis of the more than 2,000 comments under the first video.

This quantitative study is followed by a more qualitative approach, a closer viewing and listening, since the second objective is to get an in depth view of the videos, and study how images on the one hand, and sound on the other hand, are used by readers to reperform Bukowski's poem. Comparing three videos was necessary as I did not have the manpower to study all videos using computational study. I decided to bring a selective approach to my study, which has become more descriptive than a study of all thirty videos compared together

would have been. The study of the images, followed by the study of the audio, utilise another approach to reception studies, that of the content creators, in how they interpret the poem "The Crunch" into something new. The goal is to show the variations developed in the reperformed poem. For each part of the closer study, a set of three videos have been chosen for both the image and the audio analysis.

The study of the video images will provide answers to how the content creators visually recreate the poem, whether they use the same tools, the same fragmentation of stanzas, once again going from general (all the images taken together) to specific images. This study is done using ImageJ (Abramoff et al. 2004), an image processor, which will help compare and contrast the excerpts from three videos selected for their varied fragmentation of the images.

The study of the audio is necessary as it relates to the idea of performance, defined in the Oxford Dictionary[4] as "The action of performing a play, piece of music, ceremony, etc.; execution, interpretation". While the first close study of three videos focuses on the fragmentation of images, here, I am interested in the variations in the reading of poetry. Tany E. Clement (2020, p. 280) explained that "sound is air pressure variation over time". One could relate air pressure variation to the reading variations developed in poetry, as stated in Bernstein's (1998) introduction to *Close Listening*, citing Gregory Nagy: "to perform the song … is to recompose it, to change it, to move it." Readers online also change, move, the written text within their videos. With a closer look at the videos, I will suggest a possible way to study how each reader has their own interpretation and own rendition of the poem through their use of audio, for example a different voice or background music. The third analysis is conducted using Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2023), a "computer program with which you can analyse, synthesize, and manipulate speech". This program offers the possibility to make pitch and intensity analysis of the sounds selected, and analyse their waveforms and spectrograms side by side.

2.2 Data Presentation

2.2.1 Corpus Selection

The corpus of thirty videos[5] selected for analysis of Bukowski's performance poetry, re-performed online, is that of videos adapting the poem "The Crunch" (1977). Bukowski's text in each video stays, in most cases, the same, even though this poem has the characteristic of having had several versions published over the years. Most videos use the first two versions of the poem, 16 videos use the version from the magazine Second Coming, 11 videos use the version from *Love Is a Dog From Hell* (1977).[6]

Content creators avoid using the third version of the poem, published in 1999 in *What Matters Most is How Well You Walk Through the Fire* (Bukowski 1999),

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4 The definition of performance can be found at link. Accessed November 16, 202.
5 I have used a YouTube playlist to gather the videos online before downloading them to an offline folder. YouTube Playlist, Accessed October 27, 2022.
6 The three versions of the poem can be found online on Bukowski.net, Accessed October 27, 2022.

which is why only version one or version two is mentioned in Table 1. After the author's death, John Martin, his editor, sold Bukowski's publishing rights to Ecco Press, which would soon be purchased by Harper Collins. Martin remained editor of Bukowski's books until the 2000s when he eventually decided to retire. Readers snub the third version, which appears in none of their videos, most likely because of research completed by a community of Bukowski readers and fans online. They have discovered that the books of poetry published after Bukowski's death have been, according to them, overedited by Bukowski's former editor. They consider the last versions of his poems "stained" or "impure" and do not consider them Bukowski's poetry (Macaud 2021, pp. 319–327). This could explain why the YouTube community has also decided to avoid the last version of the poem in their video making, as Bukowski's fandom online is a tight-knit community.

Table 1 overviews the selected videos, found on YouTube with information such as title of the video, version of the poem, and number of likes, views and comments. The comments, likes and views were recorded on October 27, 2022 and are likely to change due to the changeable nature of the internet.

A corpus of thirty videos was used for the study of the reception of these videos, through the study of comments, likes and views.

The three videos chosen for image and video analysis are:

- "The Crunch by Charles Bukowski" (video 4, with the voice of Tom O'Bedlam and classic music)

- "'The Crunch' by Charles Bukowski" (video 26, with the voice of Charles Bukowski and no background sound)

- "The Crunch by (Charles Bukowski) x Kids (1995)" (video 12, with the voice of Charles Bukowski and hip-hop music)

Table 1 offers a few statistics relating to the videos. Other interesting facts are available and are developed further in the data overview below.

2.2.2 Data Overview

First, almost all the videos, 29 out of 30, use a voice-over that reads the text, making it possible to listen to the poem. The only voiceless video, using written text, is video 29 (see Table 1). The voice in each video is also pertinent and differs according to the video. We hear the singer-songwriter Bono in 10 percent of the videos, a YouTuber named Tom O'Bedlam in 30 percent of the videos, and Charles Bukowski in 33 percent of the videos. In 23 percent of the videos, we can hear the voice of the content creators speaking in front of the camera or in voice-over. If we exclude subtitles generated automatically by YouTube, the text is integrated by the creator as subtitles in half of the videos. At times, the text scrolls across the screen, as in video 15. A written version of the text, sometimes with spelling errors, can be found in fourteen of the videos selected. This is placed either at the bottom (in nine videos) or in the centre of the screen (in four videos).

Video n°	Video's name	Month-year of creation	# of comments	Version of poem	# of views	# of likes	Length	Content creator's name
1	People Aren't Good (The Crunch by Charles Bukowski)	Sep-18	2,079	1	1,701,068	52,000	4'35"	illneas
2	The Crunch Narrated by Charles Bukowski	Jul-12	26	2	33,995	789	3'35"	AJ Ox
3	Bukowski Reads his Poem "The Crunch" (Love is a dog from Hell - 1977 Collection	Jul-17	33	2	28,207	865	3'40"	npatou
4	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	May-22	15	1	5,728	286	6'00"	John Cogs
5	The Crunch (first version) by Charles Bukowski (read by Tom O'Bedlam)	Nov-14	29	1	59,941	1,100	4'00"	SpokenVerse
6	Why We Feel Lonely & Alienated - Charles Bukowski "The Crunch"	Apr-19	331	2	275,897	12,000	3'20"	Pursuit of Wonder
7	Bukowski reads his poem the Crunch - Charles Bukowski	Oct-21	1	2	141	3	3'48"	Boundless
8	The Crunch first Version by Charles Bukowski	Jan-21	0	1	299	19	4'13"	Unknown
9	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	Dec-20	2	2	675	31	3'41"	Unknown
10	Bono reads The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	Jun-09	21	2	20,289	168	1'48"	19j90
11	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	Dec-20	2	2	675	31	3'41"	Unknown
12	The Crunch by (Charles Bukowski) x Kids (1995)	May-20	64	2	2,665	305	2'40"	ClydeCreates
13	"The Crunch", Charles Bukwoski (Tradução)	Oct-20	8	1	749	41	4'33"	ヘクター
14	"The Crunch" by Charles Bukowski	May-14	0	1	136	1	3'20"	sam "lostgirL" ripples
15	"The Crunch" by Charles Bukowski	Jun-12	0	2	586	5	2'40"	Jonathan Jones

Video n°	Video's name	Month-year of creation	# of comments	Version of poem	# of views	# of likes	Length	Content creator's name
16	People Aren't Good (The Crunch by Charles Bukowski)	Oct-20	2	1	547	12	4'19"	Unknown
17	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	Jul-19	3	2	406	12	3'00"	Mr Wamble
18	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski	Jun-22	0	2	5	0	4'24"	Brian
19	The crunch - H.C. Bukowski	Jan-08	24	2	20,105	57	1'48"	assalice
20	The Crunch, by Charles Bukowski	Jun-13	6	2	5678	85	3'31"	THE PARABLE
21	The Crunch by Charles Bukowski (fragments)	Feb-21	4	1	118	10	4'19"	Daliana Pacuraru
22	the crunch // Charles Bukowski	Oct-15	6	2	5,515	89	2'42"	Unknown
23	The CRUNCH by Charles BUKOWSKI (People Aren't Good To Each Other)	Sep-21	1	2	155	4	2'51"	Unknown
24	Van Sarkissian - The Crunch (Poem by C.Bukowski)	Dec-20	2	2	73	7	4'55"	Van Sarkissian
25	The Crunch: Bono read a charles bukowski's poem sub ITA	Mar-08	7	2	25,528	120	1'54"	Iapomarinis
26	"The Crunch" by Charles Bukowski	Jan-22	0	2	6	0	2'05"	Zack Blake
27	The Crunch	Jan-15	0	1	151	2	2'26"	Dom Dan
28	The Crunch: Poem by Charles Bukowski	Feb-15	0	2	294	3	1'48"	Unknown
29	The Crunch	Charles Bukowski	Dec-20	0	1	35	1	4'00"	Kobke
30	"The Crunch" Charles Bukowski	Nov-20	6	1	105	12	5'31"	MOTIVERSYM

Table 1: Youtube Videos selected for the study

Most videos also use music with a pace that differs greatly from one video to the next, although the layout of the poem is maintained. Two thirds of the videos use music. The different types of background music are hip hop (video 12), classical (6 videos), jazz (video 6), or even electric (video 24 for instance). The music creator is at times named, for example the music in videos 1 and 13 is by Max Richter-November, and in the comments section below video 2 we learn that the music was composed by Kevin McLeod.

The videos present the poem in different ways. Usually there are moving images: only 20 percent of videos use still photographs as images which, in some cases, change with each stanza. Thirty-three percent of content creators have selected video clips (from movies or contemporary events) and mixed or mashed them together. Each clip usually follows a verse or stanza. For instance, with the line "an army running through streets of blood", some videos depict either a crowd running away (video 20, 0'31") or a clip of an army during what looks like one of the world wars (video 2, 0'32" or video 6, 0'25"). The line "and there is a loneliness in this world" is often portrayed on screen by a single person looking melancholic or sad, for example at 0'46" seconds in video 4, or with nobody on screen, such as in video 2 (0'52").

Finally, a few videos are simply uploads of "The Crunch" read by Bono (video 19) or Bukowski (video 3) in two documentaries. John Dullaghan (2003) directed the documentary in which we find Bono, entitled *Bukowski: Born into This*. Charles Bukowski read "The Crunch" in The Charles Bukowski Tapes (1987) directed by Barbet Schroeder (1985). Since these videos cannot be said to have been remediated nor re-performed, I have excluded them from closer analysis.

3   A Descriptive Approach to the Reception of "The Crunch"

The reception of these videos is introduced here with a study of the comments, likes and views for the videos in order to have a broader view of what Internet users and viewers think of them.

3.1   Comments, Views and Likes

This section analyses the corpus using excel files to create graphs and charts that present a general overview of the videos created and how they received and remediated the poem. This part offers a broad view of the reception of the poem via its remediation into videos by content creators. Lev Manovich (2017, p. 62) was cautious about the importance of "*like*, share, or comment on a piece of content" when studying user-generated "content and users activities". The first video of the corpus is also the one that was the most viewed; around 52,000 users liked the video with over 1.7 million views and 2,000 comments.[7] The video is entitled "People aren't good (The Crunch by Charles Bukowski)" (Video 1 in Table 1). Figure 1 highlights the most viewed videos, the latter clearly standing out.

[7] The video was last checked on August 16, 2022.
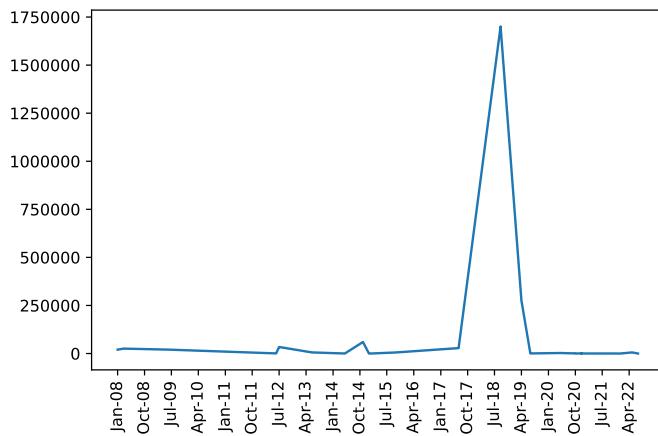
Figure 1: Number of views per YouTube video of "The Crunch" according to date of upload

Only three videos have above 20,000 views, which is more clearly visible with the exclusion of video 1 from the graph, as highlighted in Figure 2. The majority of videos have below 5,000 views, although this does not mean they do not matter. Some of the most compelling videos have indeed very few views. They seem not to matter to YouTube's algorithm. The same occurs in Figure 3, which is dedicated to the number of likes and excludes video 1, making it more legible in Figure 4. The highest number of likes is found in videos uploaded between 2012 and 2014 and there is a peak in 2019, despite the exclusion of the first video. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic could explain the rise in video uploads at the time, but the number of likes staying low except for two videos posted in 2019 could be evidence of a certain lack of interest from viewers.

Yet, Bukowski's poem and the reperformances by content creators led to reactions from readers or listeners on YouTube. In a recent *New York Times* article entitled "The Accidental Media Critics of YouTube" (Jackson 2022), the journalist explains that "One of the most popular genres of videos online is to comment on other videos online".[8] Critiquing a video online is also evidenced by the multiplicity of written comments under each video of "The Crunch" by Bukowski.

Some might assume the comments would be depreciative and troll-like, but they would be wrong. Most comments[9] praise the originality of the content, or the poem itself and its author. The document terms section of Voyant Tools, part of which is presented in Figure 5, reorders terms in the document provided (in this case the comments sections of the videos selected) according to Term, Count (raw frequency) and Relative Frequency. The words that keep coming

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[8] www.nytimes.com Accessed June 29, 2022.
[9] Voyant-tools.org Accessed August 9, 2022.
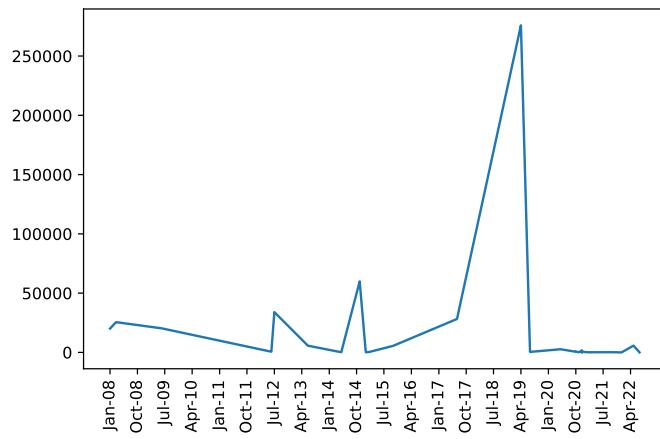
Figure 2: Number of views per YouTube video of "The Crunch" according to date of upload (without video 1)
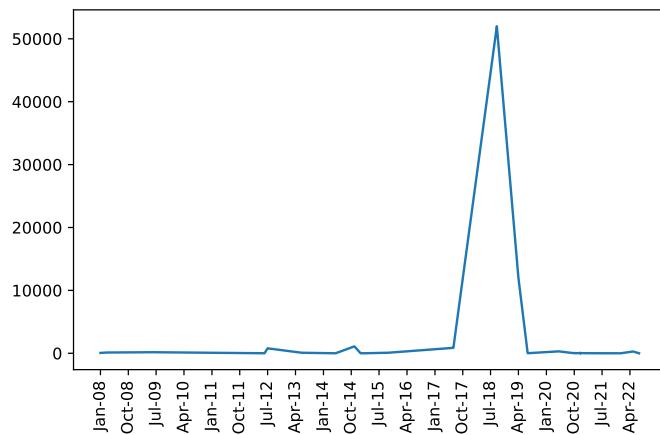
Figure 3: Number of "I Like it" per YouTube video of "The Crunch" according to date of upload
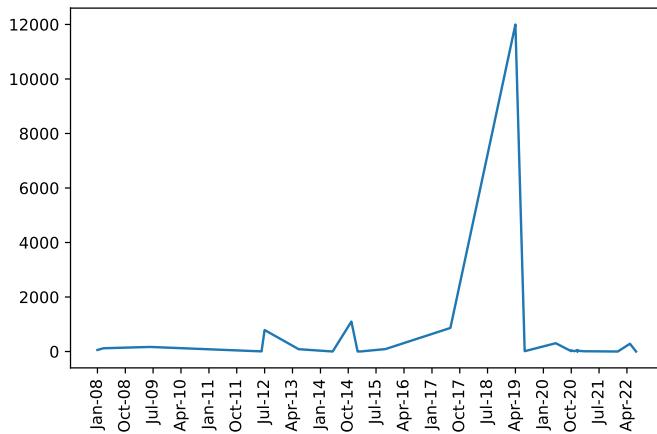
Figure 4: Number of "I Like it" per YouTube video of "The Crunch" according to date of upload (without video 1)
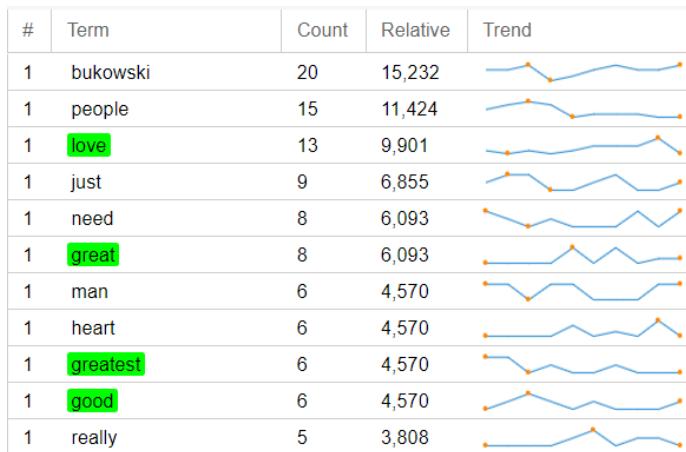
Figure 5: Screenshot of the "Document Terms" section from Voyant-tools

back are the name Charles Bukowski (20), people (15), and verbs such as need (8), love (13) heart (6), great (8), and the greatest (6).

The collocates tool in Voyant Tools highlights a positive participatory culture; the name Bukowski is associated with words such as beautiful, brilliant, and amazing. The comments discuss the poet's work but also the content creator's work. Below the video uploaded by illneas (video 1) we read such comments as "One of Bukowski's finest works. Well imagined. Cheers!" followed by "yes, this channel is too good to be true. amazing work." These positive comments and wordings are part of the "literary sociability" discussed by Leveratto and Leontsini (2008, p. 37), which leads to the creation of a postdigital community of readers. The comments are only part of the reception study I intended

to introduce with this article. Even though the statistics and the quantitative analysis of comments, likes and views per videos highlight an interest in such videos between the years 2012 and 2019, with generally positive feedback within the comment sections, that interest stays low and none of these videos can be considered viral. However niche this interest is, I found it interesting to look further, with closer video analysis, in order to understand how content creators view the poem and remediate it via the addition of images and audio.

3.2   Video Analysis: A Close(r) Listening

Laurier (2016, p. 489), aware of the ongoing "textually centric" quality of social sciences and humanities research, even on platforms such as YouTube, found it unfortunate that no one was studying the videos themselves, which will be the last focus of our article. These videos highlight the "postdigital creative web culture [that] is the mashup" defined as "the juxtaposition of different pre-existing and/or created digital artifacts for fresh effects" (O'Halloran 2022, p. 76).

The performances evolve, and some artists or content creators have gone above and beyond to make us feel what this poem means to them. Ted Underwood (2018, p. 363) noticed that "quantitative and qualitative interpretations are mutually illuminating". Close viewing and listening to a selection of videos show the utility of working with a focused dataset to enable detailed analysis and observation.

3.2.1   Close Viewing with ImageJ Processing

Mittel (2019) explains the problems with video criticism using computational studies in terms of the challenges in "transforming moving images and sounds into data that can be treated algorithmically".

This preliminary computational analysis of amateur videos on YouTube began with the acquisition of the videos and selection of the most relevant ones for image processing. Videos without moving images in the background and videos uploaded from documentaries were excluded. As with Tran's (2016) study of 193 Michelle Phan videos, I have ripped a corpus of videos, 30 in this case. Eighteen videos from this corpus used moving images. The first thirty seconds of each of these eighteen videos were framed with the use of a free video to JPEG converter online.[10] Each video represented 140 still images, which represented overall 2,520 images to process. The width and height of the frames were standardised to 640x360 to make a montage in the ImageJ software. ImageJ allows analysis of a stack of images and possibly a more "distant reading" of all the videos framed into one picture. Unfortunately, the montage of the 2,520 images was not relevant to our search and did not help much to gather knowledge about the reception of these videos.

This "distant reading" was not a good course of action, except to notice that most readers have chosen colour to depict the poem "The Crunch" online (only

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[10] www.onlineconverter.com Accessed August 17, 2022.

five videos are in black and white). Despite the gloomy quality of the poem and a dark-themed text, in which Charles Bukowski states that "people are not good to each other" and evokes war and loneliness, readers using colour might indicate that they read the poem as more positive, more upbeat. For instance, an amateur video shot with a smiley face balloon, Figure 8, seems quite optimistic and entertaining. Two other videos using colour and depicting people reciting the poem either in their kitchen or bedroom do not entail any negativity.

Other users ripped clips from movies, pictures, or contemporary events with a negative impact or a sombre or violent storyline. For instance, the screenshots of this short three-second clip presented in Figure 6 show a mashup with the main events at the 2022 Oscars after a dark screen claims "people are just not good to each other". The scene following is one in which the actor Will Smith slaps the comedian Chris Rock after the latter had made a questionable joke about the actor's wife. The next frame is a close-up of a seated, deeply angered Will Smith, while the line from the poem is set in mid-screen and the voice-over says "we are afraid".

The background colour chosen is homogeneous and could be explained by Internet culture as a whole. Roland Barthes (1981, p. 117) claimed that in the United States "everything is transformed into images: only images exist and are produced and are consumed" even before the Internet existed for everybody to produce and consume more images. Today's users are well aware that for their videos to be visible, they need to make them entertaining and appealing to viewers who are free to watch many different images on different screens.

Videos in colour can also be more readily available to amateur video makers, who only want to share their favourite poems to the biggest audience possible. Even though an ImageJ montage of the 2,520 images does not bring much to our considerations, a closer reading helps further the analysis of the videos taken not as a whole, but separately. By selecting a set of three videos, one a mashup of videos from contemporary footage, one from an amateur video, and one from a mashup of movie excerpts, we notice a fragmentation of images.

In the first montage represented in Figure 7, the title is granted ample time on screen due to the background music added to the video. The first thirty seconds of the first montage provide an impression of slow motion as if each image took a long time to appear on the screen before slowly fading. The other two montages take the speed level up a notch. Figure 8 is an amateur short film shot outdoors with a Sepia filter that makes it look as if shot many years ago. The video is a modernist view of the poem, not unlike a contemporary art piece. In the montage, the camera comes closer to an actress, her face hidden by a balloon, then hidden by sunglasses. When she takes them away, the camera also moves away from her and a smiley emoji balloon hides her face again. The fragmentation of the video is as follows: setting – balloon – actress wearing sunglasses – close up with closed eyes – camera moving back – balloon close-up.

Figure 9 is a version that completely changes the tone and pace of the poem. There is a mashup of short clips of videos one after the other with the constantly changing images and many people in each image making the video a lot more 'active'. The colours also vary, with shades of orange following shades of green, for instance. The first two montages, even though they have a variety of images,
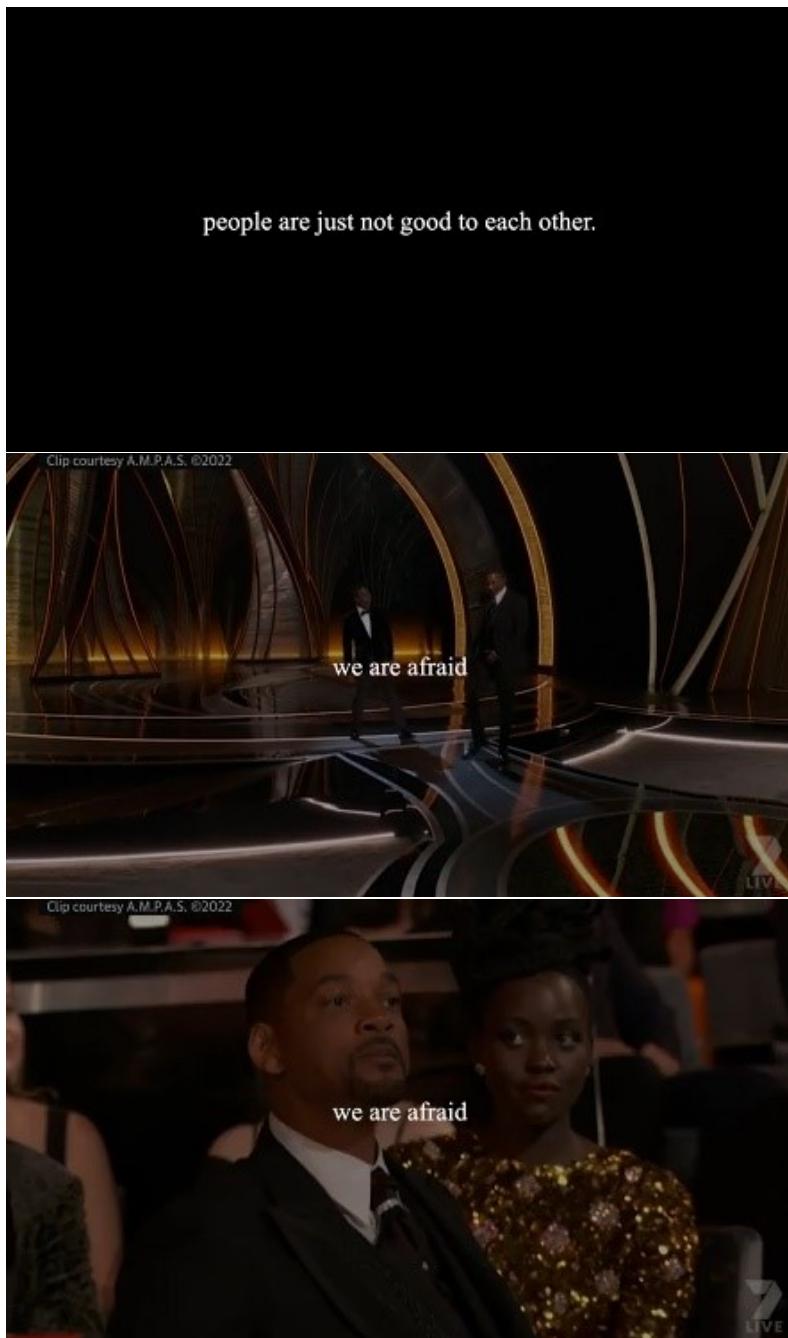
Figure 6: Screenshots of "The Crunch by Charles Bukowski" (3'18" - 3'19" – 3'20")

were not edited to make it look like a lot was happening in the videos. These examples demonstrate that there is not one way to edit or read Bukowski's poetry online, even though the similarities are there (the use of colour, fragmentation, subtext), at least partially.

The fragmentation of these videos depicts Bukowski's fragmented syntax, described by Dina Moinzadeh in her doctoral thesis. She explains that the fragmentation of syntax found in Bukowski's texts is a reflection of the fragmentation of bodies in Bukowski's poetry, "mutilated", and "in pieces", whether "by fear, desire, or violence" (Moinzadeh 2017, p. 300). Moinzadeh used the example of "The Crunch" when she made this statement, and it is interesting to note that a majority of the thirty selected videos of poetry have also chosen to make this fragmentation visual, cutting and piecing together clips from amateur or professional videos and including photographs, consciously or unconsciously mirroring Bukowski's syntax.

3.2.2 Close Listening with `Praat`

Charles Bernstein (1998) declared that "To be heard, poetry needs to be sounded". The last part of our study is a descriptive approach of the audio used by content-creators in their videos. One could wonder which has the upper hand in these videoed poems: the image, the music, the poem? Do these videos add anything to the poem and its meaning through their sound? Or do they veer away from the author's intended reading? I have selected three videos from the corpus, aware that "sampling [sound] implies absence" (Clement 2020, p. 280), in order to discover whether the initial pace of the poem, read by its author, changes with the addition of other sounds within the video, and/or when the poem is read by another.

Yves Bonnefoy (2008, p. 9), when discussing the translation of poetry, explained that poetry needed to be "heard by its reader, participatory, relived in an experience far beyond the words to which the reader sees it resorting".[11] Bukowski's musicality, rhythm and voice were described as early as 1963 by Corrington (1963, p. 5) in his introduction to one of the first books by Bukowski, *It Catches My Heart in its Hands*. These qualities were highly characteristic of Bukowski according to Corrington.

Bukowski's poetry focused more on rhythm than on the rules of poetry. Marit J. MacArthur (2016, p. 39) pondered the religious influence of poetry reading by poets "absorbed into the academy", yet Charles Bukowski's reading did not follow this trend. He was famous for staying out of academic culture, even despising it. He did perform poetry in front of students at universities, but never aimed to be part of academia. His reading is as a result perhaps more personal and spontaneous, and one may wonder whether the reperformances online are trying to capture his aura.

Majit MacArthur (2016, p. 43) stated: "Analyzing intonation in recorded poetry readings—taking into account aurality (how the audience listens) and orality (how the poet speaks)—and making such analysis intelligible as literary scholarship can be daunting". Analysing poetry reading that has background

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[11] My translation.
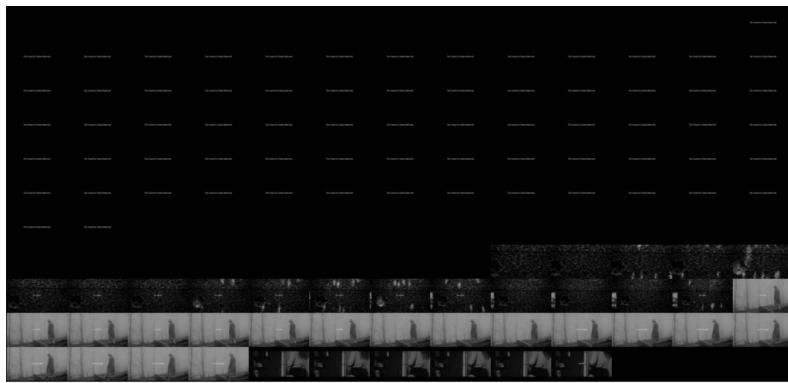
Figure 7: ImageJ Montage from "The Crunch by Charles Bukowski"

Figure 8: ImageJ Montage from "'The Crunch' by Charles Bukowski"
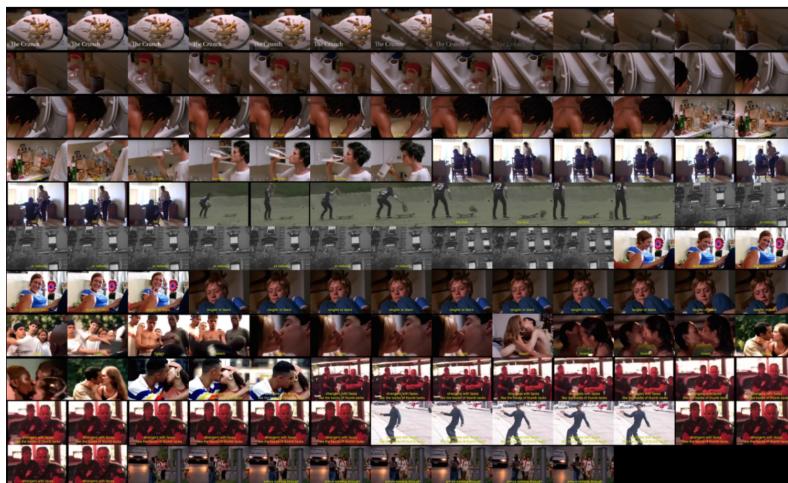
Figure 9: ImageJ Montage from "The Crunch by (Charles Bukowski) x Kids (1995)"

music is even more daunting. Here I offer only a glimpse into the study of sound that can be produced using `Praat`, a language program that analyses and visualises how or if sound changes with the editing made in readers' videos, offering analysis of the rhythm and pace of each adaptation of the poem. `Praat` makes it possible to create a spectrogram and visualise pitch. I have compared the sound in three videos using 10 and three second clips, looking at pitch and rhythm in order to visualise the differences in how Bukowski and his remediators sound out the poem. I also wanted to note what mattered more, whether it was the poem or the music. Fleming (2017, p. 437) stated the importance of choosing "the right passage" for close reading to be hermeneutically efficient. The first, 10 second, section of audio is the poem lines "too much / too little / too fat / too thin / or nobody". The three-second excerpts are from the line "people are [just] not good to each other" from the same videos, to improve visibility. The word "just" is in brackets as Tom O'Bedlam's voice uses "just", as he uses the first version of the poem, a much longer version, while the poem read by Charles Bukowski in the other two excerpts are from the second version of the poem. I have selected the line "people are [just] not good to each other" as it is one of the most famous of the poem and is also repeated regularly in the comments section below the videos. The content creators' choices of audio are interesting for similar reasons to the choice of moving image: it offers a new take on how to read the poem.

"too much, too little, too fat, too thin, or nobody"

The first excerpt is from video 26, which used a sample of Charles Bukowski reading "The Crunch" with no background music. There is no "conflict between sincerity or theatricality" (MacArthur 2016, p. 40), only sincerity in his reading. This first video has been selected as the original version, how we imagine the poem intended to be read, the original spoken version of the poem. The second is from a video using Tom O'Bedlam's voice (video 4), with a piece of classical music in the background. The last audio is a mashup of movie clips, with Bukowski's voice and hip-hop music in the background (video 12). Readers work on the audio as editors. Bukowski had created a specific rhythm in his reading of "The Crunch" in the first sound in Figure 10, the tempo is slow, and the voice is interspersed with silence.

Charles Bernstein (1998) stated that "An actor's rendition, like a type designer's 'original' setting of a classic, will not have the same kind of authority as a poet's own reading or the first printing of the work". Audio extracted from the video by O'Bedlam in Figure 10 seems to use a lower tempo when sounding out the poem, and background music is added to the video, as seen in Figure 10. The spectrograms in Figure 11 help us notice that the voices of Bukowski and O'Bedlam have a similar pace when sounding out the lines. However, the voice itself seems to be a lower pitch than Bukowski's, as can be seen in Figure 12. The spectrogram in Figure 11 from the last video makes it impossible to hear Bukowski's voice. It is as if the music takes over the poem, which is confirmed in Figure 12, where the poet's voice becomes almost invisible in the third video. The pitch in the second video is also hard to see, due to the background music again taking over the sound. The sound in Figure 10 and the spectrograms in Figure 11 highlight the difference in variations, from a very distinct voice to a
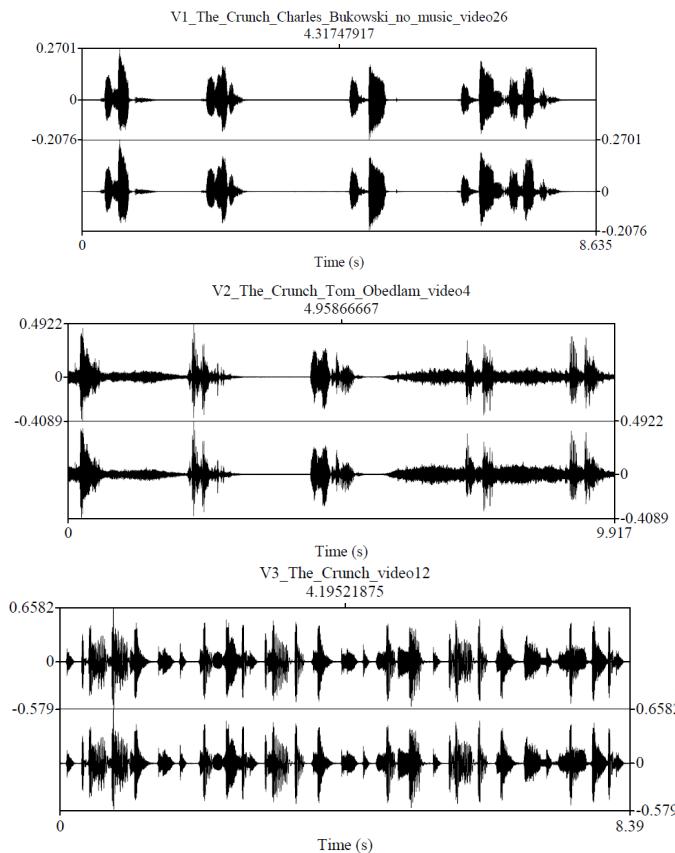
Figure 10: 10-second sound excerpts from video 26, 4 and 12

voice mixed with music, to the music taking over the voice and the tempo of the poem.

As Underwood (2018, p. 358) put it, and as the user who created this video proves, "the editor of a music video can overwhelm a viewer with rapid jump cuts", which happens in the third video sounding out the lines "too much, too little, too fat, too thin, or nobody", matching the image fragmentation from the video.

> "People are [just] not good to each other"

To confirm the observations from this first close analysis of audio waves, three seconds of each of the videos where each voice says the line "People are just not good to each other" were ripped to assess the divergence in sound, or lack thereof. Some creators used this line in the title of their videos so it seemed interesting to stress this quote in the audio interpretation. As noted earlier, the voice tone of O'Bedlam is a lower pitch than that of Bukowski, perhaps due to a better recording device (Bukowski's voice was recorded in 1987, while O'Bedlam was recorded with 21st-century equipment) as well as to the natural tone of
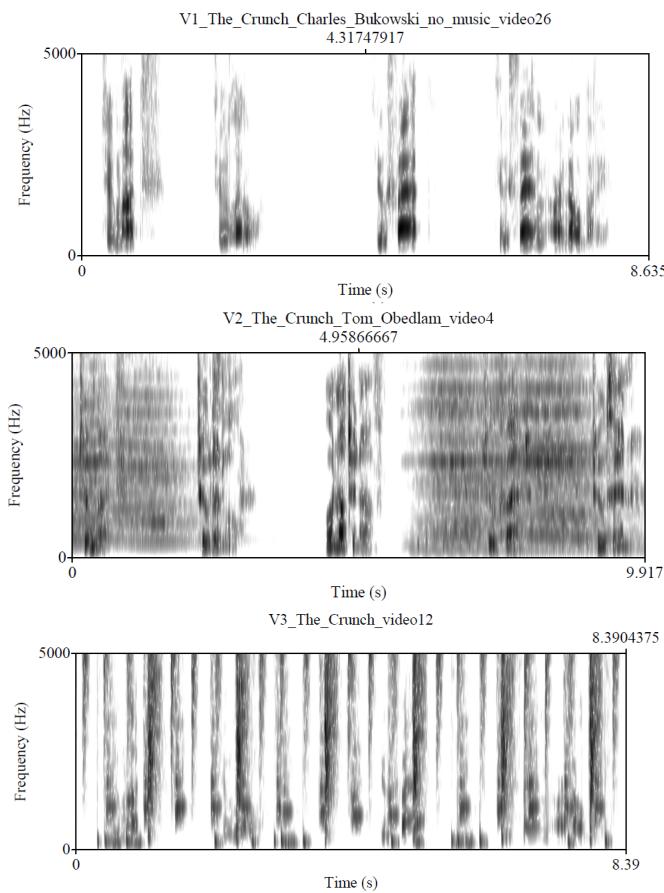
Figure 11: 10-second spectograms from video 26, 4 and 12
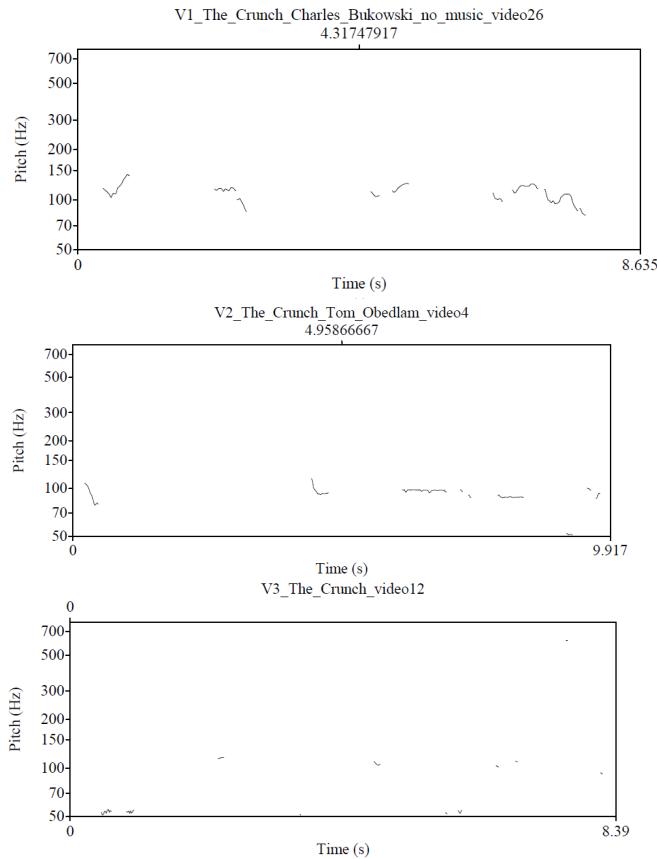
Figure 12: 10-second pitches from video 26, 4 and 12
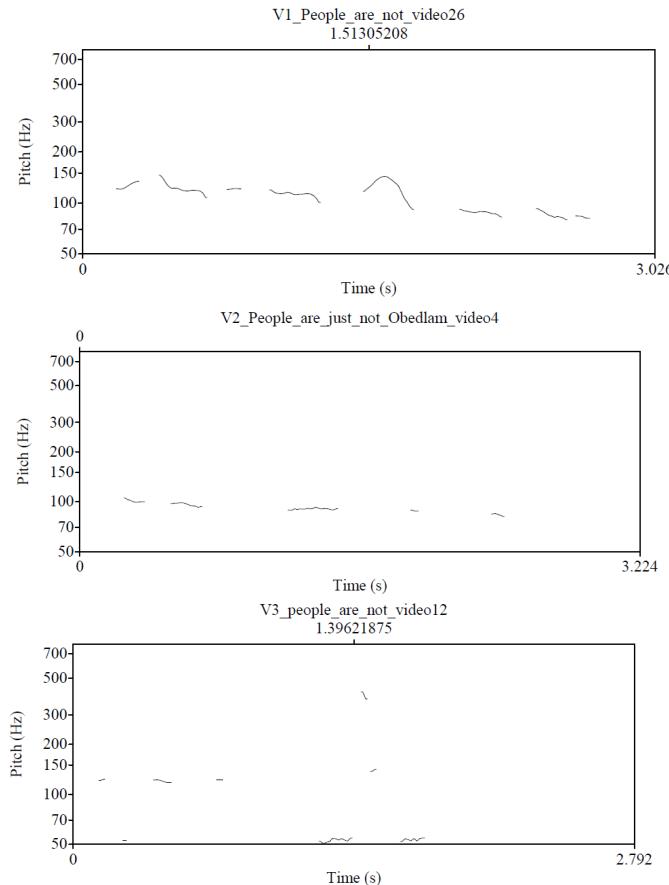
Figure 13: "People are [just] not good to each other": pitches from videos 26, 4 and 12

both men. The spectrogram allows for more straightforward visualisation of the selected audio. The two first versions in Figure 13 show the difference in pitch.

The frequency varies between Bukowski and O'Bedlam's recordings, mainly due to the addition of music in the background of the second video. In the last video studied, the voice frequency is the same as Bukowski's original video since it used Bukowski's voice mixed with hip-hop music, although his voice is not clearly visible in either spectrogram or pitch images. O'Bedlams' voice changes the visual in Figure 14 by saying the words differently to Bukowski: more slowly, avoiding gaps and seeming to follow the classical music instead. It helps us see, without having to hear, the difference in audio of each video, and confirms the fragmentation in the third video. The lack of clarity in the sound is clear in the spectrogram and pitch of the last two videos in Figure 15 and Figure 13, where the amplitude of the background music makes analysis of the voice difficult.
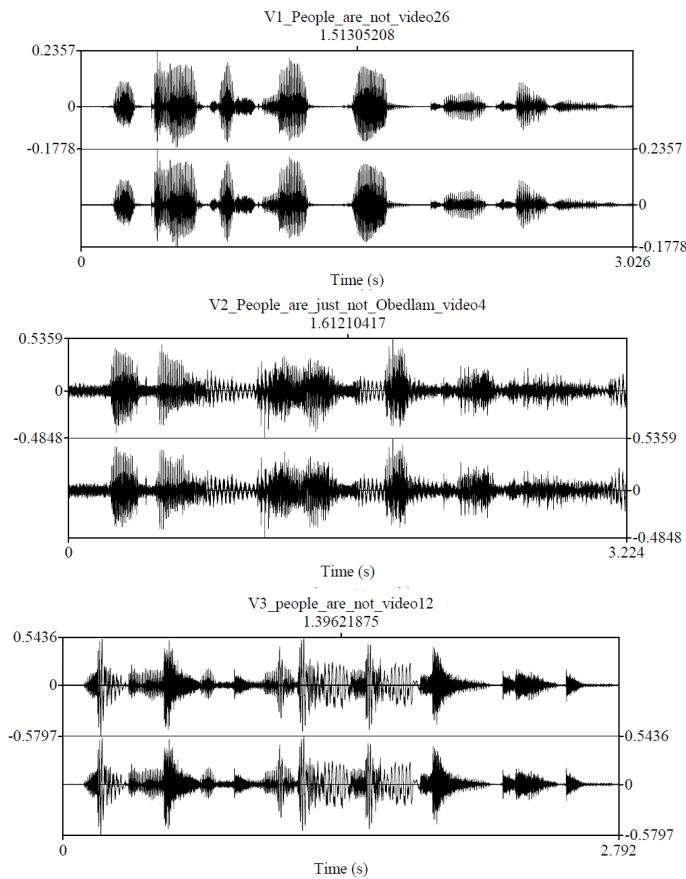
Figure 14: "People are [just] not good to each other": sounds from videos 26, 4 and 12
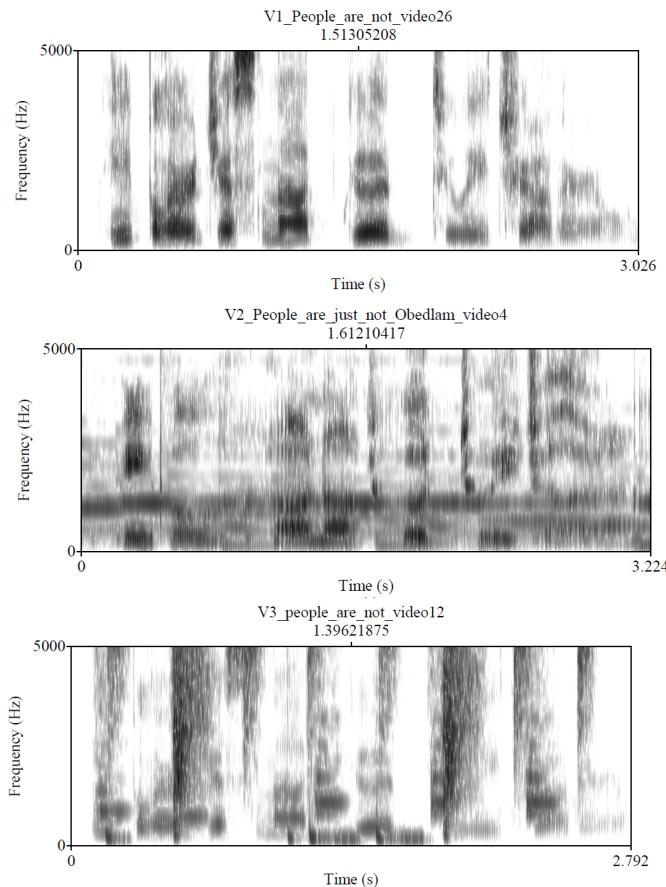
Figure 15: "People are [just] not good to each other": spectograms from videos 26, 4 and 12

As Patrick Suppes states, rhythm and meaning work in relation to poetry, particularly from a scientific perspective:

> the brain's processes phase-lock to a poem's rhythm; this rhythm is often not consciously noticed by the listener or reader. In the case of music, the phase-locking has, on many occasions, a very obvious behavioral manifestation, in tapping, swaying, singing, or what have you, to the rhythm of the music. Poetry is, with some exceptions, more subtle, but the rhythm is still there, and it produces something similar in the brain. (Suppes 2020, p. 165)

We could wonder whether voice frequency could lead to the study of the emotions readers, or in this case listeners, feel. Adding music to the poem's original rhythm can affect the interpretation of the poem, as can be seen in Figures Figure 10 to Figure 15, and its reception. This overview of sound using `Praat` compared and contrasted videos in order to represent differences in sound, if any, that are made visible by the spectrogram and pitch. As a result, we can imagine that further analysis of the sound and rhythm of more videos could highlight what content creators wanted the viewers to feel when listening, i.e., uplifted, calmed, thoughtful, or any other emotions related to rhythmic editing.

4   Conclusion

Even though there is no one clear-cut way of re-performing Bukowski's poetry, we notice similarities through video mining and analysis. However, the intent and the result of the video-making genre for poetry give rise to different outcomes in performance styles.

Franco Moretti (2017, p. 6) states that "Algorithms generate new facts, whose interpretation continues however to rely on a different hermeneutic tradition". I have decided to study images, audio and text separately, 'deforming' the reperformances into fragments for examination. Doing so helped provide a set of visuals and graphics that show the different choices readers make, as well as the similarities in those choices. I could have ripped and compared each video side by side, with all the many different traits each has. The difficulty would have been to turn this information into useful data. By parsing the videos into constituent elements I hoped to understand the amateur video-making of readers who are readapting poems and sharing them online. So, is the future of poetry visual? With a more quantitative approach and the extraction of data from text, images and audio there is a chance to understand better how 'active' readers receive and re-enact poetry and what their ways of either improving or expanding upon it are while trying to retain the text's initial beauty.

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