



TC
SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

DIRTY REALIST BUKOWSKI AND HIS TROUBLESOME
RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN IN HIS SELECTED NOVELS:
HAM ON RYE AND WOMEN

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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ISPARTA- 2017



SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ SAVUNMA SINAV TUTANAĞI

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| Anabilim Dalı | Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı |
| Tez Başlığı | Charles Bukowski'nin Seçilmiş Romanlarında İnsanlar Arasındaki Sorunlu İlişki. |
| Yeni Tez Başlığı (Eğer değişmesi önerildi ise) | "Kırtlı Gerçekçi" Bukowski ve Seçilmiş İki Romanındaki - Ham on Rye ve Women - Kadınlarla olan sorunlu ilişkisi. |

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Ayşenur ZEREN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would first like to thank my lecturer and thesis advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Beture Memmedova who inspired me to love English Literature throughout my student and academic years. She suggested me the extraordinary writer and guided me in developing the topic. I could form the framework of the paper thanks to her invaluable guidance and support. With her great advice and corrections, I was successful in completing the present thesis. Also, my special thanks go to the head of the English Language and Literature Department, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Şekerci. Warmest thanks go to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özcan for his meticulous evaluating of the thesis.

I would also like to thank and express my profound gratitude to my family for their unfailing support and infinite patience during the writing process of this thesis.

Finally, I am so grateful to my dearest friends for their continuous encouragement and moral support.

ABSTRACT

Dirty Realist Bukowski and His Troublesome Relationship with Women in His Selected Novels: *Ham On Rye* And *Women*

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Master's Thesis, 99 Pages, April 2017

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Beture MEMMEDOVA

The guiding theme of this thesis is dirty realist Charles Bukowski, the German-born American prolific underground writer, and his troublesome relationship with women. Bukowski became an important cult figure in the 20th century America. With his extraordinary biography, writing style and the subject matters in his works, he became known worldwide even in prisons. As the godfather of dirty realism, he wanted to show that literature does not mean using adorned language and complicated structures in transferring the ideas and narrating events. From Bukowski's point of view, dealing with the lives of marginalized people through the use of direct and simple language is enough to send a message to the reader. His past and writings led him to be called a misogynist for years. Although intellectuals and critics debate and question his harsh attitude towards women, the main criticism is his being a male chauvinist.

This thesis focuses on his extraordinary biography in detail and handles his adopting the Dirty Realism movement by being an Avant Gardist. It also examines Bukowski's autobiographical works *Ham on Rye* and *Women* with a specific emphasis on his discovering female gender and his hostility towards them through his fictional persona of Henry Chinaski.

Key Words: *Charles Bukowski, Henry Chinaski, Dirty Realist, Avant-gardist, discovery of women. Misogynist.*

ÖZET

Bu tezin ana teması, Almanya doğumlu Amerikan yeraltı yazarı, üretken ve kirli gerçekçi olan Charles Bukowski ve onun kadınlarla olan problemlili ilişkisidir. Bukowski 20. Yüzyıl Amerika'sında önemli bir kült figür olmuştur. Sıra dışı biyografisi, yazım tarzı ve eserlerinde ele aldığı konularla, dünya çapında hatta hapishanelerde bile tanınmıştır. Kirli Gerçekçilik akımının manevi babası olarak, Bukowski, edebiyatın, fikirleri aktarma ve olayları anlatmada süslü dil ve karmaşık yapılar kullanmak anlamına gelmediğini göstermek istemiştir. Bukowski'ye göre, marjinalize olmuş insanların hayatlarına direkt ve basit bir dil kullanarak değinmek, okuyucuya bir mesaj göndermek için yeterlidir. Geçmiş ve eserleri, onun yıllarca kadın düşmanı olarak adlandırılmasına neden olmuştur. Entelektüeller ve eleştirmenler Bukowski'nin kadınlara karşı olan sert tutumunu tartışmalarına ve sorgulamalarına rağmen, ana eleştiri erkek bir şovenist olmasıdır.

Bu tez, Bukowski'nin sıra dışı biyografisine detaylı bir şekilde odaklanmaktadır ve Yenilikçi olarak benimsediği Kirli Gerçekçilik akımını ele almaktadır. Ayrıca, bu tez, Bukowski'nin *Ham on Rye* ve *Women* adlı otobiyografik eserlerini, özellikle kadın cinsiyetini keşfetme ve onlara karşı olan düşmanlığı konularını vurgulayarak, Henry Chinaski adlı kurgusal karakteri aracılığıyla incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Charles Bukowski, Henry Chinaski, Kirli Gerçekçi, Yenilikçi, Kadının Keşfi, Kadın Düşmanı

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Being a German-American Cult Writer

*I see a bright
portion
under the overhead light

that shades into
darkness
and then into darker
darkness
and I can't see beyond that.*

—Charles Bukowski ¹

Henry Charles Bukowski was a German-born American novelist, short story writer, poet and columnist*. He was famous for being a dirty realist. Dating back to the Cold War years, the movement Dirty Realism got its fame in the 1970s and continued until the early 1990s. It was Bill Buford who used the term ‘Dirty Realism’ for the first time in the journal *Granta* in 1983. The essentials that form the dirty realism qualifications are the usage of simple and unadorned language, the sparse style of prose,

¹ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/bukowski> (08.02.17)

* Bukowski became a staff columnist when *Open City* (an underground newspaper) came out in 1967 and for 87 weeks he wrote the *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* column between 1967 and 1969. See: Barry Miles, *Charles Bukowski*, Virgin Books, London, 2009, p. 181.

direct and frank description of the lives of marginalized people and events. The writer Raymond Carver is considered the pioneer of the movement and the writers Richard Ford, Frederick Barthelme, Jane Ann Philips, Elizabeth Tallent, Tobias Wolff, Bobbie Anne Mason, Joy Williams, Robert Olmstead as practitioners², but it is Bukowski who is called ‘the godfather of dirty realism’.

Bukowski lived what most of us would probably call a very bad life, largely because of his neglectful and abusive parents. More than half of his life, he struggled with depression, alcohol abuse and starvation. On the other hand, he was so interested in literature that at the age of twenty four he published his first story and started composing his poetry when he was thirty five. His works were enormously affected by his home city, Los Angeles, frequently including direct language, brutality, and sexual imagery. “*Bukowski was a master of dialogue’s shape and rhythm: question and answer, pause and movement.*”³ He was a prolific writer having over sixty books including dozens of short stories, thousands of poems and several novels. He became a cult author with his works that feature his experiences, feelings and imagination.

Many of his works autobiographical in content and are centred on the character, Henry Chinaski, who functions as Bukowski’s alter ego. In the novels, Chinaski’s hazards are living on skid row, giving up lots of menial jobs, getting involved in drunken fights and roaming the country. In his autobiographical works, Bukowski was frank in what he wrote about his life. When writing about the urban lives of Americans, he is far from describing himself as a hero. Bukowski’s popularity in America must have reached such a high level with his outstanding contribution to American literature that in 1986, *Time* magazine called him “*laureate of American lowlife*”.⁴ His popularity has continued to increase since his death in 1994. Even though Bukowski had a successful literary career, in the beginning he failed to gain a place in the literary world and instead he had a debauched lifestyle that lasted for a decade and was employed in “*shit jobs.*”⁵

² Michael Hemmingson, *The Dirty Realism Duo: Charles Bukowski and Raymond Carver on the Aesthetics of the Ugly*, Wildside Press, USA, 2008, p. 12.

³ David Stephen Calonne, *Sunlight Here I Am*, Sun Dog Press, United States of America, 2003, p. vii

⁴ Nicholet Blaire - Martin Amis - John Fuller, *Modern Poetry*, Writers&Artists Publishing, New York, 2015, p.10.

⁵ Howard Sounes, *Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life*, Grove Press, New York, 1998, p. 31.

Bukowski revived with literature and stated that “*without literature, life is hell.*”⁶ The writer had made his living out of literature until his death, becoming a desirable person in the literary world.

As an underground writer, poet and columnist, dirty realist, avant-gardist and misogynist, Charles Bukowski was a man of versatility. He wrote explicit or sex stories and published them in several underground pornographic newspapers and magazines without any fear of the reading audience and, as a result, he got himself identified as an ‘underground’ writer. The subject he bravely dealt with in his work and the plain, unembellished language made Bukowski become known as an iconoclast and dirty realist. “*He expressed no interest in schools, movements, or explicit ideologies, instead attempting to write directly, with honesty and humor, of his experiences.*”⁷ In the literary field, Bukowski was now extraordinarily dirty literally and figuratively. Despite his reputation of being “a dirty old man”, his works got published during his life and even years after his death. Moreover, he “*is on a short list of the most original talents in the history of American literature.*”⁸ In spite of his fame, he was criticized for having a rough attitude towards women and discourse on them. He was labeled a “*chauvinist*”⁹ but it did not prevent him from publishing a novel about women.

The present thesis will examine the dirty realist Bukowski and his troublesome relationship with women in the light of his two novels *Ham on Rye* and *Women*. The roots of dirty realism predates the Cold War years. After the war’s effect on society in the 1960s, dirty realism identifies a sign of realism that first appeared in American and Canadian writing and in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s it came to prominence as a new reality. The term, which represents the mundane aspects of low-class people’s lives in unadorned and simple language, was coined in 1983 by Bill Buford in the magazine *Granta*. Chapter III gives a detailed explanation of the term ‘Dirty Realism’ related to Bukowski. Having adopted this literary movement, he became an avant-gardist and reached a wider audience. In addition to being a dirty realist, Bukowski, gained the

⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150814-what-bukowski-taught-us-about-life-in-nine-quotes> (01.02.17)

⁷ Gay Brewer, *Charles Bukowski*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1997, p. 9.

⁸ Paul Brody, *The Dirty Old Man Of American Literature*, BookCaps, USA, 2013, p. 4.

⁹ <https://letterpile.com/writing/Was-Charles-Bukowski-a-Misogynist> (08.02.17)

reputation of womanizer by publishing the novel *Women*. The book focuses on the many dissatisfactions of Chinaski when he faces each new woman. His dissatisfaction with women leads to his troublesome relationship with them.

In order to draw attention to an original underground 20th century author as such, this thesis devotes four chapters to Charles Bukowski. The Introduction part will present short information about the writer's literary career, state the purpose and significance of the study, the methods used and the limitations of the study. Chapter II will deal with the detailed account of his extraordinary biography. First, the intention was to describe his life and career briefly but later, during the research it was decided on giving a more detailed chapter of his life taking into consideration his unusual life full of predicaments and controversies. A detailed account of his life is not available online. Chapter III will focus on the writer's characteristics as a dirty realist and avant-garde writer. The last chapter examines the periods of his life when the child Bukowski discovers females and its consequences. Then, he shares his experiences in his novel *Women*. Lastly, the conclusion covers the summary of Bukowski's perspective of life from a new aspect.

1.2. The Subject of the Study

The portrayal of the 20th century writer Charles Bukowski was the milestone of my study. He was an extraordinary underground writer among his contemporaries. His unusual writing style and the subject matters he dealt with in his works made him known as a real dirty realist. Therefore, the dirty old man was called as the godfather of dirty realism. The general view of academia, audience and especially feminists was also to be his misogynist. His troublesome relationship with women was enlightened his two selected novels *Ham on Rye* and *Women*.

The biography of his seventy-four years drew a certain judgement about him; he was a prolific and unusual writer of the literary world with his dozens of works and different discourse. His unusual and unsteady attitude towards academia, ignorance of existed grammar rules and social norms, disregard of people sayings, his ups and downs in his literary career throughout his years of life drew my attention to start a research on him which turned out to be a very interesting and suspensive subject.

1.3. The Purpose and Significance of the Study

The study's purpose is to examine Charles Bukowski's literary career and life as a dirty realist and misogynist. The thesis contains his detailed biography and focuses on the terms *Dirty Realism* and *Avant-Garde*. Another aim is to impart the information about the writer not available online. The importance of the study is to show how Bukowski was different from his contemporaries by adopting the movement *Dirty Realism*. Besides, the factors that built his reputation and made him famous all over the world are also handled.



1.4. The Methodology of the Study

The eclectic method was employed during the research. Biographical and historical approaches were applied throughout the study. The text-based and autobiographical approaches predominate in the thesis. Firstly, with the biographical approach Charles Bukowski's life story was examined from the point of view of several biographers, writers and critics. The literary movement Dirty Realism was explicated in the study in order to show Bukowski's style of writing and extraordinary subject matters in his literary works. During the years of his life and still, since he is known as a male chauvinist, the cultural attitude of misogyny was evaluated from the perspective of Charles Bukowski himself. He is thought to be a famous underground writer even in the 21th century literary world, so an historical approach was necessary to view his life and literary career chronologically.

1.5. The Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is that Charles Bukowski has been only chosen writer to be analysed among the 20th century underground writers. Since he is different from the others with his life style, attitude and discourse, the study just focuses on him. As in the research topic, his being a dirty realist and by this way, an avant-gardist is handled in this thesis since he has been a popular underground writer. In this paper, also, in order to prove his misogynistic thoughts, just two biographical novels of the writer are dealt with. The study does not necessitate analysing all his novels because these two novels including his childhood, adolescence and adult years are enough to portray Charles Bukowski's attitude towards women. The study is limited to dirty realist Charles Bukowski and his troublesome relationship with women in his selected two novels.

CHAPTER II

JOURNEY TO THE UNDERGROUND

2.1. “The Man Who Lived Fast and Died Old”¹⁰

*We`re here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that
Death will tremble to take us.*

—Charles Bukowski¹¹

The time had come for Katharina Fett to give birth to the boy who would be one of the prominent writers of the 20th century; he was named Heinrich Karl Bukowski. His unusual life story that covers seventy three years from the time he opened his eyes to the luminous world to the time he said good-bye to the “underground” in 1994 is worth examining. Aubrey Malone, one of the biographers of Charles Bukowski, states in his introduction to *The Hunchback of East Hollywood*:

The story of Charles Bukowski is the story of a man who went from suffering unspeakable neglect as a child to becoming a worldwide celebrity courtesy of a gift man still decry. The story of a man almost given up for dead who went on to the live the biblical span. The story of a man who never knew what he wanted to say but kept

¹⁰ The sentence is from: Aubrey Malone, *The Hunchback of East Hollywood*, Critical Vision Book by Headpress, Manchester, 2003, p. 5.

Note: The summary of Bukowski’s life is based on the biographies: Howard Sounes: *Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life*, Neeli Cherkovski: *Hank: The Life of Charles Bukowski*, Paul Brody: *The Dirty Old Man of American Literature*, Aubrey Malone: *The Hunchback of East Hollywood* and Gerald Locklin: *Charles Bukowski: A Sure Bet*.

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150814-what-bukowski-taught-us-about-life-in-nine-quotes> (01.02.17)

on saying it anyway. The story of a man who lived fast, died old, and made a not-too-pretty-looking corpse.¹²

To understand what a writer writes about, reading his or her life story is of utmost importance. Bukowski's life, though terrifying on the surface, he had a number of funny stories in his life. In 1972, eight hundred people gathered to see Bukowski read a poem about his father whom he actually hated. The crowd expected him to cry at the end of the poem because of his tone and the subject of the poem. However, he immediately disguised himself as a wild man, spoke nonsense because of his drunkenness and got the crowd bursting into laughter. This example shows that people who make others laugh are likely to have problems of their own. Harvard psychology professor Daniel Gilbert says:

If I wanted to predict your happiness, and I could know only one thing about you, I wouldn't want to know your gender, religion, health, or income. I'd want to know about your social network – about your friends and family and the strength of your bonds with them.¹³

He did not have a strong relationship with both his family and the people around him. His life story shows that he is in a fight club surrounded by darkness and survives to overcome adversity by alcohol, drug and women.

Bukowski, born on August 16, 1920 in Andernach, Germany, believed that he was born out of wedlock even though his father, Sergeant Henry Charles Bukowski in the charge of the US army and his mother, Katharina Fett, his then mistress had got married on July 15, 1920. After the collapse of the German economy in 1923, the family made a drastic decision to sail to the United States. This journey brought about some changes, starting with the spelling of their names and surname. Bukowski's mother called herself Kate, and little Heinrich became Henry. Their surname changed from Buk-cow-ski to Buk-ov-ski because the sounds in the former name were more American. Less than a year later, the family moved to Los Angeles which would become an integral part of the writer's inner being.

¹² Malone, 2003, p. 5.

¹³ <https://hbr.org/2012/01/the-science-behind-the-smile> (16.10.16)

Bukowski was born into a family of very strict rules. His childhood was a painful, joyless and scary period for him. *“A twisted childhood has fucked me up.”*¹⁴ One of the reasons was that his family considered themselves better than the other people in the neighborhood; therefore, mixing with other children for little Bukowski was forbidden. Another reason was that his parents did not let him play with other children so he does not make his clothes dirty. Anna Bukowski, the wife of Bukowski’s Uncle John, pictures her nephew as follows:

I felt sorry for little Henry. It seemed as if he really needed friends – some kids his own age. I know that his parents didn’t let him play with other children. He didn’t speak out like most kids. Henry just didn’t seem a jolly boy. When they came to visit us I could see how closely they watched over him.¹⁵

Naturally, this situation led other kids to make fun of him, and this caused Bukowski to complain, *“I had some pretty terrible parents, and your parents are pretty much your world. That’s all there is.”*¹⁶ After having been diagnosed with dyslexia, his mother was summoned to school. This made Kate weep not because she felt worrisome for her son’s wellbeing but because she was scared of what her husband, Henry Bukowski, would say. In his poem *Education*, Bukowski expresses his feelings:

*‘oh Henry,’ my mother said,
‘your father is so disappointed in
You, I don’t know what we are
Going to do!’
father, my mind said,
father and father and
father.*

words like that.

*I decided not to learn anything
in that*

¹⁴ Sounes, 1998, p. 10.

¹⁵ Neeli Cherkovski, *Hank: The Life of Charles Bukowski*, Random House, New York, 1991, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

school

my mother walked along

beside me.

she wasn't anything at

all.

and I had a bellyache

and even the trees we walked

under

seemed less than

trees

and the more like everything

else.¹⁷

The more his family forced Bukowski to do something, the more things got worse. Bukowski first got beaten after he had been sent home for fighting at school. His father was always looking forward to beating him which continued unceasingly throughout his childhood. For Henry, any mistake of his son necessitated a beating. *"My ass and the backs of my legs were a continual mass of welts and bruises. I had to sleep on my belly at night because of the pain."*¹⁸ His mother Kate, too was also facing physical abuse. However, what was more tragic than his father's beatings was his mother's silence and ineffectiveness. Henry Bukowski was a cruel man and his cruelty was one of the things that influenced Bukowski's character. According to Sounes, this was the reason that *"Bukowski came to talk so slowly - he learned to think before speaking in case he upset his father."*¹⁹ Here the word 'upset' might not actually mean making his father sad, but making him angry where he knew very well that the consequence would be a beating. *"As a father and role model, Henry Bukowski could not have been a worse example for his son."*²⁰ Such a role model of a father would likely affect his son's relationships with and attitude towards women. Hence,

¹⁷ Sounes, 1998, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Brody, 2013, p. 10.

Bukowski's anger, frustration, and rebellion were ready waiting for the right time to be made apparent. The beatings of his father had oppressed him so much that this feeling of revenge would, in the long run, affect not only his relationship with his father but also many mistreated women that would enter his life.

The American nickname 'Hank' used for the rest of his life by his friends, was given to Bukowski during his childhood, when he was living in the house in Longwood Avenue that his family had just moved to and what Bukowski later called "*torture chamber*"²¹. The house that Bukowski used to love as a child gave him the opportunity to have his first close relationship with other children, which later on turned out to be his nightmare. To find happiness in his childhood was almost impossible for Hank, because when he was thirteen a severe acne illness called 'acne vulgaris' troubled and prevented him from the first semester of high school. He went through heavy treatment including electric needles and lances. This devastated him so much that he had "*felt as if no woman would ever want to be with*"²² him. He had seen himself "*as some kind of a freak. Remember, they were big.*"²³ They had dominated his face. As a result, his family "*was ashamed of him and was repulsed,*"²⁴ according to his cousin Katherine Wood. The sympathy that was expected from his family was surprisingly shown by a nurse who made him believe the possibility of some goodness in the world. Thus, Hank developed a crush towards her. No matter what he had faced during his childhood, be it his devastating relationship with his father or his mother's silence towards his father's violence, he had planted the seeds of his first relationship with women with the caring nurse during his visits to the hospital.

During the years of his being at home, Bukowski spent many hours reading and visiting libraries. He loved reading early stories of Ernest Hemingway. Sinclair Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, John Dos Passos and Sherwood Anderson were among his favorite writers. He had a lot of time for reading because he was neither disturbed by "friends" nor had to go to school. He also enjoyed reading Turgenev because of his appreciation for Russian novelists.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cherkovski, 1991, p. 31.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sounes, 1998, p. 13.

Los Angeles High School, where the girls looked beautiful and the boys handsome, was a troublesome phase for Bukowski. Appearance becomes so important for teenagers at this age. Because of the heavy acne treatment, his skin looked strange and became a problem for him. Even though he wanted to choose gym class, the boils on his back urged him to choose a form of military training. On graduation day, *“Bukowski didn’t officially attend the prom; instead, he skulked in the bushes and watched all the classy boys and girls dancing the night away. He had yet to give much thought, if any to his future.”*²⁵ The feeling of exclusion from the activities and the rejection lived by the girls in the school can be due to the girls not wanting to be in a relationship with a boy that has spoils on his face. This, therefore, might lead Bukowski to strike an aggressive attitude towards girls in the future.

The rush for finding a job to survive began for Bukowski when he graduated from LA High School. One day, as Bukowski was searching for something to enlighten him, he came across his bedside book *Ask the Dust** by John Fante. Bukowski likened himself to the hero of the book ‘Arturo Bandini’. He expressed the importance of the book by saying: *“Fante was my god. He was to be a lifelong influence on my writing.”*²⁶ Probably, the desire of the hero to become a writer and his struggles against devastating odds to define himself illustrate Bukowski’s own desire to earn money with his writing. To have the opportunity of becoming a newspaper journalist, as a scholarship student, he enrolled to L.A. City College to study Journalism, English, Economics and Public Affairs. His performance in the lessons was so poor that he got a ‘scholarship warning’. Getting the warning was not enough for the rebellious teenager so he expressed his positive thoughts about Nazis as well. Although the sound of World War II did not reach America, there were negative thoughts about Nazis nearly agreed by most people. After apologizing for his behavior, he declared that he was apolitical. However, to draw the attention of the people, he also enjoyed saying shocking and extreme things from time to time. Such treatment of the writer to the people around him

²⁵ Brody, 2013, p. 14.

* The hero, Arturo Bandini, is a twenty-year-old would be a writer, the son of immigrant parents, who feels cut from the society. He wants to write about life and love, but has little experience of either so he goes to live in a flophouse at a place called Bunker Hill where he meets and falls in love with a beautiful girl. See: Sounes, 1998, p. 18.

²⁶ Ibid., 19.

seemed as if he did not respect or value other people. On the other hand, his attitude towards his environment may not attract the attention of the girls and it is most probably enough for a teenager to get angry or have bad feelings towards girls when he is thought of as a troublesome candidate to start a relationship.

Bukowski could not hold a job and the LA College experience lasted him six months, but he did not give up. Day by day, the thought of being a writer was becoming increasingly important. He started to learn to overcome the difficulties that hindered him from doing something good. His father did not want him to write anything. When he discovered that Bukowski was writing short stories, he got them and tossed the manuscripts. This led the promising writer to rent rooms with the remaining money in his pocket or to live on candy bars without money, but he continued to write. He “*allowed himself to starve rather than get a regular job, believing that writing would save him like the deluded hero of Knut Hamsun’s Hunger, another favorite novel.*”²⁷ Bukowski ventured to be sick with hunger. However, after he had asked his father for money and gotten a long reply of warnings to correct his behavior, he seriously thought of committing suicide for the first time.

Bukowski could not obtain anything easily in his life. He wanted to serve in military forces during World War II, however, a routine psychiatric test of mental reasons got him to fail to enter there. Locking himself in his room, he was producing short stories that were sent to magazines, but after the replies, he tore them up, rewrote them and drank as much as possible. The good things started to arouse when his first short story, *Aftermath of a Lengthy Rejection Slip*, an autobiographical account, was accepted by a magazine. Charles Bukowski, dropping the first name, became his debut as a writer, for the reason that he did not want to remember his father. His excitement for his first publication did not last long for Bukowski. When he went to New York to see his name in the magazine, he realized that it was not in the main body of the magazine but at the end of the pages. This discouraged him from submitting a story again. During those days, he worked in manual jobs such as a truck driver and stock room boy and in different cities including New York and Philadelphia. When he was not working, he spent most of his time hanging around in bars until closing time. He

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

was also accused of being a draft-dodger and was sent to prison because he failed to report his mental problems. He was released after the second psychiatric test. Although he claimed that he abandoned writing, he still wrote short stories. His second success *20 Tanks from Kasseldown* which was about a man's execution while waiting in prison, was published in *Portfolio* by Caresse Crosby, the founder of the Black Sun Press. What drove her to publish his story was the reply to her inquiry of who Bukowski was:

Dear Mrs. Crosby,

I do not know who I am.

Sincerely yours,

*Charles Bukowski*²⁸

Bukowski's success started to show itself after publishing two short stories. At the same time, his interest in poetry bloomed while reading Walt Whitman and Robinson Jeffers but for Bukowski, the latter one was a little bit more impressive: "*Jeffers is stronger, darker, more exploratively modern and mad.*"²⁹ It is likely that seeing the feelings expressed easily in a poem rather than writing long pages in a prose could play a role in his inclination to start the 'poem age.' This phase satisfied Bukowski after getting acceptance from some magazines for his poems that deal with rooming house life, bar life and unfaithful women. The success began to be heard and he gained a big amount of readers so that *Matrix* readers, one of the magazines publishing his works, "*were promised another 'slightly wacky sketch by Charles Bukowski' in the next issue.*"³⁰

In 1947, Bukowski returned to L.A. where he stayed with his family and got a job in a company. However, his father's jealousy of his son was the final nail on the coffin for Bukowski. His father had such a devious mind that he pretended to be the author of Bukowski's article in *Portfolio III* because of the similarity between their

²⁸ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 11.

²⁹ Ibid., 118.

³⁰ Sounes, 1998, p. 26.

names. The bosses were impressed by his work so he got a promotion. His father's dishonesty devastated him so greatly that he moved and rented a room for the second time. The most inevitable consequence for Bukowski would be to welcome again his drunken years in order to escape the agony caused by his father.

When Hank started drinking, he discovered a new side to himself, a side that at last made the world seem a tranquil place. It was escapism, but a beautiful escapism. For him it was happy drug- and would always be. Every time he had a problem now and in later life, he would try and drink his way through it to make it go away.³¹

While sitting in a bar all upset, Bukowski met an orphan woman who was raised by nuns after being abandoned by her parents. She was Jane Cooney Baker, one of his stock characters used in his novels and film *Barfly*. She, his first serious girlfriend, was thirty-eight years old, his eleven years senior. Although there were bad rumors that she was a hooker and had attacked the man who she did not like, he might have been so charmed by her rebellious attitude that they shared a decade together. Despite the many years they spent as a couple, their relationship was not very stable. They had received a warning from the apartment after one of their fights, which occurred because of her tendency to be flirty with the man whom she assumed would order her a drink. As though confirming the rumors, Bukowski could not help thinking of her as a whore. One night, he must have uttered such offensive words due to this excessive drunkenness that in 1948, 1949 and 1951, he was sent to prison for disturbing the environment. *"In the end, the relationship gave him a poor opinion of women, because every other woman would be compared to Jane."*³² In spite of the hitches he faced, Bukowski did not give up and he got a job in a post office as a mail carrier. He was still young, but his addiction to drinking cheap wine, green beer and whiskey, his eating disorder and smoking caused a bleeding ulcer that needed to be cured by a transfusion. Sounes expresses the transfusion event: *"Ironically, the one member of Bukowski's family who did have blood credit was his father and it was because of Henry that Bukowski was given the transfusion which saved his life."*³³ After a long rest away from his drinks, Jane directed him to play the horses. The satisfaction caused by winning streaks brought

³¹ Malone, 2003, p. 17.

³² Brody, 2013, p. 25.

³³ Sounes, 1998, p. 33.

the drinks back into his life. On the other hand, his money was running out fast turning him into a poor man with no money, no job, and no 'Jane' after being seen with another woman.

Having sent his poems, not long after Jane, Barbara Frye, the editor of *Harlequin* magazine, accepted them for publication and "*considered Bukowski the greatest poet since William Blake.*"³⁴ A friendly relationship was crowned with a marriage in 1955. Because of Barbara's complaints of her physical deformity in her neck mentioned in a number of letters to Bukowski, she feared that she would not be able to find a man to marry. Bukowski felt sorry for her and in order to calm her down, he said he would marry her but forgot his words the next day. Unfortunately, he had to keep his promise and felt forced to marry her. This might be another reason that affected his negative perspective of women. The changes she made in his life such as moving out of an apartment into a house and her encouragement to make him a commercial artist due to his talent to draw were not suitable for underground Bukowski. Their marriage began to shatter as "*Barbara obsessed with the man, [portrayed] him as 'a real gentleman'*"³⁵ – something that he definitely was not. Barbara blamed him for subjecting her to mental persecution, and eventually her miscarriage ended the marriage. The divorce proceedings were completed in 1958, where Barbara remained in his mind as "*a cold, vindictive, unkind, snob bitch*"³⁶. The only benefit of this marriage was *Harlequin's* special issue created with eight of Bukowski's poems.

Bukowski did not see his family much before they died. The last time Bukowski got a call from his father was for his mother's cancer operation. In 1956, when he went to visit her mother with his gift, there was a wreath on the door which meant she died. Two years later, in 1958, his father was found dead on the floor most probably from a heart attack. "*If Bukowski failed to grieve for his mother, the death of the father was positively a cause for jubilation. '(...) he's dead dead dead, thank God,' he wrote.*"³⁷ These words were because of his parents' cruelty towards their son; his father pushing

³⁴ Ibid., 36.

³⁵ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 103.

³⁶ Sounes, 1998, p. 40.

³⁷ Ibid., 44.

his head to the vomited rug, beating him with a razor strop and his mother doing nothing but just watching.

Experienced by the deaths and losses, Bukowski started to produce darker and more realistic poems that his name was frequently seen in little magazines. In Loujon Press, Jon and Louise (Gypsy Lou) Webb published eleven of Bukowski's poems in their journal *The Outsider*. "*Later the Webbs named Bukowski their first 'Outside of the Year', an honor that amazed the then-middle aged writer for the rest of his life.*"³⁸ During that time, his path crossed with that of Jane, but she looked so old that Bukowski referred to her as "*the old woman.*"³⁹ One day, when he went back to see her, she was soaked in blood suffering from cancer and died in 1962. "*Hank felt he had lost someone that he allowed himself to get very close to, which was rare for him.*"⁴⁰ After her death, Bukowski started to write a series of grief poems because those years were the years a death brought about other deaths.

After the death of his first real love Jane, Bukowski was so deeply depressed that the women on the street reminded him of Jane. He was weak and miserable and he took away all the sharp objects; knives, scissors, and razors, in order not to show a tendency to commit suicide that seemed like a logical solution for him again. He tried to focus on writing and sent them to the editors. One of the clerks, Johnny Moore, from his previous job of post office, helped Bukowski work in the post office again where he worked for twelve years. Besides writing, this was his only income. In 1963, he met a woman who was born as Frances Elizabeth Dean and later changed to FrancEyE. Interested in poetry, she admired Bukowski a lot: she rented a cheap room in L.A. in order to be close to him. Here they started to see each other often. The woman was a sober drinker, unlike Bukowski. However, Bukowski expresses that "*he could stop drinking if he wanted, if only for a day or so, and because he carries on writing however much he drank. This remained his opinion throughout his life.*"⁴¹ According to Bukowski, FrancEyE loved him but he did not. Her support and love for Bukowski maintained the relation only temporarily. Later, she became pregnant and Bukowski, to carry out his

³⁸ Brody, 2013, p. 43.

³⁹ Sounes, 1998, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁴¹ Ibid., 61.

father figure, asked to marry him, but she rejected it not being willing to marry anyone again. They agreed to live together as a family for their child. That year, after being honored by Jon and Gyps Lou Webb, an offer to publish an anthology of his best poems was an indescribable feeling that *“Bukowski was overwhelmed by the Webb’s generosity of spirit, people he still had not met.”*⁴² Bukowski became a contributor to their (Webb’s) magazine. The book, published in 1963 as a work of art, succeeded to draw attention to Bukowski and his extraordinary style - dark and gritty - that lots of copies were made. When the first copy of the book arrived, Bukowski was most probably like a bouncy child: *“‘My God, you’ve done it, you’ve done it!’ Bukowski wrote to the Webbs in high excitement. ‘Never such a book!’”*⁴³ The agony for the deaths and losses pulled Bukowski towards a life of depression and misery. He might have thought the excitement may be worthwhile enough to endure all the pain.

In 1964, after the first book’s success, Webbs offered to produce and publish a second book. Bukowski liked both the idea and the Webb couple so much that if their baby was a girl, he would give her the name Louise. That year on September 7, Bukowski had a baby that he named Marina Louise Bukowski. He gave a great deal of attention to little Marina, probably because Bukowski did not want to repeat his father’s mistakes. *“It was especially wonderful that he was so natural and direct in his love for her.”*⁴⁴ From now on, Bukowski most probably realized that when the idea of suicide came up in his mind, he could easily defeat it due to having a beautiful reason to live - his baby. For Bukowski, life became tough because he was responsible for two people at home and his work too. He found time for writing and obliged himself to keep up with his literary career. However, having a baby crying at home and a woman doing housework was overwhelming for Bukowski. This worried both the Webbs and him about their second book. Therefore, Webbs got Bukowski to live in New Orleans so that he can finish the poetry book. Unwillingly accepting his move, Bukowski felt under pressure working like a laborer rather than a writer. As a result, after a year later, the poems inside *Crucifix in a Deathland* which mainly dealt with the problems of the urban underclass, was published like an album of Gothic fairy tales. Webbs made

⁴² Ibid., 62.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 142.

Bukowski increasingly more popular day-by-day so that young poets got interested in Bukowski and his work. Douglas Blazek, one of young poets and the owner of little magazine *Ole*, asked the writer for some of his short stories to publish in his magazine. Responding with an autobiographical essay, his alter ego 'Henry Chinaski' started to appear. The short stories of Bukowski about his childhood, adolescence and youth and his relationships with women would later become significant components of his novels.

Even though he was a father and had the responsibility of a family, the gloomy life pursued him. Everything in his life needed attention, but he was the underground Hank; hanging around the bars, being involved in fights and locking himself in a room. Bukowski offered FrancEYE to live separately with the promise to support them. Although it was not good news, Marina believes "*she is lucky the split came before she knew any other life. 'I didn't have any unhappy memories of that and, obviously, if it had been a year or two later I would have been at least initially miserably.*"⁴⁵ Being strongly connected to her father, she could feel his love and affection both in his actions and words. "*I'm really lucky to have the father I have because he may have been really unusual, but he always talked to me just as another person. He didn't talk down the way a lot of adults do to their children and, as a result, I felt much closer to him.*"⁴⁶ He kept his promise and unlike his father Henry Bukowski, he continued to visit her daughter after the split.

John Martin, a furniture storeowner who then decided to have a publishing company, had been interested in Bukowski's literary work. After having read Bukowski in *The Outsider*, Martin thought "*the poet was the modern incarnation of 'Walt Whitman'*"⁴⁷ and decided to be his publisher. In 1965, the first thing that Martin said when he paid a visit to the writer was "*I worship you.*"⁴⁸ This admiration was crowned with five of his poems that were waiting to be published. Martin had chosen a name for his new and small publishing company 'Black Sparrow Press'. Martin had also offered some money for one of his stories. Having gone home with enough material, Martin arranged the first publications of the writer a year later. Furthermore, Martin sold his

⁴⁵ Sounes, 1998, p. 76.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁷ Brody, 2013, p. 55.

⁴⁸ Malone, 2003, p. 64.

library of the first edition to the University of California and carried the small press into a company publishing Bukowski's and other new or neglected writers' works. Despite Martin being a teetotaler and Bukowski thinking of him as: "*inhuman [because] he does not drink beer!*"⁴⁹, the press company would become a corpus for more than thirty of Bukowski's books.

Bukowski's poetry is like reading a story; the incidents experienced by the writer are committed to paper immediately. Once, when he met a handsome Spanish cartoonist, he did not like him and wrote the poem *Trouble with Spain* about him. His poems consist of one, two or three words in a line much like a list that draws attention to the images and ideas in the poem. On the other hand, in his writings, the emotions are mixed with an excellent simplicity that each line in the book has its own energy. He was probably influenced by the direct prose style of John Fante and Ernest Hemingway and the poetry of Pablo Neruda, Robinson Jeffers and the other writers or poets that he was "*writing down one simple line after another' and bringing humor in as well, because he believed 'creation cannot be all that serious, or you fall asleep'.*"⁵⁰ By using a little bit of drugs, much alcohol, sex, gambling and supporting radical politics for a while, the underground writer shows his enjoyment in ridiculing the counter-culture. Even though he holds out on the many conventions of society, he may not be totally for the counter-culture that from his latest chapbook *The Genius of The Crowd*:

... The Best At Murder Are Those
Who Preach Against It
And The Best At Hate Are Those
Who Preach LOVE
AND THE BEST AT WAR
FINALLY ARE THOSE WHO PREACH
PEACE⁵¹

Consequently, the young writers, poets, editors and even hippies who admired his work relatively took part in these things. For example, one of the admirers of Bukowski, Steve Richmond, studied law at a university by spending his time having sex

⁴⁹ Sounes, 1998, p. 79.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 83.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

and taking LSD. He, who was deeply impressed by the writer, gave up his plans for the future about law and decided to operate a poetry bookshop where he would sell the chapbooks of Bukowski.

The writer's reputation was growing rapidly. In 1967, a weekly column titled *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* for the newspaper *Open City* founded by John Bryan was launched. Using his real name, at the beginning, Bukowski wrote about his past life – the death and funeral of his father, the barfly years, his marriage and his years of starvation as a writer-to-be – but later getting bored with the oldies, he started to invent sex stories. Cherkovski states that “*Hank treated his readers to slices of autobiography, a portrait of himself as the eternal outsider, or as he puts it ‘the frozen man’.*”⁵² His unpleasant honesty, even sarcastically declaring a disdainful expression for hippies, made the column last nearly two years. In this column, he made his political point of view clear; he was not on the left or right or in the center, but, as an underground, on the outside, the outside of ‘everything’.

In terms of friendships, Bukowski may not be a faithful one to his friends: he could betray the people who were close to him. In the column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*, he criticized Jon Webb as “the great editor” by writing spitefully about him. Douglas Blazek got his share as well. When they met, he felt the friendship that had continued since 1964 seemed unwanted by Bukowski.

Blazek formulated a theory about why Bukowski the correspondent was so different from Bukowski in the flesh. When he wrote his wonderful letters with the jokes, poems and funny drawings he often included, so intimate and revealing, he could allow himself to be vulnerable because he was at a safe distance. His antagonism and aggression came to the fore when met people face to face. ‘As much as he wanted a camaraderie, he wanted to be friends, he wanted to be open, he wanted to share love, he couldn’t allow himself luxury having been hurt so much in the past. ‘This made him rather mean-spirited as an individual.’⁵³

However, his friendship with the publisher John Martin was not on the shaky ground, maybe because Martin was not around to see the savageness of Bukowski during the times he drank.

⁵² Cherkovski, 1991, p. 189.

⁵³ Sounes, 1998, p. 88.

Bukowski started to become the mini legend of the underground with the *Open City* column and Black Sparrow books. The steps towards becoming a full time writer were taken when somebody warned the post office secretly about Bukowski's dirty stories in *Open City* and his wedlock child. As a result, they forced him to quit the job by making up the excuse that he was dismissed for his frequent absenteeism. Hence, at age forty-nine, he devoted himself to his writing career. In the meantime, the book *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* was published by John Bryan. Bukowski was asked to edit a literary supplement for which he chose a story about sex. This story, *Skinny Dynamite*, became the cause of Bryan's (its editor) arrest because of its obscenity. Micheline, the author of the story, agreed that it was a simple story about a girl loving sex and got support from some writers including Bukowski. In 1969, even though the case was dropped, the inevitable end for *Open City* had come. The betrayed Bryan stated: "*Bukowski was very talented, but he was really an asshole.*"⁵⁴ For Bryan, Bukowski had now become 'Bullshitski'. Nonetheless, explicit stories as such aided Bukowski's discovery of women.

Bukowski met a gay poet, Harold Norse, one of the Beat Movement's* figures that he admired during *Open City*. Both of the writers were involved in the magazine *Ole* and *The Outsider*. Norse was also an underground writer of the 20th century when he reached a wide readership. "*Both of them came out of the 'underground cobwebs', (...) More importantly, fame came late to both of them, which in Hank's eye view meant they wouldn't be spoiled by it.*"⁵⁵ Norse also differentiated the good and the bad Bukowski. The good Bukowski was a little sad, not very aggressive and arrogant and polite to strangers but the bad one was a troublesome, drunk Bukowski who loved to praise himself. Bukowski had some hesitations to be among the Beat writers, because many of them were homosexual. However, Norse thought that Bukowski was interested in seeing the other men's sexual organs. Towards the end of the 1960s, Bukowski

⁵⁴ Ibid., 93.

* In American in the 1950s, a new cultural and literary movement staked its claim on the nation's consciousness. In the world of literature and art, the Beats stood in opposition to the clean, almost antiseptic formalism of the early twentieth century Modernists. They fashioned a literature that was more bold, straightforward, and expressive than anything that had come before. To many, the artistic productions of the Beats crossed the line into pornography and therefore merited censorship. See: <http://www.online-literature.com/periods/beat.php> (25.10.16)

⁵⁵ Malone, 2003, p. 67.

recorded fifty poems for the Beatles when the Beat writer Barry Miles suggested Bukowski to his friend by stating: “*he was just very interested in the avant-garde, very open minded about these things and prepared to take my word if I said this guy was OK.*”⁵⁶ Bukowski carried out the duty successfully. Bukowski loved some of the writers in the movement but he did not to be called a Beat writer. In an interview, when the question “*Do you feel akin at all to the Beat Generation writers?*” was asked, he stated his ideas clearly about the generation by answering “*I don’t. I find a certain type of phoniness about them.*”⁵⁷ He was writing from a part of the counterculture, but he did not ascribe his style of writing to any grouping.

Public reading that would increase his reputation began when his friend Peter Edler asked him to read at The Bridge. Normally, he would have rejected it because the idea frightened him. On that day, the people who were close to him came to watch. Two days later in 1970, Bukowski started his first novel *Post Office*. He completed the book in three weeks and the book was translated into fifteen languages*. “*It is the first, and arguably the best of a series of five novels charting the life and times of Henry Chinaski in an innovative but accessible prose style (...)*”⁵⁸ After reading Fante and Hemingway, and, as a result, using lots of dialogues in his writing, Bukowski wanted to be understood easily. According to the writer Russell Harrison, “*no contemporary American novelist has treated work as extensively or intensively as Bukowski.*”⁵⁹ *Post Office* deals with the misadventures of Henry Chinaski, the autobiographical anti-hero of Bukowski, as being a lover and postal worker with a sardonic humor. The book represents the working class experience in 20th century America and the changes the country had undergone since the Second World War. From the point of Harrison, “*it will be somewhat skewed because I have left out the personal relationships (in the novel Henry Chinaski marries, divorces and fathers a child) and will probably make the*

⁵⁶ Sounes, 1998, p. 96.

⁵⁷ Calonne, 2003, p. 130.

* For instance; in Brazil "Post office" was translated as "Cartas na Rua", that means "Letters on the street". See: <https://bukowskiforum.com/threads/bukowski-translations-in-brazil.9070/> (08.02.17)

⁵⁸ Sounes, 1998, p. 105.

⁵⁹ Russell Harrison, *Against The American Dream*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa, 1994, p. 123.

novel seem more a Tendenzroman than it may appear to be.*"⁶⁰ Despite having completed his first book in a short amount of time, he waited for its publication for a year. Later, he did not give a break and started his second book *The Horseplay* which remained unfinished and unpublished.

Being away from the fields of women, Bukowski met Linda King who was interested in sculpting and poetry in 1970. As the days progressed, their relationship bloomed with Bukowski's romantic letters and their sexual life. Linda transformed Bukowski's life into a healthy one by reducing his drinking and smoking and putting him on a diet. She was also involved in a work of art *Me and Your Sometimes Love Poems* with Bukowski. However, the jealousy phase started when Linda danced with whoever she wanted and flirted with his friends. They were sick of fighting and separated many times. When Bukowski was drunk, he insulted her violently. Once he was drunk again and treated her so viciously. He came to Linda as if he would kiss her, but instead he hit her so hard that she had a broken nose. The relationship ended with a farewell letter. In 1972, Linda left L.A. to take off to Utah by leaving a note and a pair of her panties. A woman leaving him meant a new relationship for the womanizer. He started to negotiate with Liza Williams who was an executive. Both of them had known each other since *Open City*. At that time, Bukowski started to write his third novel, *Women*. However, he could not forget Linda and they often spoke on the phone. For Bukowski reuniting with Linda meant separation from Liza. Lasting less than a year, she was fed up with the nonstop splitting and reconciliation and, as a result, the couple separated.

William Wantling, one of Bukowski's long-standing poet friends, invited the writer to the Illinois College to public reading in 1974. However, the drunk Bukowski gave such a bad reading that the audience was devastated by his performance. Ruth, the wife of Wantling, says: "*he was extremely disappointed in Bukowski as a person. He said he didn't know why Bukowski came, and that he wished he had never met him.*"⁶¹ When he returned to L.A., he created an outrageous poet character by disguising

* A novel with an obvious social-political purpose. See: Tom Cheeseman, *Novels of Turkish-German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions*, Camden House, New York, 2007, p. 118.

⁶⁰ Harrison, 1994, p. 131.

⁶¹ Sounes, 1998, p. 136.

Wantling's name and wrote stories about him. An unexpected tragedy happened after a couple of weeks; Wantling committed suicide. "*You write something, and the person you write about dies. It's a responsibility.*"⁶² Bukowski stated that he recognized his role in his demise. Soon after the tragedy, Ruth came to L.A. to spend time with Bukowski. That night she found herself in his bed without intercourse that caused her to feel an emotional rape.

Starting to be equalized with the writers Allen Ginsberg, the Beat writer, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti who had associations with the Beat writers, Bukowski was thinking of joining the Beatles, even though the Beat writer William Burroughs, whom Bukowski admired, despised him (Bukowski) in a reading. Bukowski's mass of readers broadened with the great French intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Genet who were fans of Bukowski's work. His personal life also attracted some writers such as Jack Micheline, Harold Norse, Steve Richmond and Raymond Carver who made Bukowski the subject of their works. The driven Bukowski did not stop and published his second book *Factotum* in 1975. He focused on the experiences of a young man, Henry Chinaski, who worked at menial jobs by travelling the United States. The writer was continuing to compose short stories for pornographic magazines, possibly in an attempt to maintain his reputation as a 'dirty writer'. Incisively, he could easily find new materials for sex magazines by watching the street prostitutes and going to the sex parties with his neighbor Tina Darby, an exotic dancer. Bukowski was getting lots of emails, calls, letters and nude photographs from his fans, mostly from many young mothers. Due to such desperate attitudes of women, Bukowski might have begun generating misogynistic thoughts about them.

Bukowski met Pamela Miller (Cupcake) for the first time when she brought her friend Georgia, a fan of Bukowski, to his apartment. She was twenty-three year old cocktail waitress with reddish-blonde hair. The nickname Cupcake came from her 38D chest. Bukowski deeply fell in love with her but she did not; instead, she flirted with other men. Bukowski dedicated the book *Scarlet*, a collection of love poems to her, but she was too stoned to admire it. In one of the poetry readings, Cupcake left without

⁶² Ibid., 137.

saying good-bye to him. However, it did not matter for the womanizer Don Juan. He was ready to wait for the next one.

Linda Lee Beighle who was twenty-five years younger than Bukowski lived as a hippy and believed in the Indian guru Meher Baba. She introduced herself to Bukowski as his fan at a poetry reading in 1976. They became good friends despite her refusing sex at first. As days went past, by sending letters to him, a love that later would be crowned with a marriage bloomed by her side. When settled in Bukowski's apartment, she checked that Bukowski was alright by calling. Linda was such a jealous woman that she telephoned and disturbed all the women with whom Bukowski had a relationship. This attracted Bukowski's attention. The way that Linda was taking care of him by keeping him away from alcohol and smoking appealed to Bukowski. This brought them together.

In May 1978, Germany was waiting for Bukowski to give a reading with Linda Lee. The first book translated into German language was *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*. Carl Weissner, a young editor and future translator of Bukowski, must have witnessed his popularity that Bukowski's work was bewilderingly being read more in Germany than Europe. For John Martin, "*Bukowski's vulgarity appeals to German readers. You see Stern magazine, they love nothing better than bathroom jokes and farting jokes. That's their national humor, so he caught on right away.*"⁶³ He also gave interviews to German magazines. Hundreds of fans from Sweden, Holland, Austria and Denmark were lining up for his ticket. Meanwhile, the manuscript of his *Women* had been with Martin for a year without being published. His reputation was on the peak, and one night he was telephoned by a film director, Barbet Schroeder. He wanted to direct a film from one of his stories. Also, a French TV show *Apostrophes* that had with several million viewers invited the writer to the program. He was so drunk in the program that the other guests were shocked, but this increased Bukowski's reputation in France where the readership of his books increased after the incident.

The expected book *Women* soon appeared after a long delay, in 1978. The book focused on many dissatisfactions of the new women that the alter ego Henry Chinaski encountered. Most of the women in Bukowski's life did not think of themselves as a

⁶³ Sounes, 1998, p. 174.

source for his book but when they bought the book, they discovered themselves there – from Linda to Lydia, Ruth Wantling to Cecelia, Amber O’Neil to Tanya, and Cupcake to Tammie. He considered it “*the best book he had done.*”⁶⁴ He added on to his success with his poetry book *Love Is a Dog from Hell*. Bukowski was satisfied with his fast life and tried to live what his age anticipated him. That year he also wrote a new preface to the reprinting *Ask The Dust* and produced a 1979 travelogue *Shakespeare Never Did This* about his adventures in Europe. Now, he was a rich underground accelerating to the high-life. He bought himself a new house and a BMW. In August 1980, Bukowski agreed on *Barfly*, a film based on the years Bukowski spent in Philadelphia and the years he spent with Jane in Los Angeles. Schroder, who listened to the writer’s stories of his youth, was impressed and started a film named *The Charles Bukowski Tapes*, a collection of short interviews. At that time, the Italian director Marco Ferreri also produced a Bukowski film entitled *Tales of Ordinary Madness*.

Bukowski did not withhold himself from producing something new and in the summer of 1982, he published his fourth novel *Ham on Rye*. Focusing on his childhood years, it was “*likely the most honestly autobiographical book that [he] ever finished*”⁶⁵. The book’s title is a pun of the novel *The Cather in the Rye*, one of his favorite books and also means that “*Chinaski was trapped between his parents, like ham in a sandwich.*”⁶⁶ During the production process, Bukowski, sixty-four, proposed to Linda Lee, forty-one, and two days later after his birthday (sixty-five), they got married. The studies for the film *Barfly* was continuing. The rising Hollywood star and Madonna’s husband Sean Penn was asked to play the character Henry Chinaski, but it failed. At long last, Schroder found the company ‘Cannon Pictures’ that could afford the film. The actor Mickey Rourke was chosen to star in the film. While the premiere of the film was held in fall 1987, another film *Crazy Love* by a Belgian filmmaker was released. Being dissatisfied with the film *Barfly*, he remarked: “*if I looked that bad in my drinking days I would have been kicked out of even more bars than I already was.*”⁶⁷ Despite the fact

⁶⁴ Ibid., 181.

⁶⁵ Brody, 2013, p. 90.

⁶⁶ Sounes, 1998, p. 200.

⁶⁷ Malone, 2003, p. 141.

that the film might not have been a good representation of the writer's life, the film made an impression worldwide.

Bukowski's health problems had reminded itself since he consumed an excessive amount of alcohol, smoked heavily, participated in bar-fights and stayed in prison. Despite his inadequate energy, he successfully wrote a new novel *Hollywood* in 1988 which handled the years Bukowski experienced with Barbet Schroder while making *Barfly*. His symptoms such as losing weight, having no appetite, a hacking dry cough, being dizzy and even having difficulty going to the toilet were the cause of his tuberculosis. After a six-month antibiotics treatment, he felt better. Charles Bukowski must have learnt to be happy with little things so that when Linda Lee bought a computer, it was a miracle for him. In 1992, he published an anthology *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* about the life in Los Angeles. However, he rejected other offers of making a television program and a sit-com series because of being rich enough.

My work was finally getting recognized. And I was still writing the way I wanted to and felt that I had to. I was still writing to keep from going crazy, I was still writing, trying to explain this god-damned life to myself. And here I was being talked into a tv series on commercial tv. All I had fought so hard for could be laughed right off the boards...⁶⁸

The admiration for Bukowski, this time, came from the rock band U2. Bukowski, Linda Lee, the actor Harry Dean Stanton and Sean Dean went to one of the group's concerts. Bono, the lead singer of the group, was a fan of Bukowski and recorded a praise song titled 'Dirty World'. That night the concert was dedicated to the couple.

Bukowski was really a prolific writer that despite his increased age; (seventy), he thought of continuing to write and started a new novel but with a little twist. In 1993, he was three-quarters of the way of the novel. However, after tuberculosis, he became ill again and had somber leukemia. He did not put on mourning against death: "*All we gotta do is die. And after livin', that's a break.*"⁶⁹ During his chemotherapy treatment, he had some unpleasant side effects such as; losing his strength and hair and having

⁶⁸ Sounes, 1998, p. 228.

⁶⁹ Malone, 2003, p. 167.

some bleeding parts on his body. After staying sixty-four days in the hospital, he spent his remaining days in his garden sitting under trees. Stoutly, he had decided to complete his last book *Pulp*, a very twisted detective story. The book published in 1994 was an example of 'bad writing'.⁷⁰ With its crime story, the book was different from the others. "In abandoning the subject matter he knew about and could write convincingly about – low-paid work, relationships between men and women, and the predicament of the urban under-class – he seemed lost."⁷¹ In August, several months before his death, he went to a store, Vinegar Hill Books where he signed books. When he was about to leave, he realized a journalist's smile and said: "I can see your headline: 'Old man of seventy-three signs his last books'."⁷² In the healing process, cancer returned and started to destroy his blood cells and immune system. This destruction led him to get pneumonia. "Dying didn't depress him. What depressed him was what he was leaving behind: 'the drunken nights and the days at the track'."⁷³ The doctors tried to keep him alive, but at the age of seventy-three, he closed his eyes to the real 'underground' on Wednesday March 9, 1994.

Charles Bukowski, with six novels, dozens of short stories, many poetry books, and a screenplay translated into many languages, had his name written as a very significant author of the 20th century. As he saw the world as a beautiful, sexy and funny place, he had an uncompromising personality against the imposed rules of society, drudgery, hypocrisy and pretentiousness. However, he had an understanding mind that accepted the reality of people being wretched and cruel to each other. Thought as a proletarian writer by lots of people, the direct Bukowski dealt with everyday life in his works with an emphasis on the less successful Americans living in cheap buildings and working at menial jobs, the relationship between men and women, and the relationship between a child and his/her parents. Martin thought "Bukowski had more than justified himself by writing books that were totally honest, completely devoid

⁷⁰ The first person narration is weak, the ridiculous cases (involving, among other things, the angel of death, space aliens, and hallucinatory animals) flirt, but don't go anywhere, with magic realism, and Belane's penchant for the drink is simply tiresome. And we've all heard Nick's tired, jaded, cynical philosophy before. See: <http://www.thrillingdetective.com/non-fiction/r024.html> (29.10.16)

⁷¹ Sounes, 1998, p. 238.

⁷² Ibid., 239.

⁷³ Malone, 2003, p. 163.

*of pretense, (...)*⁷⁴ The words, sentences, paragraphs and pages in his books were really all about himself so that Sounes, in his book, pointed out Bukowski's own words: "*ninety-three per cent of his work was autobiography, he said, and the remaining seven per cent was 'improved upon'.*"⁷⁵ Therefore, his novels can also be partly called *roman à clef* by his autobiographical anti-hero Henry Chinaski. Standing unusual in modern American Literature, the author who opened himself so directly to his readers deserves to be read. Bukowski – a bum, a hard drinker, a cross-continental hero, an anti-hero, a late blooming 'Don Juan' and an outsider – should never be forgotten and will not.



⁷⁴ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 265.

⁷⁵ Sounes, 1998, p. 7.

CHAPTER III

A MAN OF VERSATILITY: “THE WRITER OF ALL GENRES”

3.1. Bukowski as a Representative of “Dirty Realism”

Charles Bukowski lived almost all his life as a writer in America. The subject matter for his many works stemmed from the street life of Los Angeles. He must have focused mainly on the city’s skid row to the degree that in 1986 *Time* called Bukowski a “laureate of the American low life.”⁷⁶ In his works based on the experience, emotion, and imagination, Bukowski used direct and clear language generally with sexual and violent imagery, but there are some disagreements about his style among critics. While some of the critics think of his style as offensive, others find that Bukowski criticized the machismo attitude by using sex, alcohol, and violence. Stephen Kessler in the *San Francisco Review of Books* states:

Without trying to make himself look good, much less heroic, Bukowski writes with a nothing-to-lose truthfulness, which sets him apart from most other ‘autobiographical’ novelists and poets. Firmly in the American tradition of the maverick, Bukowski writes with no apologies from the frayed edge of society.⁷⁷

His directness, understood completely and clearly by the readers, and his focus on the absurdities of life and examination of “broken people” in his novels constituted Bukowski’s realism. In his realism, he struggled to portray being down and out, the drudgery in workplaces, and misadventures in love with either dialogues or description.

⁷⁶ Blaire-Amis-Fuller, 2015, p.10.

⁷⁷ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/charles-bukowski> (09.12.16)

Rather than bourgeois' taste and interest in successful people, Bukowski directed his focus on the repressed ones in the society. One day, the writer Jean-François Duval went to Bukowski's house to interview him and when he directed a question about losers, he answered:

They found somebody who fed them with something. Some kind of strength. Something that made them feel better. And so they hung around me. Sometimes I'd say: Go away! Listen, I'm tired of you, go away! And they would for a while, and they'd come back. So...The losers seem to like me. Maybe 'cause I symbolize losers. Or better, I symbolize a loser who hasn't jumped off the cliff yet... I get a lot of letters from people in prisons, New Zealand, Orient, various places. They love my books. One guy in New Zealand, he said, no it was the guy in Asia, he said: 'You are the only writer the convicts read. They pass the book from cell to cell.' To me this is a great honor. Because the hardest people to fool are those in hell. So I feel there is a good gang there reading me.⁷⁸

To make his style distinct from bourgeois style, Bukowski also wrote the newspaper column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* and sold his stories to pornographic magazines.

Bukowski's point of view about the concept of reality is 'dirty'. His realist manner in his narratives consists of extremely dirty and unpleasant conditions, poverty, and exclusion which are the representations of reality in the 20th century American world, where the class struggles and labor divisions can be seen explicitly. The writer Paul Clements states in his book *Charles Bukowski, Outsider Literature, and Beat Movement*:

As Henry Chinaski suggests in the movie *Barfly*, "nobody suffers like poor," and the claim that Bukowski's oeuvre represents working-class experience rather than outsider marginality, is a counterhegemonic attempt to deny mainstream American Dream ideology and the marginalization of this large sector of society.⁷⁹

Bereft of any glamorization, Bukowski's direct, rough and pessimistic style is his way to describe the life that is experienced by himself and the people around him. While reading his books, the readers can identify themselves with the real world and

⁷⁸ Duval, 2002, p. 165.

⁷⁹ Paul Clements, *Charles Bukowski, Outsider Literature, and the Beat Movement*, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 65.

find similarities in their own worlds. Because of his preference to use daily language to describe the usual things, readers are able to internalize the written. Bukowski, throughout his life, did not care about what people thought that he wrote exactly what he lived and felt. In one of his poems *Alone with Everybody* readers can discover not only the writer's and their personal experiences, love-sexual relationships, alcoholic and philosophical issues, but also the unadorned-unfurnished language, which many people fail to put into words this a feeling:

*the flesh covers the bone
and they put a mind in there and
sometimes a soul,
and the women break vases against the walls
and the men drink too much
and nobody finds the one
but keep looking, crawling in and out of beds.
flesh covers the bone and the flesh
searches for more than flesh.
there's no chance at all:
we are all trapped by a singular fate.
nobody ever finds the one.*

*the city dumps fill
the junkyards fill
the madhouses fill
the hospitals fill
the graveyards fill
nothing else fills.⁸⁰*

The human body, as expressed in the poem, is in need and search of something more than satisfaction of one's sexual desire. The title actually is very suggestive of the

⁸⁰ Blaire-Amis-Fuller, 2015, pp.12-13.

poem's contents. The poet expresses his frustration as to the impossibility of spiritual satisfaction in sexual relations. To achieve unity of body and soul with a lover seems to be rare.

The language and the subject matter made Bukowski become known as the 'Dirty Old Man' and "*the godfather of Dirty Realism*"⁸¹ by many critics. It is a style of writing that deals with the mundane and seamier aspects of ordinary life. Focusing on the sadness and losses in the everyday lives of lower-middle-class or marginalized people, dirty realism is concerned with the disadvantaged or disaffected experiences. Approximately forty-five years during 1945-1991, "*the Cold War's political contortions provide the context from which dirty realism draws the diametrical oppositions and unified contradictions that it instates and negotiates.*"⁸² When contrary discourses; conflicts, diplomatic and militaristic, caused by the Cold War was inscribed to the world, dirty realism started to be involved in discussion variance to get its own contrariness written on the world. "*By the 1960s, literary writers had become aware – an awareness largely owing to the ways in which the Cold War authorized its 'norms' – of a new 'reality'.*"⁸³ The language no longer represented or recorded the actual language with a narrative. The realities and controversies started to appear with this new reality. By 1960s, as a literary and artistic style and a branch of minimalism, dirty realism was described and showed "*a strain of realism first appearing in American and Canadian writing*"⁸⁴ and through the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s its popularity became apparent. It made also people notice its own boundary, authority and separateness. Raymond Carver's *What do you do in San Francisco* (1976) is thought as an example of the canon of dirty realist writing from the 1960s to the 1990s. It indicates a conflict with the predominant culture's discourse spread by Cold War and a struggle with the culture's fraud and paradox.

The hypocrisy of American policy – whose narrators embodied the country as the home of the free while ignoring such rampant curtailments of freedom as segregation,

⁸¹ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 11.

⁸² Tamas Dobozy, "Towards a Definition of Dirty Realism", The University of British Columbia, The Faculty of Graduate Studies, Colombia, 2000, p. 171.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., ii.

McCarthyism, military interference in foreign nations, and governmental censure-finds itself reproduced in the dirty realism text.⁸⁵

In 1983, it was the journal *Granta*, that coined the term Dirty Realism by the critic and editor Bill Buford. However, “in 1973, ten years before Buford’s term, Roland Barthes made a startling and prophetic observation on reading in ‘The Pleasure of the Text,’ which would help elucidate the tactics of dirty realism.”⁸⁶ Buford revealed first *Granta 8: Dirty Realism* (1983) and then *Granta 19: More Dirt* (1986) to develop his term and to describe the practitioners of the form; Richard Ford, Jane Anne Philips, Raymond Carver, Elizabeth Tallent, Tobias Wolff, Bobbie Anne Mason, Joy Williams and Robert Olmstead. Bukowski is not among these writers and the writer Michael Hemmingson states his astonishment in his book *The Dirty Realism Duo*: “Neither volume includes Bukowski, which is a curiosity, if Bukowski is indeed the alleged Dirty Realist godfather.”⁸⁷ He gives also a footnote explaining what the possible reason may be and states that:

Granta may have refused to acknowledge Bukowski’s work as many academics have in the past, determining it to be “low culture” writing. There could have been publication rights issues – Bukowski’s publisher, Black Sparrow Press, was known to be extremely protective of where their star writer’s work appeared outside the scope of their editions. Perhaps Bukowski did not care for the term Dirty Realism – being the anti-academic he was – or *Granta*. There could be many reasons.⁸⁸

Dating back to Cold War years, the dirty realism’s existence advanced throughout the history. In terms of what the dirty realism is really about or what the text of the movement deal with is clearly understandable when the writer Guillermina De Ferrari specifies in his book the editor Buford’s description of dirty realism:

It is not a fiction devoted to making the large historical statements... It is instead a fiction of a different scope – devoted to the local details, the nuances. The little disturbances in language and gesture – and it is entirely appropriate that its primary form is the short story... These are strange stories: unadorned, unfurnished, low-rent tragedies about people... They drink a lot and are often in trouble ... drifters in a world cluttered with junk food and the oppressive details of modern consumerism...

⁸⁵ Ibid., 172.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁷ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

This is a curious, dirty realism about the belly-side of contemporary life, but it is realism...so insistently informed by a discomfiting and sometimes elusive irony – that it makes the more traditional realistic novels seem ornate, even baroque in comparison.⁸⁹

The new ‘dirty realism’ school of writing started to become famous by the virtue of a group of American writers who were interested in middle-class characters, their heartbreaks, disappointments, and harsh realities of their ordinary lives. The best known among these writers are Raymond Carver, Jayne Anne Philips, and Tobias Wolff. “*The term refers to a tendency for their stories to recount incidents of impoverished life among blue-collar workers in small-town America, in a bare, unsensational style.*”⁹⁰ The nitty-gritty of life consisting of the feelings of boredom and meaninglessness is also the matter portrayed by ‘dirty realism’. To depict the dark grim lifestyle, Bukowski used social dialects. Hemmingson in his book the following about the genre:

Dirty Realism showed up in the early 1980s, branching out from minimalism, the stripping of fiction down to the least amount of words and a concentration on the object. The characters are usually run-of-the-mill, every day people – the lower and middle class worker, the unemployed, the alcoholic, the beaten-down-by-life. Charles Bukowski is considered by many critics to be the godfather of this sub-genre, followed by Carver.⁹¹

In his first story *Aftermath of a Lengthy Rejection Slip*, Bukowski, to express the character Millie’s negative uneducated social dialect, uses phonology in the narration. The aim is also to describe her social background. From her implicit and concerned dialogues, Millie might worry about the character Mr. Burnett’s well-being that she states she would do anything for him.

Millie, put on Tchaikovsky's 6th for Mr. Burnett. (...) I want you to notice, (...) the section which brings forth the marching movement in this symphony. I think it's one of the most beautiful movements in all music. And besides its beauty and force, its structure is perfect. You can feel intelligence at work. (...)

⁸⁹ Guillermina De Ferrari, *Vulnerable States: Bodies of Memory in Contemporary Caribbean Fiction*, University of Virginia Press, USA, 2007, p. 196.

⁹⁰ Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 99.

⁹¹ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 11.

Good Lord, ya gone off ya nut, baby boy? what's eatin' at ya? Sompin's botherin' ya tonight, I can tell! Tell Millie all about ut! Millie'd go ta hell for ya, baby boy, ya know that. Whats'a matter, huh? Ha?⁹²

As a realist writer and poet, Bukowski touches on also the themes such as; escapism, alienation, depression, and loneliness. Although they seem maddening, gloomy and upsetting, the writer creates a suspenseful echo that the reader feels the beauty of dreariness throughout the work, which are seen in his novels and poems. In one of his poems “*Bluebird*”, Bukowski showed that the only solution was escapism. “*There's a bluebird in my heart /that /wants to get out /but I'm too clever, I only let him out /at night sometimes /when everybody's asleep. /I say, I know that you're there, /so don't be /sad (...)*”⁹³ Escapism, alienation and loneliness are actually feelings from Bukowski’s own life. The horrific, desperate, and saddening experiences of Bukowski come into existence with his poems, short stories, and books. Because the realism necessitates showing the reality and truth in everyday life, in the poem, Bukowski most probably emphasizes his own desire; escape. By this attitude of realism, handling the underground subject matters in his work and using firsthand and direct language, Bukowski shows his inclination to dirty realism. According to the writer Michael Hemmingson:

Bukowski’s dirty realism is too obvious – the drunk, the unemployed, the hopeless – does it get any more lower middle class American than that? The difference is that Bukowski finds humor in it all. I think a lot of new Bukowski readers are attracted to the low art nature of his work, (...) Bukowski’s characters know there won’t be better days ahead and so they live it the best they can in the moment.⁹⁴

Apart from the lower class themes and the unadorned language covered in short stories and books, dirty realism also consists of the elements of traditional poetic forms and rules. If a dirty realist poet wants to write a poem, his or her preference can be mere of the free verse. For Bukowski rhyme or rhythm may not be so important for a poem that as a poet, he uses the free verse form in his works. He also shows his interest in lower case in his poems where the readers might expect upper case. It might underline

⁹² <https://bukowski.net/poems/aftermath.php> (11.12.16)

⁹³ John Martin, *The Pleasure of the Damned: Selected Poems 1951-1993*, Canongate Books, Great Britain, 2010, p. 494-495.

⁹⁴ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 15.

his disregard for major rules of punctuation; in other words, disdain for the conventions. In the book of *Bukowski for Beginners* the writer, Carlos Polimeni states that Bukowski's "(...) style would seem to defy literary logic – his punctuation, for instance, ignored basic grammatical rules."⁹⁵ In relation with Carlos Polimeni's statement on Bukowski's ignoring the punctuation rules in his poems, the following poem titled *Art*, though deep in meaning, could be an example:

as
the
spirit
waned
the
form
appears⁹⁶

The form of the sentences, use of grammar and choice of the words categorizes Bukowski as an unusual writer. The above mentioned poem, though seems to be plain in form, is deep in meaning that can be interpreted in two ways. First, it implies something sexual in terms of human character. For example, the word '*form*' in the poem becomes the most practical form of relationship as the word reminds the reader of '*pornography*', which makes Bukowski '*dirty*'. On the other hand, the poem expresses something universal: the loss of spirituality. When we become deprived of spirituality, it is only the form that remains. Despite his dirty language, he never loses his literariness. There is always some deep meaning behind the sexual. Bukowski is also honest with words; he does not use too advanced words making no demands on the readers' vocabulary. "*I'm talking about words. It's too easy to seem modern by using difficult words. Anyway, I think I'm honest with words. They are the fruit of whorehouses and hospitals. In those places empty words don't work.*"⁹⁷ Actually, not only in words but also in the structure of the sentences, he obtained this honesty by being simple and ignoring some rules. In the column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*,

⁹⁵ Carlos Polimeni, *Bukowski for Beginners*, Writer and Readers Publishing, New York, 2000, p. 17.

⁹⁶ <http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Bukowski,Charles/lastnightoftheearth.html> (12.12.16)

⁹⁷ Polimeni, 2000, p. 17.

Bukowski writes, “*An intellectual is a man who says a simple thing in a difficult way; an artist is a man who says a difficult thing in a simple way.*”⁹⁸ The autobiographer Cherkovski states in his book *Hank*: “*Bukowski had made a deliberate choice to use a limited vocabulary in his writing.*”⁹⁹ Thereby, Bukowski wrote how he wanted, how he felt and how he believed in his righteousness, and by doing, he has entered the category of “dirty realist”. Bukowski’s terminology might be thought to be more real with his preference of the words that are used in a simple way without much skill. The reason may be because of Bukowski’s being aware of this “simplicity” of his style that he says: “*Writing is painting and the sooner people realize this the less dull crap will dull the market ... A good style comes primarily from lack of pretentiousness.*”¹⁰⁰ Bukowski prefers to be plain not only in writing but also in his own life such that he does not give a place to the pretentious people in his life. Bukowski’s girlfriend Linda Lee says, “*Most of these people (celebrities) have pretense and Hank was not somebody who accepts pretense.*”¹⁰¹ As a person, if Bukowski shows such a sensibility in his own life, as a writer his desire to reflect the simplicity in his works is an understandable fact. In the interview, Duval directed a statement about the crude way used in his works and he explained:

Duval: I’m sure. Though you write in a very crude way, there is much poetry emanating from this crudity, and despair...

Bukowski: I prefer the term simple. I always try to write clearly, so people know what I am saying. And so that I know what I’m saying. So I try not to use large words. I try to use the easiest, smallest word possible to say anything. I don’t use the dictionary, and I like it raw, easy and simple. That way, I don’t lie to myself. Because what I’d read first, the classical literature, is not raw, easy, and simple. It’s confusing, contrived, cloudy and devious. I want to get rid of these things.¹⁰²

Adopting the movement ‘Dirty Realism’ led to criticism towards Bukowski. Although he is thought as a counter-culture hero in America, Europe, and Germany, he

⁹⁸ David Charlson, *Charles Bukowski: Autobiographer, Gender Critic, Iconoclast*, Trafford Publishing, USA, 2005, p. 93.

⁹⁹ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 177.

¹⁰⁰ Duval, 2002, p. 106.

¹⁰¹ Sounes, 1998, p. 230.

¹⁰² Duval, 2002, p. 157.

was not totally accepted by American academics. In academia, Bukowski was different. The reason might be that his works, his “tamer” subject matters and his vulgarity in terms of form and content go counter to what American academics prize. His dealing with the working class’ life might seem boring that the writer Russell Harrison states in his book *Against American Dream* that “*I think it is the working-class content of much of Bukowski’s work, rather than any so called ‘banality,’ that is the sticking point for many academic critics as well as for others.*”¹⁰³ Other critical studies also showed the difficulties of placing Bukowski in the 20th century stream of literature that the author of the book *Charles Bukowski* Gay Brewer states:

His work also anticipated and doubtlessly influenced, the ‘dirty realism’ prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the stories of Raymond Carver. But Bukowski’s persistent focus on the lower class and his unrepentant use of drink and scatological idiom...contribute to setting him apart stylistically and ideologically.¹⁰⁴

While other writers were collecting first-hand information about lower-class milieu to use in their writing, Bukowski was actually living and writing about this life and a good writing, for him, should reflect the reality. In an interview for *High Times*, the statement “*So good writing is writing that stays in reality, in the street*” was told and he said: “*I didn’t say it has to be like that; I said that for me it is. So I try to stay in the streets, wherever I am; I try to stay with reality. I only describe things; I don’t try to explain them. (...) I guess I am closer to the street people than I am to anybody (...)*”¹⁰⁵

Although Bukowski can be seen as a late-bloomed poet of the counter-culture, he is also known as a proletarian writer. “*Bukowski has brought into contemporary American poetry an experience which is neither elitist, bohemian nor overtly political, but working class.*”¹⁰⁶ Bukowski tries to depict the United States of the second half of the 20th century in his works. In one of his poems titled *out of mainstream*, Bukowski

¹⁰³ Harrison, 1994, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Bigna, “Life on the Margins: The Autobiographical Fiction of Charles Bukowski”, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Australia, 2005, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Calonne, 2003, p. 182.

¹⁰⁶ Harrison, 1994, p. 30.

pictures a social commentary and a very little but accurate psychological state of mind (just in the last line the narrator mentions about his feeling).

*(...) I can't blame anybody: people get tired of the
mainstream*

*I sit inside my place
reading the daily newspaper over and over
again*

*then I turn on the tv to the
morning soap operas
and I am glad that I don't live
with any of those women
they are always getting pregnant and are
always unhappy
with their doctors and lawyers.*

*I snap the set off
Consider masturbating
Reject that and
Take a bath instead.*

*The phone rings, it's my
Girlfriend : "what are you
"Doing?"
"nothing."
"what do you mean, 'nothing'?"
"I'm in bed."
"in bed? It's almost noon."
"I know"
"why don't you take a walk?"
"all right."*

*I get up, get dressed and go outside.
I walk south down Western
I walk all the way to Santa Monica Boulevard
Go into Sears Roebuck.*

*there's a blue jean sale on
I purchase a pair for under \$10
(...)
jamming the popcorn into my mouth
And feeling like a total
asshole¹⁰⁷*

Many skills mentioned in the poem such as; reading the newspaper again and again, turning on the television, getting dressed and taking a walk because of his girlfriend's suggestion carry out the individual, the hidden power of the social world and the connection between the narrator and his world. According to Harrison:

There is a rejection of absolute solipsism – he decides not to masturbate – yet here, too, there is a hint of the outside world in that (...) the impetus for masturbating was seeing the unhappy – women on the soap operas, women whom he immediately ate brings into his (fantasy) life. His *flaneur*-like amble through the Sears appliance to such feelings of anomie: consumption. He rejects the “tools that (he has) no interest in” just as he had ultimately rejected masturbation as a solution (...)¹⁰⁸

In the above given poem, as an example, Bukowski with very little subjectivity but excessively effective social criticism shows his attitude to the norms and expectations of society.

Bukowski is very well aware of the characteristics of the social class. In one of his autobiographical novels *Ham on Rye*, the social class and history play an important role. Henry Chinaski, the alter-ego of Bukowski, depicts his father suffering from American fates and upside-down social hustle. The writer pictures his father in the

¹⁰⁷ Harrison, 1994, pp. 37-38.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 39.

shape of 'warped' by social class. In the beginning of the novel, an event shows the father's weakness within the organized order. One day, the family gets an empty picnic basket and goes to the orange gardens outside of Los Angeles. In one of the gardens they stop:

Then we were between two rows of orange trees, shaded from the sun by the branches and the leaves. My father stopped and reaching up began yanking oranges from the lower branches of the nearest tree. He seemed angry, yanking the oranges from the tree, and the branches seemed angry, leaping up and down. He threw the oranges into the picnic basket which my mother held. Sometimes he missed and I chased the oranges and put them into the basket. My father went from tree to tree, yanking at the lower branches, throwing the oranges into the picnic basket.

"Daddy, we have enough," said my mother.

"Like hell."

He kept yanking.

Then a man stepped forward, a very tall man. He held a shotgun.

"All right, buddy, what do you think you're doing?"

"I'm picking oranges. There are plenty of oranges."

"These are my oranges. Now, listen to me, tell your woman to dump them."

"There are plenty of god-damned oranges. You're not going to miss a few god-damned oranges."

"I'm not going to miss any oranges. Tell your woman to dump them."

The man pointed his shotgun at my father.

"Dump them," my father told my mother.

The oranges rolled to the ground.

"Now," said the man, "get out of my orchard."¹⁰⁹

In front of his family, the father, whom a gun is directed at, is despised when he puts back the oranges taken from the garden. However, there is an inevitable reality; if the father had stopped when enough oranges were taken and the family had left, the

¹⁰⁹ Charles Bukowski, *Ham on Rye*, HarperCollins e-books, 2007, p. 14.

humiliating situation would not have existed. Because of the father's uncontrollable anger, he might get nowhere and the events he experiences may make him feel defeated. "Since the incident takes place in 1920s, before the Crash and Depression and at a time when the father is employed, he is not taking the oranges out of need but purely out of resentment of the rich. He is not upset at the political system, only at his place in it."¹¹⁰ After the Depression, he completely loses his job and becomes a part of the working class with the jobs of milkman and museum guard. Here in the example, the father is not satisfied with his social status. His uncontrolled anger and desire to have more oranges than needed might show his ambition to have a high status in society.

In the book, child Chinaski feels the cast system of the society when he mentions his severe situation of acne. When his illness is treated by uncaring and uninterested doctors, he specifies: "They experimented on the poor and if that worked they used the treatment on the rich. And if it didn't work, there would still be more poor left over the experiment on."¹¹¹ Even the doctors, whose duty is to save people's lives, treat their patients according to their socio-economic position. It is the 'dirty' face of reality. Even in his novels, *Post Office* that tells the life of postal worker Chinaski and *Factotum* that covers the work life of Chinaski before the post office, Bukowski presents the destitute of the working class people from the point of his persona. Inside of blue-collar jobs slaving for wages more than ten years before his literary career, Bukowski as a notable figure of counter-culture exhibits a good evidence of marginalized people. Focusing on the same subject matters on his works (short stories, poems and novels), Bukowski tries to develop his personal voice. The writer Jean-François Duval writes in his book *Bukowski and The Beat*: "Buk's perspective is clear: like the Beats 'the point he hoped to make, was that a writer must create his art from the world around him, not from others' voices'."¹¹² Bukowski's voice is the voice identifiable from the first-person-narrator; in other words 'his own' that is unafraid to be profane.

Charles Bukowski addresses certain segments of society with his works. In this society, the people represent the belly side of contemporary life, and with dirty realism, the focus is on the small rather than the large. As a result, the stories the movement deal

¹¹⁰ Harrison, 1994, p. 170.

¹¹¹ Bukowski, 2007, p. 136.

¹¹² Duval, 2002, p. 92.

with can be limited such that the writer Robert Rebein states from Buford's own words: "These are strange stories unadorned, unfurnished, low-rent tragedies about people who watch day-time television, read cheap romances or listen country and western music."¹¹³ Because the people symbolize a determined district in their homeland, they create their own taste towards literature with the works of dirty realists. While they are reading them, most probably, they will find similar things in their lives and may see that what they are currently doing is the same as what they have been doing for centuries. The writer Rebein continues to speak about: "They are waitresses in roadside cafes, cashiers in supermarkets, construction workers, secretaries and unemployed cowboys. They play bingo, eat cheeseburgers, hunt deer and stay in cheap hotels."¹¹⁴ Such kind of people inside or outside, as Charles Bukowski mentioned, embraced Bukowski with his 'dirty realism'. He shows his address to simple things of life, to what is mundane.

A writers' experiences, memories, and habits may either directly or indirectly affect their work. The reader may not see a one-to-one trace of him or her, but it can be felt. This estimation might be clear in Bukowski's works because there are basic elements that settled in his own life and made him change either in a good or bad way. 'Alcohol' is one of them. It has a great effect on the form of his works. The other can be 'work' that consists of 'shit jobs' because, nearly a decade before gaining his fame in the literature world, Bukowski pursued a career to survive. The last and busiest topic is 'women'. His many relationships with ups and downs became a subject matter for his writing; thus he published a novel about *Women*. The three elements Bukowski experienced in his own life are the same elements of 'dirty realism' that the writer Michael Hemmingson points out in his book *Dirty Realism Duo*; 'alcohol', 'cancer', 'work', 'women', and 'the ugly'. Firstly, he speaks about alcohol:

Bukowski and Carver wrote a great deal about booze. Both were hospitalized for their drinking issues (...), the problems of being drunk; these issues are the content of his finest stories. (...) Their narrators and characters drink because they are depressed, frightened and lonely. Their drinking helps them to deal with the aesthetics of the ugly-poverty, forced to work menial jobs (...)¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Robert Rebein, *Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists: American Fiction after Postmodernism*, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2001, p. 41.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 42.

The other element is what Hemmingson names ‘cancer’. When Bukowski had cancer, he was fifty-four. After he had overcome poverty and alcohol, he had a new struggle in his life. The writer says: “*Bukowski was battling leukemia, and he’d pretty much said all he had to say – his posthumous poetry is rehashing subjects and events he’d written a great deal about, (...)*”¹¹⁶ The ‘work’ is another matter discussed in the book. Getting fired and being unemployed, then working in menial jobs helped create the novels ‘*Factotum*’ and ‘*Post Office*’. The first novel deals with Chinaski’s continuing search for a job and the latter one covers his being a clerk and carrier in U.S. Postal System. As a fourth element, for Bukowski, women are categorized as prostitutes, nymphomaniacs, barflies or writers/poets who are searching for his sexual mentorship. “*Sometimes they are ex-wives and ex-girlfriends in Bukowski, but he does not write love stories. In Women, he goes from one encounter to another, but never truly falls in love.*”¹¹⁷ About the last element ‘the ugly’, the writer points out the face of the movement:

And so that is what Dirty Realism is – discourse on the ugliness of modern life, poetry on the beauty of the human grotesque*. Dirty realism is telling the dirty truth – about unattractive people who get drunk, puke, fight, shit their pants, sleep with strangers, and do the wrong thing and suffer the consequences. Dirty Realism is about the everyday things most people would rather sugar coat or forget...Carver and remind us of these things, in all the repulsive-yet gorgeous-detail.¹¹⁸

The elements of dirty realism are evidently the subject matters in Bukowski’s works as well. The stories in his works are about Chinaski’s relationships with women, alcohol, and work. He does not stay long enough with a woman, nor long enough on a job, nor long enough sober. He is on the move from bar to bar and from job to job, as a result he creates strong connections with neither anyone nor anywhere. It can be concluded from his act of life that he constitutes a resistance toward hypocrisy, power and work, that is the capitalist world. His crisis is because of the whole system, a whole

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 45.

* “A frequently subjective value judgment concerning the unnatural and bizarre deviation from consensual norms of style.” See: James M. Cooke, “The Grotesque Tradition in the Short Stories of Charles Bukowski”, North Texas State University in Partial and Fulfillment of the Requirements, Master of Arts, Texas, 1988, pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁸ Hemmingson, 2008, p. 46.

way of living. *“The hypocrisy aesthetic so visible in dirty realism and, in particular, Bukowski mirrors the hypocrisy of capitalism itself.”*¹¹⁹ Chinaski as an anti-hero refuses the working culture, however, he does not take any action against the system. Instead, he survives as best as he can with the jobs he works.

When a reader, who is interested in Charles Bukowski, reads his life, he or she most probably will identify the difficulties experienced in his life. However, Bukowski might have a strong shield against them and this shield can be ‘writing’ such that he says: *“Hey baby, when I write, I’m the hero of my shit.”*¹²⁰ It can be concluded that while he was writing, he was strong and tolerate towards everything around him. He was accustomed to just getting up, drinking and writing. Looking like a man on the street, Bukowski wrote for people like himself, people on the street.

Consequently, realism being the representation of characters, events and settings from the author’s perspective and depicting characters within the social, economic, and psychological reality, directs its ‘dirty’ face to some writers. Dirty realism, in terms of its plain, direct, unadorned language deprived of conventions and the subject matters that generally represent ordinary people whose lives are often shaped by desperate circumstances beyond their control, are the main concepts of Bukowski’s literature. *“I feel good among marginalized because I’m an outcast. I do not like the laws or morals, or religion or rules. I hate to be shaped by society.”*¹²¹ Bukowski through Chinaski, who is surrounded by beer, whiskey, whores and room motels, shows the example of an outcast, the life of a working class person, the destitutions and actually the people that have been ignored by society, not just because of lacking an attractive job but also for their simple desire to be there; inside of society. As a person, Bukowski tried to kill himself by committing suicide and luckily, he failed, but he got himself the burden of life being rebellious to his environment. *“I was a man who thrived on solitude; without it I was like another man without food or water. Each day without solitude weakened me. I took no pride in my solitude; but I was dependent on it. The darkness of the room*

¹¹⁹ Tamas Dobozy, “In the Country of Contradiction the Hypocrite is King: Defining Dirty Realism in Charles Bukowski’s Factotum”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2001, Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 2. (The pages between: 43-68)

¹²⁰ <http://www.bukowskidrankmedry.com/2011/05/charles-bukowski-quotes-on-writing.html> (17.12.16)

¹²¹ From the documentary of Bukowski; *“Bukowski Born into This”*, 2003.

was like sunlight to me."¹²² All in all, Bukowski reflects his own dark life in his writing by making it dirty and even though he has been known as a 'Dirty Old Man' for decades, Bukowski spun his literary career like a spider spins its web.



¹²² Charles Bukowski, *Factotum*, HarperCollins e-books, 2006, p. 30.

3.2. Bukowski as an Avant-Gardist

Charles Bukowski, the once-poet, the novelist, the short story writer, the columnist and the dirty realist had now become an avant-gardist. When he started his literary career after the menial jobs, he might not have thought of what would happen next in his life that he lived spontaneously. Because of the subjects of his works, language usage and extraordinary biography, Bukowski became a living legend as an underground writer. The writer Michael Foley says: "*It is not possible to be original by trying to be original - those who attempt this in the arts will be merely avant-garde (...)*"¹²³ Bukowski neither made an effort nor became furious in terms of his literary career. When his biography is studied, it can be seen that he had lost and trashed a lot of his short stories, thus, with his lifestyle, the books he wrote and his ignorance of the rules and norms he had already been original in those days.

The writer David Charlson comments on Bukowski with Peter Bürger's explanation who is a German literary critic and has the book *Theory of the Avant-Garde*: "*Bukowski is also critical of what Peter Bürger calls 'institution art,' a gesture both populist and avant-garde.*"¹²⁴ Richard John Murphy also explains the 'institution art' in his book *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*: "*The term describes both the attitudes taken up towards art in society as well as ideological and institutional limitations imposed upon art's possible effect.*"¹²⁵ So while the avant-garde writers actually are dealing with performing their art, they should also take into consideration the possible effects of their art on society and its point of view.

Bukowski, being the representative of dirty realism, can be easily identified as an 'outsider'. Among the people around him, he seems like a queer card of plebs. The subjects of his works are partly taken from society, yet the revolt and explosiveness of his works make him seem like an innovator and avant-garde. Representing the ideas, opinions and lifestyles of ordinary people, Bukowski can also be called a populist.

¹²³ From the book of Michael Foley, *The Age Of Absurdity: Why Modern Life Makes It Hard To Be Happy*. See: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/avant-garde> (19.12.16)

¹²⁴ Charlson, 2005, p. 10.

¹²⁵ Richard John Murphy, *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1998, p. 10.

As populist, he resembles the British working-class writers described in *The Republic of Letters* who aim to “disestablish” literature, yet he is no man of the people. His iconoclastic outsiderhood places him in the American avant-garde, defined as “the work of the socially marginalized” by Maria Damon. As general postmodern phenomenon, he blends the democratic accessibility of populist writing with the adventurous gesturing of the avant-garde. The blend includes the directness of Hemingway (an early hero), the freedom to be profanely honest, and the ability to laugh at himself and make us laugh as well.¹²⁶

Bukowski, a counter-culture hero, created his cult against high-culture. By doing this, he might be on the periphery of the culture in which he lived and accepted being called an ‘outsider’ in order to be out of the mainstream of society. He spoke “*against a world that has failed, but a failure he refuses to accept.*”¹²⁷ As a result, he went on his own Buk style both as a poet and a writer. His very early life might show people’s attitude towards him being an ‘outsider’. Paul Clements states:

The content and theme of [Bukowski’s] work concern the ‘loser’ who does not really fit into a productive mainstream social role. He questions the American Dream and its flip side, the down-and-out hobos and alcoholics whose lives on ‘skid row’, revolve around the next ‘hit’, those living a hand-to-mouth existence either unemployed or flitting from one job to another with little aspiration or interest in paid work. In many ways he is their representative with much outsider credibility and authenticity because for much of his life he lived the life of a ‘loser’, a harsh existence amongst pimps, prostitutes and drug addicts, (...) ¹²⁸

It is most probably because of the experiences that he had to live. His inebriety that started from his early ages, drastic acne problem faced during his childhood and lack of publishing success in the beginning of his literary career, lead him to be a self-closed person. Because of these, he may have been pushed to the outer edge of society, but in order to show the real side of the community, he chose to be honest by dealing with the troublesome matters in his literary world. These are the elements that his readers love about Bukowski. His stories disclose a man whose aim is to tell all the truths about himself and the world and shock the whole society. That is exactly what makes Bukowski avant-garde.

¹²⁶ Charlson, 2005, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Brewer, 1997, p. 9.

¹²⁸ Clements, 2013, p. 116.

During his literary career, Bukowski was influenced by some writers and poets. The influences shape Bukowski's own style and give information about whom he took what. One of them is Ernest Hemingway. Bukowski is most likely inspired by the unadorned and direct line of Hemingway's poems and writings. *"While he owes a debt to Hemingway (as even he occasionally admitted), the times in which Bukowski wrote allowed him to take the Hemingway style into new territory—the humorous and profane."*¹²⁹ Julian Smith, the writer in the Review of Contemporary Fiction writes a part of *"Charles Bukowski and the Avant-Garde"*. In that part, *"she calls Bukowski 'subversive' and claims that Bukowski 'rewrote Hemingway with postmodern laughter'."*¹³⁰ It can be concluded that Bukowski seems like a man of versatility. Despite having gained fame worldwide, inside or outside, he does not disclaim the influences, on the contrary he admits them. Bukowski not only imitates Hemmingway's style but also his hidden voice.

Frederic Henry, the narrator of Hemingway's Farewell to Arms, is 'embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice', but it is just as much Hemingway himself speaking there, loud and clear. Bukowski often employs the same artistic strategy, using a voice that is identifiably his own. Such a strategy puts him in the company of his previously mentioned contemporaries: Vonnegut, Exley, and Thompson.¹³¹

According to the critics, Hemingway's influence on the lines of Bukowski and other writers who deal with dirty realism needs to be deeply respected and praised. Besides Hemingway, Bukowski also showed a resemblance with his contemporaries. When he was summoned to universities to read his poems, he accepted but his desire was not to read, but the offers such as; money, drink, drugs, and women. According to Charlson *"in this regard, he resembles Exley and Thompson."*¹³² However, Bukowski's hero is different from theirs. Bukowski most probably writes about Chinaski's infamous behavior with women:

Admittedly, his autobiographical based hero outdoes Exley's in outrageous behavior with women, often saying that he wants to do more than just stick his tongue down their throats, but his main gesture is something like spitting in the face of the typical

¹²⁹ Charlson, 2005, p. 17.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹³¹ Ibid., 35.

¹³² Ibid., 37.

literary audience. In effect, this places him in the tradition of certain avant-garde artists such as the Russian futurist.¹³³

Bukowski depicted his hero in such an interesting way that his behavior and language usage for depictions may get people to think of his works of art as strange, brave and avant-garde. Bukowski's topics such as; sardonic jobs, explicit sex, excessive alcohol and violence placed the underground Bukowski in the 20th century whether people criticized him or not. "*Outsider, troublemaker, or counter-culture hero, he remains a writer to be taken seriously.*"¹³⁴ While his vulgar and honest style with these topics can be charming and ridiculous for some, for others, they can be inelegant and rough. "*More importantly, Bangs went on to call Bukowski his 'favorite writer,' especially because of his prose, which is 'spare, to the point, dirty, abusive, violent, and self-mocking,' as well as 'bullshit philosophical' and funny.*"¹³⁵ When he was awarded "Outsider of the Year" in 1962 by Loujon Press of the owner Jon and Lou Webb, he was most probably proud of the name that throughout his life, without caring for the criticism, he stuck to the subjects in his works and wrote angrily, very directly, and as disarmingly honest as possible about everything. In short, what he wanted was to be free of belonging to a particular group or organization.

Some readers of the avant-garde Bukowski, whether from bourgeois or even working class, can classify the writer's work of art as pornographic. "*Other readers, though, delighted with his assault on the 'Inbred/Dead,' view Bukowski as a challenger at the margins—in a phrase, avant-garde.*"¹³⁶ The sexual and violent side of his works fit the writer to be read by a certain degree of people. Because of depicting himself among the marginalized people, Bukowski wriggles out of the norms of society. Charlson states the writer Maria Damon's clarification avant-garde in her book *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* that "*the American literary avant-garde comes out of the work of socially marginalized' and that it is*

¹³³ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 83.

*'writing that pushes at the limits of experience as well as at the limits of conventional form'.*¹³⁷

An avant-gardist can prefer a direct challenge to the provider of rules or norms of the culture by reflecting this challenge to his or her work of art. On the other hand, a populist may choose to boost the working class. To be called both avant-gardist and populist, the writer should balance the tension between them. If the writer just performs a challenge to the providers, the lower class would feel the same thing as the avant-gardist or will think they have a supporter, but as a populist if the writer makes them feel confident and entrepreneur, they can hope that something is going to change and be better. Both populist and avant-gardist *"Bukowski holds the tension of the two well: he occasionally speaks of 'we' with sympathy, and he often rails against 'they' with vengeance."*¹³⁸ Standing for the working class and being against high culture, Bukowski not only wrote, but also published, promoted and distributed, even though there were rejections to his works and he could not find a press house during the beginning of his literary career.

Bukowski exhibits evidence of both the populist and the avant-garde in a very postmodern way. It does so allegorically, and like any good allegory, it works on more than one level. It concerns a boy in junior high who masturbates in class to the sight of his teacher's legs.¹³⁹

Terry Eagleton with his book *The Republic of Letters* which is known as a populist work including seven coauthors and two editors *"examines how in recent years working class people ... have begun to develop new forms of writing, new models of local, collective publishing, and alternative distribution networks."*¹⁴⁰ The working class' activeness began to arise with the new literary products. In 1976, The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers was founded by several groups of people in order to organize a series of activities and to try to achieve the recognition of the working class people. From its inception, the community stood for a variety of groups in that class such as; trade unionists, the unemployed, literacy students and black and

¹³⁷ Ibid., 84.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 85.

activist women. Also, other institutions and organizations became the member of this constitution. The Big Issue, a charity institution for the homeless, started to be an active member of prisoners groups, disability groups, and mental health survivors. Having taken the courage of the working class people, the avant-gardist and populist writers' roles were incontrovertible. Thanks to these writers' autobiographical or fiction works that also include the realities, the members of that federation may have felt effective for the first time in their lives. "*Bukowski acknowledges that to write well about a subject one must know and live with it.*"¹⁴¹ Therefore, Bukowski, living his writings, pioneered the skid row part of the community. He was the judge of his own life accepting little and questioning much. Not pressed between by the traditional society and art, Bukowski composed his own forms that represented his own experiences. He created his own vision without wrapping the vision of life itself. He refused many things that belong to society because he did not prefer to endure the life going on around him. He tried to get himself out of his uneasiness by 'writing'. In accordance with the purpose of the federation, the people reading such writers must have realized that the troublesome situations or injustices were not only in their lives, but also in other people's lives including the writers who earned well and were in front of the community who must have directed themselves to do something productive like 'writing'.

The television star Roseanne includes Bukowski among her list of favorite writers, along with Edgar Allan Poe, Dylan Thomas, Virginia Woolf, and Gertrude Stein. Like Bukowski, Roseanne is immensely popular but has yet to be fully recognized by academia for the positive voice that she gives to the working class. Considering the feminist edge to her work, her vote of confidence in Bukowski is all the more significant.

A final testimony comes second-hand, from a teacher, but his report has a special power if one considers whom he taught – prisoners. Chris Challis, who taught literature in men's prisons in England, says that his prisoner/students were quite impressed with the poetry of Bukowski. (...) Presumably, Bukowski is interesting and different to prisoners because he can describe their world – or the world and how they fit in – with straightforward clarity and with first-hand knowledge it.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Cooke, 1988, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴² Charlson, 2005, p. 87.

As a drunken bum, Bukowski's works had been hardly accepted for years, although a wide variety of society accepted and enjoyed them. The avant-gardist and iconoclastic Bukowski's style was simple and direct in terms of form, outrageous and brave in context and therefore new and fresh for many. "(...) *profane if not sexist to some, avant-garde to others, and undeniably popular to many.*"¹⁴³ Bukowski created a writing style whose keyword was different and interestingly 'honest' in the vanguard when applied to the work of social outsiders. "(...) *while reading about the facts of this honest man's life, from abused child to drifter, to factotum, to postal worker, to poet, and eventually to famous writer.*"¹⁴⁴ Before writing down his honesty to the pages, to compose his literary persona Bukowski held onto the column as a 'dirty old man' whose aim seemed to gain attention. After having managed to have a place in the literary world from shorts stories to his autobiographical novels, Bukowski started to get people to contemplate upon their point of view towards life. He set some standards of life as if he wanted to force people to look within themselves with honesty. "*In general, he is quite a postmodern phenomenon, for he somehow blends the democratic accessibility of populist writing with the adventurous gesturing of the avant-garde.*"¹⁴⁵

It can be deduced that after looking into his biography, not only his expression of his chaotic life but also the exteriorizations of the people's feelings come to light with his creative works. A scriptwriter Ed Weiner, "*questioned about sex and violence in filmmaking, claimed: 'We grew up being told that we wanted to be Cinderella and Prince Charming, but deep down we really wanted to be Charles Bukowski(...)*"¹⁴⁶ Writing from another point of view or substituting himself for another really necessitates a different aura as a writer. Bukowski managed to get people to go in the same direction as himself. By doing this, "*Bukowski opened up an aperture to explore from another point of view.*"¹⁴⁷ The dirty old man put his hand on young generations who see themselves in his dismissals and aversions, in the blend of delicacy, hardness, frantiness and twisted in his verse and writing. Touching all of humanity, from the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁴⁶ Gunfold S. Freyermuth, *A Final Visit With Charles Bukowski*, Xlibris Corporation, United States of America, 2000, p. 68.

¹⁴⁷ Duval, 2002, p. 53.

young to the elderly, Bukowski, with his avant-garde attitude, became the voice of nearly everyone. When Dual asked a question again, about whether the people live too restrained a life, he answered:

Well, in our society, they are almost given no choice. Either do your eight hour job, or you starve to death. So the restraint is laid upon them by society and their fear keeps them that way. How many can break out of that? What can they do? Some people can't paint, some people can't put on boxing gloves, I mean you have to have some exceptional thing to get you out of this eight hour day, and the restraint is their choice: should I die in the street, or should I go to my job every day, which I hate? It's not so much restraint. There is no choice for them.¹⁴⁸

All in all, Bukowski, the avant-gardist, the iconoclast, the dirty realist, the populist and a man of versatility “*considered himself a painter of hell and the grotesque.*”¹⁴⁹ His preference was loneliness, although he did not accept that he was lonely because according to him loneliness meant you needed something or somebody; rather mixing with people allowed him to create lots of works from all genres; poems, short stories, novels and writing in a column. “*When I'm alone, I charge my batteries. I build. I had myself and I worked with myself, from myself.*”¹⁵⁰ Bukowski, who seemed to settle nearly everything in his life of seventy-four years and live life to the fullest despite the hitches brought by life itself, says: “*if we move too quickly, we are dead. If we do not move fast enough, we are dead*”¹⁵¹ In a hustle and bustle world, Bukowski tried to make sense out of a senseless world. Finally, Bukowski became the pen of the working class people with his style and the topics he handled. In his novel *Women*, his alter ego Chinaski says that he pounds a typewriter which leads one of his friends from the post office to think that he is a clerk-typist. When his friend asks him, “*You mean you're a clerk-typist?*”¹⁵² Bukowski answers that he is writing poems, short stories and novels. “*They pay me for that.*”¹⁵³ His friend looking at him, turns and walks off. He registers himself as “the worker-poet”. The outsider stays pretty much outside, or in the edge of the avant-garde. During and after his literary career, some people love him, but

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 145-146.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 164.

¹⁵¹ Cooke, 1988, p. 12.

¹⁵² Charles Bukowski, *Women*, HarperCollins books, New York, 1978, p.284.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

some people try to evoke his dark and dirty side by criticizing him. His reaction from his very early ages is to an environment. It is an environment that lacks the necessary elements needed to foster people's growth and development as human beings and an environment that is uncomfortable for their existence. Because Bukowski depicts the conditions of present society, he seems to be chosen as a grotesque victim by both the system that withdraws him from the real world and his madness that causes him to turn off his personal contact and fastens him within his own fantasy world.



CHAPTER IV

BUKOWSKI VS. WOMEN

4.1. The Discovery of Women: *Ham on Rye*

*girls please give your bodies
and your lives to the young men
who deserve them
besides there is
no way I would welcome the
intolerable dull senseless hell
you would bring me
and I wish you
luck in bed and out
but not in mine
thank you.¹⁵⁴*

Bukowski's fourth novel *Ham on Rye*, published in 1982, deals with his alter ego Chinaski, his youth and upbringing. By writing Chinaski's Bildungsroman, Bukowski reflected his own deeply painful, unhappy and troublesome childhood. In an interview with Silvia Bizio of *High Times* in 1981 Charles Bukowski, finishing three-quarters of the book, had not completed the book yet. When Silvia asked what he could tell about this book on childhood that he was writing, he answered that "*It's a horror story, and it has been harder to write than the others. Because it's so serious, I have*

¹⁵⁴ Charles Bukowski, *You Get So Alone at Times That It Just Makes Sense*, HarperCollins Publishers, USA, 1986, p. 188.

tried to make it a little funny, to cover the horror of my childhood.”¹⁵⁵ The events in the novel are such developmental seeds of his personality that it consolidates Chinaski’s philosophical outlook and constitutes the context of his self-destructive habits as well. He was like a prisoner at home and an outsider at school. “*In Ham on Rye, a prequel to (his) previous work, one witnesses the gradual and inevitable formation of adult Chinaski.*”¹⁵⁶ In the novel, Chinaski’s relationship with and between his parents and his relations with the social world are the flow of events that explore the unknown facets of the Chinaski character. The writer of the book *Charles Bukowski* Gay Brewer makes clear the formation of adult Chinaski: “*The adult Chinaski’s behavior, rather than postulated as the idiosyncratic response of one individual, is given cogent social and psychological motivations.*”¹⁵⁷ In other words, *Ham on Rye* sets the necessary and crucial setting for the grown-up Chinaski stories.

In the novel, Chinaski is exposed to physical abuse and is the victim of neglect as a child. He suppressed his emotions and created a defense mechanism for himself when the severity of his troublesome experiences in his life is considered. He did not feel any connection with his parents. Chinaski expresses his troubled childhood by emphasizing his father, Henry Chinaski Sr. He had such an abusive attitude towards his only son that “[*He*] didn’t like people. He didn’t like me. ‘Children should be seen and not heard,’ he told me.”¹⁵⁸ It is unlikely possible that a father who utters such a sentence would be a good role model for his son. For Bukowski, his childhood was like a horror story and the villain of this story came out in the interview of Silvia by directing the question:

Silvia: Was it a horror story?

Bukowski: Oh, yes. Capital *H*. Why? Have you ever been beaten with a strap, three times a week, from the age of six to the age of eleven? Do you know how many beatings that is?

Silvia: Was it your father?

¹⁵⁵ Calonne, 2003, p. 185.

¹⁵⁶ Brewer, 1997, p. 34.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Bukowski, 2007, p. 16.

Bukowski: Yes. But, see, this has been a good literary training. Beating me with that strap taught me something.¹⁵⁹

The love between the father and the son was not an unrequited one. He did not like his son, but it was also Chinaski who hated his father throughout the years. The seeds of Chinaski's intense hatred towards his father increased as the years went by when he exposed the sadistic violence with a leather strop even for tiny things that were not a big issue. In the novel, the delight of his father's tone made itself clear when he wanted his son to mow the lawn and came to look for if any blade of grass might have been sticking up.

“AH HAH!”

He leaped up and ran toward the house.

“MAMA! MAMA!”

He ran into the house.

“What is it?”

“I found a hair!”

“You did?”

“Come, I'll show you!”

He came out of the house quickly with my mother following.

“Here! Here! I'll show you!”

He got down on his hands and knees.

“I can see it! I can see two of them!”

My mother got down with him. I wondered if they were crazy.

“See them?” he asked her. “Two hairs. See them?”

“Yes, Daddy, I see them...”

They both got up. My mother walked into the house. My father looked at me.

“Inside...”¹⁶⁰

When these beatings became routinized, Chinaski, at some point, noticed his father's pleasure as a result of the abuse. The injustice was so clear that the father had a

¹⁵⁹ Calonne, 2003, pp. 185-186

¹⁶⁰ Bukowski, 2007, pp. 69-70.

dominant presence in his son's life and, therefore, Bukowski began building cynical thoughts for the rest of his life.

Unlike his father, his mother had a less significant place in Chinaski's memories. However, she was, like her husband, a contributory character affecting his psychological and behavioral development in a negative way. One Christmas Eve, when his father complained about something around him, his son shouted him to get out of the house. His father went to sit in the car and his mother told him to apologize to his father.

"Sorry for what?" he asked

"But he's all alone there," she said.

"I think its time for you to leave too."¹⁶¹

His relationship with his mother was not better than his father. She was unable to support and show affection to young Chinaski for his healthy emotional development. She remained distant from her in terms of showing any emotion. "[His] mother's heart is dead."¹⁶² It was not because of her choice, but her husband's dominance on her. Her marriage with him did not move beyond a master-slave relationship. She even called her husband "daddy". Emotionally, she was so manipulated that she had no authority and sense of self. She must have supported her husband by turning her back to her son while little Chinaski was being mistreated and viciously attacked. After having his first beat from his father, Chinaski was in the mood of disbelief at his mother's inactivity and asked her why she did not help him. "*The father*", she uttered, "*is always right.*"¹⁶³ The passivity of his mother was not the kind that a little child could deal with. An obvious sense of displacement by his family penetrated the early chapters and Chinaski specified the feeling that: "*When I was back in my bedroom I thought, these people are not my parents, they must have adopted me and now they are unhappy with what I have become.*"¹⁶⁴ Thus, his family was present physically but emotionally not available. Longing for the love of his parents and the feeling of not belonging to his house created

¹⁶¹ Cherkovski, 1991, p. 106.

¹⁶² Polimeni, 2000, p. 38.

¹⁶³ Bukowski, 2007, p. 39.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 42.

an emotionally corrupted Chinaski. From the interview Bukowski gave to Robert Wennersten of *London Magazine*, the lack of love he felt could be clearly understood as follows:

Robert: What were your parents and your childhood like?

Bukowski: My father liked to whip me with a razor strop. My mother backed him. A very sad story. Very good discipline all the way through, but very little love going either direction.¹⁶⁵

The experiences in his childhood would affect his mental and moral development so much that he would not like people in his life and develop a prejudiced and harsh attitude towards them; especially to women.

Chinaski's childhood was a vital period of his life to build good human relationships. Because of the role models in front of him, he could not be a good bridge between himself and the people; especially himself and women. Chinaski says that the reason he couldn't love "was [his] childhood."¹⁶⁶ His growing rebelliousness would actually reflect on his love for the people around him. The pure love of childhood towards people was not experienced by Chinaski while he was taking up the merciless beatings of his father. The relationship between his parents determines his attitude towards others. The more the family could have befriended and behaved properly, the more the child could have imitated them.

Thus a family is more than a pair of parents, and as a child develops, so the social world is increasingly made up of more than just the immediate family anyway. Nonetheless, the family remains a major source of the child's learning about human relationships, both through the child's experiences in the family and its observation of the family. (...) characteristics of family relationships have implications for the impact of the family on children's development. No understanding of individual behavior can be divorced from relationships shared with others outside of the family or from the interconnections within the family that develop between parent and child.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Calonne, 2003, p. 87.

¹⁶⁶ Charlson, 2005, p. 55.

¹⁶⁷ Steve Duck, *Human Relationships*, Sage Publications, London, 2007, p. 130.

In the novel, from childhood to adolescence, Chinaski's discovery of women; the curiosity of their body was clearly identified by the narratives which he experienced in person and witnessed while his friends were building a relationship or having sexual intercourse. After having satisfied his curiosity of women's physical appearance, their moral attitudes and their attitudes towards men were Chinaski's second discovery. He was eager to learn something about women. One day, when he stated that most teachers did not trust or like him, especially the lady teachers, the principal made Chinaski stand in the phone booth with the door closed. He spent many hours there and *Ladies Home Journal* was the only reading material. He thought that it was a planned torture. "*I read the Ladies Home Journal anyhow. I got to read each new issue. I hoped that I could learn something about women.*"¹⁶⁸ The desire to know and learn something about girls or women was so normal for child Chinaski. He was aware of gender differences and so he was curious about what the girls were like. When he was in kindergarten, the little girls aroused his attention. "*The little girls were nice in their short dresses, with their long hair and their beautiful eyes.*"¹⁶⁹ This period of Chinaski was the period of curiosity of anatomy; the sexuality.

At the age of six in grammar school years, Chinaski mentioned a girl whose name was Lily and lived next door to him. According to him, she was one of the most attractive girls with long red-brown hair and dark brown eyes. One day while he was sitting on the grass and looking at her, she asked whether he wanted to see her panties or not. Bukowski, with great curiosity, could not reject her offer. She lifted her dress and "*the panties were pink and clean. They looked good. She kept holding her dress up and then turned around so that I could see her behind. Her behind looked nice.*"¹⁷⁰ After seeing her panties again and again every afternoon, Chinaski offered a walk to Lily. Sigmund Freud calls this period "Latency Period" and states that in this period "*the child sublimates libido into a new arenas of worldly interest. The explicit sexual interest of the small child becomes latent in the service of acquiring greater levels of*

¹⁶⁸ Polimeni, 2000, p. 114.

¹⁶⁹ Bukowski, 2007, p. 27.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 44.

socialization.”¹⁷¹ For child Chinaski, this latency period began because of Lily’s panty shows each day. He was most probably curious about the anatomy of the girl, that’s why, he got the girl into the tall weeds. When he started to kiss her and continued it for quite a long time, he said “*Let’s do it. I wasn’t sure what there was to do but I felt there was more.*”¹⁷² The desire to explore her body unconsciously is among the sexual behaviors in childhood. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, among the common sexual behaviors in childhood, approximately at the age of four and six, are to “[attempt] to see other people when they are naked or undressing and [mimic] dating behavior such as kissing, or holding hands.”¹⁷³ These behaviors and the attention to physical concerns also led to many questions and comments about sex, anatomy and physiology from the child. Here, the family’s contribution plays a significant role. The family should introduce appropriate levels of sexual conversation and satisfy their child in terms of possible intercourse. For Freud, “*the healthy child ceased all sexual interest and behavior and was vulnerable to sexual trauma if his/her environment was not devoid of sexuality.*”¹⁷⁴ Thus, Chinaski, having an unhealthy psychology, did not stop but his sexual attempt was interrupted by the environment because Lily stated that there were some men half a block away. Although he insisted on Lily, she did not accept and, therefore, showed his anger by saying “*God damn it.*”¹⁷⁵

When Chinaski was in fourth grade, approximately at the age of ten, although he still did not talk to anybody, he learnt a fact about it. A boy walked directly towards him and told him something about “fucking”. After the boy walked off, Chinaski could not believe it and thought about it all day. Because he learnt the information, he started to imagine himself doing it with the little girls whom he watched. His interest and concern to have sex consciously appealed to him such that when his teacher Mrs. Westphal was correcting the students’ papers the next day, Chinaski thought whether she wanted to do it or not. Chinaski stated that he was ready to do it. When she ordered him to clean all

¹⁷¹ Daniel Benveniste, “Sigmund Freud and Libido Development”, California School of Professional Psychology, Ph.D., 2015, p. 3.

¹⁷² Bukowski, 2007, p. 44.

¹⁷³ http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/sexualdevelopmentandbehavior.pdf (24.02.17)

¹⁷⁴ Loretta Haroian, “Child Sexual Development”, *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*, 2000, Vol. 3. p. 12. See: (www. ejhs. Org)

¹⁷⁵ Bukowski, 2007, p. 45.

the blackboards, Chinaski could not help himself from asking the reason why she was keeping him after school. While the teacher was explaining the reason of him sometimes being a bad boy, her sitting on top of the desk across from him, smiling at him and touching one of his wrists aroused his sexual feelings.

“Your parent’s don’t give you much love, do they?”

“I don’t need that stuff. I told her.”

“Henry, everybody needs love.”

“I don’t need anything.”

“You poor boy.”

She stood up, came to my desk and slowly took my head in her hands. She bent over and pressed it against her breast. I reached around and grabbed her legs.

“Henry, you must stop fighting everybody! We want to help you.”

I grabbed Mrs. Westphal’s legs harder. “All right, “I said, “let’s fuck!”

Mrs. Westphal pushed me away and stood back.

“What did you say?”

“I said, ‘let’s fuck!’”

She looked at me a long time. Then she said, Henry, I am never going to tell anybody what you said, (...) ¹⁷⁶

So, Chinaski’s curiosity about sexual behavior increased after he had been informed by his friend. As he grew and reached the period of puberty, he sought out sexuality. However, for Chinaski, who was eager to discover women, the teacher’s attitude was misunderstood. His getting informed in an intellectual and realistic sense stimulated him to make the intercourse real. He was still thinking of it while he was walking down the street. Although his teacher’s attitude was so straight towards him, he still thought that she was afraid “*because I was too young for her and that my parents or the principal might find her.*”¹⁷⁷ On the basis of these reasons, Chinaski was actually at the age of being aware of his sexual desires that begin with puberty. “*It had been exciting being in the room with her alone. This thing about fucking was nice.*”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 56.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Dreaming to experience the sexual activity but, instead, declaring the idea of being alone, was enough for ten year old Chinaski to show his interest in sexual arousal.

Chinaski's sexual desire ignited whenever he saw a girl, because he had not experienced the activity and been satisfied yet. A woman could easily evoke his concern about the anatomy of her. One Saturday, when Chinaski and his friend Red went to swimming at the public pool, he touched a private part of a woman. To get Red frightened, Chinaski would grab his leg from behind him but instead he came across something soft. He realized that it was a woman's ass. The woman felt it with no color in her eyes and she started to call him "*You dirty little prick. You wanna suck my titties? You wanna eat my shit?*"¹⁷⁹ While Chinaski was moving backwards swallowing some water, on the other hand, she was insisting that he touch her cunt.

"Touch my cunt," she said. "I know you want to touch it, so go ahead, touch my cunt. Touch it, touch it!"

She waited.

"If you don't, I am going to tell the lifeguard you molested me and you'll be put in jail! Now, touch it!"

I couldn't do it. Suddenly she reached under and grabbed my parts and yanked. She almost tore my dong off. (...)

"Listen, "I said, "we've got to get out of here! That fat lady is going to tell the lifeguard that I touched her cunt!"

"What'd you do that for?" Red asked.

"I wanted to see what it felt like."¹⁸⁰

Chinaski's first intention was not to explore the woman's private body parts, however things changed and when Red asked him whether he really did it, Chinaski stated that "*a guy's got to get started sometime.*"¹⁸¹ His sexual arousal in his early adolescence turned into the sexual function that he desired much. Chinaski was in a sexual research and he tried the ways that led to him. According to J. Dennis Fortenberry, the professor of medicine, "*The essential elements of adult sexuality are identifiable in early adolescence (...) Four domains of sexual response cycle- sexual*

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 65.

desire, sexual arousal, sexual function, and sexual behaviors are well developed in adult sexuality research."¹⁸² Thus, to stimulate the cycle is very normal for a boy like Chinaski, because youth might try to satisfy their curiosity about women's anatomy in different ways such as; reading and listening to information about sex and pornographic materials and viewing naked people. However, to overcome the sexual development healthily at those ages, the effect of family is undeniable.

Since human beings learn something by modeling behaviors, sexual behavior is also learnt by what children or adults see from the environment, media, friends, siblings and the family. The role of the parents is very vital in order for their children to be emotionally balanced and sexually healthy. Firstly, the mother's role is essential for the sexual development of her boy, because she becomes the first woman that he cares about. She acts as the boy's encouragement until he is able to move on himself. However, this was not the case for Bukowski. His mother never met the expected responsibilities of a mother. A mother's absence can create possible problems in her son's relationship building. Hence, the absence of the mother figure might have led Chinaski to a number of failed relationships. *"As far as gender goes, boys who share a strong relationship with their mothers usually end up softer and more compassionate with the women in their lives, but never less manly."*¹⁸³ Chinaski had lacked a female influence that would be necessary later on his life. Because of his mother's support for his cruel father, Chinaski's way of searching for love in sexual affairs was to satisfy himself, but the relations were not successful ones that he would later develop a hatred towards women. *"A mother's love helps any boy build up his confidence and become more able to explore other situations and connect with other people."*¹⁸⁴ As a result, being physically and emotionally available for her son should be of utmost importance for a mother.

Likewise, a father is also an important model figure for his son's sexual behavior. The boy will model himself after his father. A good father, being a positive role model, can help his son be aware of his feelings and emotions. *"Involved fathers*

¹⁸² J. Dennis Fortenberry, "Puberty and Adolescent Sexuality", *Hormones and Behavior*, 2013 July: 64(2), pp. 280-287.

¹⁸³ <http://living.thebump.com/gender-development-boys-mothers-16935.html> (14.01.17)

¹⁸⁴ <http://living.thebump.com/gender-development-boys-mothers-16935.html> (14.01.17)

*bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring.*¹⁸⁵ Here the involved father can be described as loving, sensitive, encouraging, friendly, available, affectionate and sharing – the exact opposite of Chinaski’s father. According to Dr. Gail Gross who is a human behavior, parenting and education expert: *“If (a) dad was abusive, controlling, and dominating, those will be patterns that their sons will imitate and emulate.”*¹⁸⁶ That father model will inevitably have negative impacts on his son. From birth to death, the son’s relationship mostly with his father will affect his relationships with friends, lovers, and spouses. Chinaski most probably could not find one better than his own ineffective father. One night, Chinaski’s milkman father took him on his milk route to collect money from the people who owed him. When they knocked a door, a woman dressed in a loose silken kimono with a cigarette opened up. His father asked for the money, but the woman offered him to come in and talk about the money. He went in and Chinaski was outside for a long time. *“When my father came out his hair was hanging down around his face and he was pushing his shirt tail into his pants.”*¹⁸⁷ Chinaski asked his father whether she gave the money or not, but he did not answer and told him to return home. That woman became a problem between his mother and father. One day when Chinaski came home after school, he saw his mother crying.

“Henry, do you love your mother?”

I really didn’t but she looked so sad that I said, “Yes.” She took me back into the other room.

“Your father says he loves this woman,” she said to me.

(...)

I felt that my father was making my mother very unhappy.

“I’ll kill you,” I told my father.

(...)

He walked over and slapped me on the ear, knocking me to the floor.

(...)

My father locked me in the bedroom and my mother and father began arguing.

¹⁸⁵ Suzanne Hadley Gosselin, *Expectant Parents: Preparing Together for the Journey of Parenthood*, Tyndale House Publishers, Illinois, 2014, p. 64.

¹⁸⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-gail-gross/the-important-role-of-dad_b_5489093.html (25.02.17)

¹⁸⁷ Bukowski, 2007, p. 52.

Then my father began beating my mother. She screamed and he kept beating her. (...)

Then the beating and the screaming stopped and all I could hear was my mother sobbing. She sobbed a long time. It gradually grew less and less and then she stopped.¹⁸⁸

His father might be the worst of the worst for Chinaski, because firstly, he went into a woman's house in front of his son and came out after for a long time by tidying himself up. To make matters worse, secondly, he got his wife face to face with his lover. He was not ashamed of cheating on his wife, instead he beat her mercilessly while her son listened to her sobbing with no reaction. The last action of the father was enough to call him unscrupulous. Chinaski most probably recognized that he was not a child born to a love relationship between a husband and a wife. According to the psychologist Ana Nogales: *"When [the children] discover that one parent cheated on the other, even if that discovery occurs years later, they will adjust to the reality of having a mother or father who had sex with someone else."*¹⁸⁹ Taking into consideration his father's treatment of her mother, Chinaski might do the same thing in his relationships; cheating and beating. Because he saw his parents betrayed love and disrespectfulness towards each other, it was not an exemplary relationship in conveying truths about human love. Henry was his father and Chinaski would naturally imitate how he cared for his mother. The concepts, identity and moral development of the child, are affected negatively in such a situation that in similar families where there are a lot of conflict or stress, children may begin to act in sexual ways. Although in the novel, Chinaski stated that *"Most of us, I think, got little love from our families, and we didn't ask for love or kindness from anybody,"*¹⁹⁰ he sought the physical satisfaction and emotional intimacy from outside – girls by sexual activities.

Chinaski's desire to discover women continued with different events which were also tried by his friends throughout the novel. Even though he really had not seen any private parts of a woman's body yet, his peers exposed it and Chinaski shared the satisfaction with them. In an air show, Frank and Chinaski discovered that two guys, at

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 53.

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/family-secrets/200910/do-children-learn-adapt-parent-s-betrayal> (25.02.17)

¹⁹⁰ Bukowski, 2007, p. 91.

the age of thirteen or fourteen, were excitedly looking at something. When they walked over the place where the two guys were standing, Chinaski asked what it was:

“Hell, can’t you see it?” one of the big guys asked.

“See what?”

“It’s a cunt.”

(...)

There was a woman sitting with her skirt bunched back underneath her. She didn’t have any panties on, and looking up between the planks you could see her cunt.¹⁹¹

Chinaski, for the first time, saw a private body part of a woman. He could not hide his astonishment such that he said he would always remember that. After having seen it, he, at the age of twelve or thirteen, might have wanted to feel this pleasure by acting it. One of the acting methods for a boy to discover women and satisfy himself is masturbation which is prevalent of adolescent sexual behaviors. It was also the same for Chinaski. When his friend scratched on in Chinaski’s bedroom, he was curious about what Eddie was doing. Eddie described masturbation – Chinaski’s first discovery of it. He thought about it for a while and then decided to do it. When he finished satisfying himself, he imagined doing it with a girl. After that, Chinaski did it every now and then, because masturbation serves as an important function in individual sexuality and males use it most probably as a substitute for partnered sex. “*Masturbation allows teenagers to explore their sexuality in a safe and private way, and is generally regarded as a normative activity.*”¹⁹² At those ages, apart from masturbation, sexual and dirty jokes and stories are among the satisfying materials for teenagers. In Machine Shop where Chinaski and friends gathered to learn by doing, some of his friends were famous for dirty jokes. The more they laughed, the more enthusiastic they were to listen.

The aim to explore women changed its direction for Chinaski as the novel proceeded and he observed; female’s point of view or preference of men and their attitudes against events. He was in the phase of puberty and could easily understand the things around him. The reason of this change was firstly because of his friend Lily

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁹² Lisa J. Crockett, Marcela Raffaelli, and Kristin L. Moilanen. "Adolescent Sexuality: Behavior and Meaning." *Faculty Publications*, Department of Psychology, 2003, Paper. 245, p. 372.

Fischman who was great and hot. According to Chinaski, “*she was burning up, and we were too.*”¹⁹³ She was developed like a grown woman. She knew how hot she was and disturbed the class by slobbering the teacher Mr. Stanhope. Chinaski thought Lilly Fischman as a whore and an evil woman because of wiggling her body in front of the class and singing like she will send the whole class to hell. Lilly was seducing Stanhope and the class too. While Stanhope was screaming about the books being closed during the exam, Lilly was standing, pulling her skirt up and yanking one of her silk stockings by adjusting the garter. “*Such a sight we had never seen, nor Stanhope ever seen anything like it. Lilly sat down and we all finished the exam with our textbooks open. Stanhope sat behind his desk, utterly defeated.*”¹⁹⁴ Chinaski called her a “whore” because of her seductive behavior in front of the class. The fantasy displayed by Lilly was another reason of his sexual arousal, however, his misogynistic opinion about women spread its seed as he began identifying women as “evil”. When such events started to be repeated by women, Chinaski decided that the reasons of these behaviors were to tease and drive the boys crazy. Miss Gredis was the second example of another seduction: “*sitting on the front desk facing us. She had her skirt pulled especially high, it was terrifying, beautiful, wondrous and dirty. Such legs, such thighs, we were very close to the magic.*”¹⁹⁵ The skirt was so high that the class prayed for a glimpse of panty. “*It was like the world ending and beginning and ending again, (...)*”¹⁹⁶ She caused a boy, Richard Waite, who was the victim of the seduction, to jerk-off in class. This was heard by everyone in the class, but the important thing for Chinaski was that Red would spoil everything and Miss Gredis would pull her shirt down forever because of his pleasure. Boys in puberty might struggle with their own experiences of physical intimacy or sexual views like seducing teacher’s clothes and behaviors. “*Youth at this age lack the cognitive and emotional maturity that is necessary to make wise and healthy decisions regarding their sexuality and are ill-prepared to cope with consequences of sexual desire.*”¹⁹⁷ Here, again, families should educate their sons about such feeling. Teenagers should look to their parents or their parents should inform them

¹⁹³ Bukowski, 2007, p. 97.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 104.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/the-development-of-adolescent-sexuality/> (29.12.16)

about how to deal with all of these; sexual desire and arousal, physical intimacy, falling in love and the norms and boundaries of society.

While Chinaski was discovering attitudes of women, he did not refrain from satisfying himself. With his father's binoculars he observed women's houses and performed his sexual desires. The seduction of women crossing their legs and climbing their skirts higher were unbelievable for a boy desiring sex. Apart from his experiences, Chinaski also witnessed his friends' discovery of girls' anatomy. One of them was Pete's intercourse with Lilly Fischman. When Pete asked Chinaski to look out while doing the action, he accepted and watched everything. Another example was Jimmy, one of Chinaski's friends, and his girlfriend kissing for a long time in front of Chinaski.

When Chinaski was in 8th grade and going into the 9th, he suffered from the illness of acne vulgaris. At those ages, it was likely possible that there was an increased interest in being seen as physically and sexually attractive and he thought that he had trouble with the girls. *"The girls were further away than ever. Some of them were truly beautiful-their dresses, their hair, their eyes, the way they stood around."*¹⁹⁸ From the beginning, Chinaski was thought as a bad guy because of his involvement in fights, his escapes from home, his drunkenness and rudeness towards girls. These had a negative effect on him building a relationship with a girl. Besides, when this illness was added, the situation made possible relationships more difficult and got him to feel worse in terms of physical appearance.

Chinaski's negative point of view continued to show itself by discovering more attitude of women in the face of events. On graduation day, the students were standing in line waiting to march across the stage. *"The girls seemed to be more serious about it. That's why I didn't really trust them. They seemed to be part of the wrong things. They and the school seemed to have the same song."*¹⁹⁹ His misogynistic ideas and thoughts about girls were becoming clearer as something different occurred. However, not all the experiences were as bad as the previous ones. When he was withdrawn from school and started his acne treatment, the nurse Miss Ackerman was the first person who showed sympathy to Chinaski. He discovered a good woman in his life. During the treatment,

¹⁹⁸ Bukowski, 2007, p. 104.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

she asked him whether he was thinking of girl or not. Chinaski answered: *“Sure. But that’s out.”*²⁰⁰ Ackerman kindly told him not to think that way. He realized that she was different from the others. After having watched her walk, Chinaski stated that *“Well, she was no Miss Gredis, and I had seen many other women with better figures, but there was something warm about her. She wasn’t constantly thinking about being a woman.”*²⁰¹ For the first time, in the novel, Chinaski, apart from sexuality, felt humanistic thoughts about her that he stated: *“Despite the horror of the blood and the pus, she was always humane and kind. My love – feeling for her wasn’t sexual.”*²⁰² He found *“the kindest person [he] had ever met in eight years,”*²⁰³ and desired to vanish forever from the world by covering Chinaski with her whiteness.

In the beginning of the book, he wanted to have sexual intercourse directly, later he imagined doing it with masturbation and now he attained satisfaction by watching women walking on the street and drawing their pictures. However, these actions were not the innocent ones. While a woman was walking, he described it: *“First I stared right into her eyes and then I looked down at her legs, and as she passed I watched her ass, I drank her ass in. I memorized her ass and the seams of her silk stocking.”*²⁰⁴ One day when he went to bed with a notebook and a pen, he made some drawing. *“I drew women in high – heeled shoes with their shoes with their legs crossed and their skirts pulled back.”*²⁰⁵ Chinaski was now a fifteen-year-old adolescent with feelings of love which gave him excitement. The pleasure to be included in a sexual activity became a strong desire for him that even the women on the street that he drew reminded him of sexuality. Because of his poor communication skills with his father and not having anybody as a role model in his life, he wanted to accomplish something but he always failed. He was suppressed and kept these sexual feelings inside of him. In sexual repression, the issue is not about sexual desires *“the issue is how we act upon our sexual impulses. (...) if taught to look at such desires as natural, taught what they are about, than we will tend to find a way that is acceptable both to the individual and the*

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 135.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 136.

²⁰² Ibid., 142.

²⁰³ Ibid., 136.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 144-145.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 146.

society”²⁰⁶ Chinaski was not educated on how to react to his desires. Even, when a librarian asked him how he was today, Chinaski stated that her voice was so good that he felt as if he had already gone to bed with her.

The acne got Chinaski further away from girls than ever before. He declared that *“the girls were impossibly out of reach for me so I pretended they didn’t exist.”*²⁰⁷ When his friend Jim and Chinaski went to the beach, there were five girls talking and laughing. Jim walked towards the girls and started to show off his balls. *“If it wasn’t for the boils and scars, though, I’d be down there now showing them a thing or two. I’d flash my balls for them, bringing their dead air-headed minds to attention.”*²⁰⁸ Chinaski had no self-confidence and as an adolescence he might have wished to be attractive by showing his muscles. He emphasized that *“[he] had no interest in anything and often felt inferior.”*²⁰⁹ Thus, Chinaski continued to ignore the girls. His attitude towards them started to be offensive. In a baseball game, there was a cute girl who was wearing an orange dress with her blond hair. When she said *“Butch*, please do it,”* Chinaski answered *“Shut up.”*²¹⁰ Now, he turned out to be vulgar. He was devoid of refinement and respect towards female gender. He made himself unacceptable as a long term lover or darling.

Chinaski’s discovery started to get worse when he offered to see his friend Jimmy’s mother’s private body parts. She accepted it and made Chinaski crazy. The fantasy world was at the peak. Age *“fifteen is the threshold of adulthood”*²¹¹. Although he was still virgin, For Chinaski, seeing everything that belonged to a woman was the jubilee to be called a real man. His ups and downs about women were not clear throughout the novel. However, when it approached the end, the eighteen-year-old Chinaski had grown and developed certain ideas in him. *“Women wanted men who made money, women wanted men of mark. How many classy women were living with*

²⁰⁶ <http://bigthink.com/articles/re-suppressing-our-sexual-desires-good-or-bad> (27.02.17)

²⁰⁷ Bukowski, 2007, p. 160.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 168.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 174.

* “They called me ‘Butch’ because I played a good game and ignored them.” See: Ibid., 181.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 183.

²¹¹ Haroian, 2000, p. 27.

skid row bums? Well, I didn't want a woman anyhow. Not to live with."²¹² In other words, girls love the men like Mr. Justin Philips who was the owner of Men's Wear and was sensitive, intelligent, clever and wore dark clothing beautifully. According to Chinaski, *"he certainly appeared to be above his surroundings. It was a good trick if you could do it and get paid at the same time. Maybe that's what management and the salesgirls liked."*²¹³ However, poor Chinaski had a hope to be picked up by some girls sitting in the library and trying to look intelligent. He knew that he was ugly, but if he looked intelligent enough like Philips, he might have had some chance. *"I was talking myself further and further away from any chance with the girls. But I had never been that close anyhow."*²¹⁴

At the end of the novel, Chinaski summarized the situation he was in that *"your parents controlled your growing-up period, they pissed all over you. Then you got ready to go out on your own, the others wanted to stick you into a uniform so you could get your ass shot off."*²¹⁵ America was in war and Chinaski's sorrow was to be a virgin still and he could not imagine getting blown off for the sake of history before he even knew what a woman was.

Consequently, there was a passive mother who emotionally shut herself off from Chinaski and cried silently; on the other hand, there was a sadistic father who was delighted to give physical harm to his son. The harm was so intense that Chinaski believed that his father owned the sun. Thus, the emotional and physical abuse had become a part of Chinaski and made his life a living hell. Being both the alter ego and anti-hero of Chinaski, Bukowski, as a writer, narrated his own life experiences to discover women, because he was sure that *"you will never be a writer if you hide from reality."*²¹⁶ *Ham on Rye* is partially considered to be Bukowski's portrayal of women in a sexist way with an attempt to explore them physically. His childhood became the mirror of his adolescence and his adolescence would be a perfect reflection of his adultery.

²¹² Bukowski, 2007, p. 210.

²¹³ Ibid., 212.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 237.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 265.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 259.

4.2. Bukowski as a Misogynist: Women

*Many a good man has been put under the bridge by a woman.*²¹⁷

The obvious complaint made about Charles Bukowski throughout his literary career and his life was his direct or unconscious, unfair treatment towards women. He carried out it both literally and metaphorically. His rude attitude towards them, his discourse and his view of them as a sexual object got Bukowski to be called a misogynist and male chauvinist. He did not believe that there would exist a good woman in the world. In his relationship with Linda King, even though he loved her with all his heart, there was a distinguishing mixture of his being misogynist. He was undecided about whether she was an angel who protected him or a devil who despised him in front of his friends. In a letter in 1971 to his friend, Steve Richmond, Bukowski stated his doubtful ideas and made clear his thoughts about women as follows:

(...) don't wait for a good woman. she doesn't exist. there are women who can make you feel more with their bodies and their souls but these are the exact women who will turn the knife into you right in front of the crowd. of course, I expect this, but the knife still cuts. the female loves to play man against man. and if she is in a position to do it there is not one who will not resist. the male, for all his bravado and exploration, is the loyal one, the one who generally feels love. the female is skilled at betrayal. and torture and damnation. never envy a man his lady. behind it all lays a living hell.²¹⁸

According to him, while men show a firm attitude and abide to the feeling of love in a relationship, women turn life into a living hell. Linda was most probably accustomed to experience male discrimination in society such that when Bukowski became known and more women started to show sympathy for him, she stated *"he had double standards, typical of the chauvinist world."*²¹⁹ Because of the words Bukowski uttered, he was generally blamed for being antagonistic towards women. *"(...) one of Bukowski's sharpest and most ubiquitous criticisms: that of his seeming lack of sympathy and respect towards women. Bukowski's name has become somewhat synonymous with*

²¹⁷ Bukowski, 1978, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Sounes, 1998, p. 119.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 116.

sexual chauvinism.”²²⁰ That might have led Bukowski to get into some trouble while gaining recognition in the beginning of his literary career.

The reasons underlying these epithets – misogynist and chauvinist – could be the lack of role models to show him proper behaviors towards women, his inadequate experiences with them in adolescence and his poor view on them in general.

In most cases, misogynists do not even know that they hate women. Misogyny is typically an unconscious hatred that men form early in life, often as a result of a trauma involving a female figure they trusted. An abusive or negligent mother, sister, teacher or girlfriend can plant a seed deep down in their brain’s subcortical matter. Once planted, this seed will germinate and begin to grow (...).²²¹

The explanation presents Bukowski’s situation such that the biographer of Bukowski, Aubrey Malone, identifies the reason of his hatred towards women; her mother. “*Hank never forgave her. From now until the day she died she was a nothing to him. In a sense, she was the source from which all his misogyny sprang.*”²²² He expected every woman to behave like his mother and even if there was a very small possibility before they acted, he had showed his prejudice towards them. However, it is so unfair and relentless to behave the same towards all woman as if having taken precaution before a danger appeared. Bukowski did not abstain to be portrayed as a chauvinist. He produced his poems, short stories and novels without caring about anybody. In *a man’s woman* - one of Bukowski’s poems - he allows himself to be called the “*classic male chauvinist pig.*”²²³ Because of the ironic depiction of a man as if he was a whore, he actually meant to mock all women.

Although Bukowski had many adverse thoughts about women, he had many partners and lovers in his life. He had intercourse with almost of them. When the question “*Do you believe in love?*” was directed at him, he replied “*Love is a word... I*

²²⁰ Mike Ryan, *no hope, just/booze and madness: Connecting Social Alienation and Alcoholism in Charles Bukowski’s Autobiographical Fiction*, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Master of Arts - PhD Thesis, 2014.

²²¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mysteries-love/201502/12-ways-spot-misogynist> (08.03.17)

²²² Malone, 2003, p.16.

²²³ Ibid., 91.

really mistrust it, cause everybody uses it so much.”²²⁴ Actually, it was Bukowski who exploited the word ‘love’ by his rough and vicious attitude towards women that knew what he wanted; sex. The more he had it with them, the more he disclosed his hostility towards them. This time in a letter to Linda herself, “*he wrote that he knew why men died earlier than women, it was because women killed them.*”²²⁵ His perspective was that if there was a possible harm to the male species, it would come from no one but women.

The misogynistic aspect of Bukowski, while portraying women, is generally criticized in his writings. One critic replied to his early works as such:

Bukowski’s antics with women, his thoughts about them, are one vast and sniggering cliché. He has nothing to tell us about them because, I ‘m convinced, he knows nothing about them (e.g., “the ladies will always be the same.”) and is determined at this point not to learn. They are dirty joke to him, a dirty joke on him. Inside the web of his booze-bull-and-broad exploits lurks a demon sexual jingoist, erupting and irrupting in self-punishing concatenations; hostile frustrated, pugilistic–fearful of the role into which (he thinks) one is cast by fate of genitalia.²²⁶

So, as evident in the critique, Bukowski’s works were not only viewed as such in his early years, but continued to receive similar responses throughout his literary career. The attitudes – his humiliation of women, his physical and emotional abuse towards them and his offensive sexual desire were inflicted on women by Bukowski both in his real life and in his works of art directly. One of them was the novel *Women* in 1978. The 1970s was the time when the second wave of feminism sprouted. During this time, women were active in the battle to stop the acceptance of the social norms about how women should behave. They desired to live within the sex world. “*The second wave of feminism (1960s-1980s) focused on the workplace, sexuality, family and reproductive rights.*”²²⁷ The movement drew attention to sexuality probably to put emphasize on domestic violence and rape issues. Thus, when Bukowski published his novel, he was in

²²⁴ Duval, 2002, p. 161.

²²⁵ Sounes, 1998, p. 203.

²²⁶ Harrison, 1994, p. 183.

²²⁷ [https://www.progressivewomensleadership.com/a-brief-history-the-three-waves-of-feminism/\(07.03.17\)](https://www.progressivewomensleadership.com/a-brief-history-the-three-waves-of-feminism/(07.03.17))

a period of the independence and improvement of women's rights. Russell Harrison writes of the time he was in;

(...) *Women* (1978), we have the phenomenon of a man whose deepest attitudes to women were shaped almost a half-century earlier than the era in which they were being given artistic expression. This had has the two results; first, chauvinistic traits were more likely to be perceived as salient and to evoke stronger reactions in the context of the raised and rising consciousness of the 1970s and 1980s than even more chauvinist books of his contemporaries which had, however, been published earlier. Secondly, the fact that Bukowski's books were being written well after the start of the women's movement meant that that movement affected them as it hadn't others.²²⁸

Although Harrison stated that Bukowski seemed to be in a sense a victim of the times, it did not change the fact that he had a female gender hostility, because he recognizes Bukowski's "*undeniable male chauvinism.*"²²⁹ The clear evidence of this statement was likely his negative portrayals of women in his works; especially in *Women*.

In *Women*, Charles Bukowski appeared again under the pseudonym, Henry Chinaski. In an interview with Duval, when he asked Bukowski whether Chinaski is somewhat a fictitious character or a double of himself, Bukowski answered, "*No. He is me. The same.*"²³⁰ He also narrated the most popular women in his life under such pseudonyms as; from Linda to Lydia, Ruth Wantling to Cecelia, Amber O'Neil to Tanya, Cupcake to Tammie, Linda Lee Beighle to Sarah and Joanna Bull to Mercedes. When his lover Ruth got a copy of his novel *Women*, she realized "*it was about women Bukowski had known, (...) he had included her as well.*"²³¹ Malone expresses his ideas about real women used in the novel: "*perhaps, but after he wrote Women, they themselves came out of the closet and called him a liar and worse for his denunciation of them, claiming he used them both as sex objects and raw material for his work.*"²³² Bukowski also made clear that he was collecting material when he stated in a letter to John Martin: "*I'm making a study on (Linda). If I ever get it down right some day you'll see the female exposed as she has never been exposed.*"²³³ He lived with women not

²²⁸ Harrison, 1994, p. 19.

²²⁹ Ibid., 183.

²³⁰ Duval, 2002, p. 138.

²³¹ Sounes, 1998, p. 138.

²³² Malone, 2003, p. 173

²³³ Sounes, 1998, p. 133.

only to satisfy himself but to possess a good material for coming works of art. So, it can be concluded that if the women in his life were not informed that they were used, it was because of his disrespectfulness to them.

In the novel, Bukowski depicted different kinds of women by way of Chinaski's relationships with them. Chinaski glorified his fame by sleeping with as many as women he could. The relations were a noticeable theme of the novel that deal with women emotionally and interpersonally. According to one critic, Chinaski had a sexual intercourse with "*well over 20 women.*"²³⁴ Even though he had many women around him, here, he was the man who treated women as a sex object or a one-night pleasure. The women that he lived with, drank with, laughed with and loved generally turned into the women he fought with and insulted at the end. In the very early beginning of the novel, Chinaski clarified his thoughts: "*I had no women friends. I looked at them as I passed them on the streets or wherever I saw them, but I looked at them without yearning and with a sense of futility.*"²³⁵ Chinaski thought that women were useless and they did not mean anything to him. However, his utterance of such words in the second sentence of the book was most probably because of his yearning for women. It was not an innocent one, in that, he was fifty years old and had not had intercourse with a woman for four years. The idea of Chinaski – "*having a relationship with a woman (...)* *was beyond my imagination*"²³⁶ – got him to strike an aggressive attitude towards them. He was keen on having a relationship with a woman but with a possibility of being rejected, he had been a passive actor in the play of sex for four years. The womanizer Chinaski who uttered his negative view on women very early would often make up ideas about women in general.

The most significant relationship in the novel was between Chinaski and Lydia Vance who was a sculptress. "*It [was] Bukowski's most successful attempt at presenting such a relationship in depth and at creating a 'round' character other than the protagonist.*"²³⁷ They met at a poetry reading that Chinaski was giving. At the break she walked towards him and looked at him. Bukowski was affected by feeling the

²³⁴ Harrison, 1994, p. 197.

²³⁵ Bukowski, 1978, p. 7.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Harrison, 1994, p. 199.

vibrations running between them. She was wearing a cowgirl jacket with a fringe, but when Chinaski said: *"I'd like to trip that fringe off your jacket – we could begin there!"* his rude behavior repulsed her and she walked off. *"It hadn't worked. [He] never knew what to say to the ladies."*²³⁸ He acted like how he actually felt, but if there was a woman who came to his table to speak with him, the reaction should have been acting according to the norms expected of a man rather than acting according to his feelings. Nevertheless, Lydia went to Chinaski to ask him if she could sculpt his head or not. Chinaski accepted her offer and later she asked some questions about the subject of his writing style as follows:

"Why do you write about women the way do you do?"

"Like what?"

"You know."

"No, I don't."

"Well, I think it's a damned shame that a man who writes as well as you do just know anything about women."

I didn't answer.²³⁹

(...)

"I've heard about you," she said.

"Like what?"

"About how you throw guys off your front porch. That you beat your women."

"Beat my women?"

"Yes, somebody told me."

I grabbed Lydia and we went into our longest kiss ever.²⁴⁰

It can be stated that Chinaski was actually well aware of the image of himself. When Lydia asked the first question, he did not deny the way he wrote about women, instead he did not give an answer. *"[He knew] he [wrote] in a way that [was] degrading to women, and very insensitive to his female followers, if any."*²⁴¹ In the second question,

²³⁸ Bukowski, 1978, p. 8.

²³⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁴¹ <http://www.thewolvesden.com/journal/2015/11/12/charles-bukowskis-cry-for-help> (08.03.17)

again, instead of commenting on her statement or justifying himself, he preferred to confuse Lydia in order to have intercourse with her.

Apart from Chinaski's physical abuse, his rough and brutal oral abuse made him become known as a misogynist. When he was jealous of the women he was with and could not make them behave like he desired, his discourse suddenly changed to insults. Chinaski was very conscious about what he did. Although he did not accept the label misogynist, he gave this opportunity to the people. Lydia was one of those to expose his language when she wanted to go dancing. Chinaski got jealous and ended up calling her a "*whore*."²⁴² In another example, he went to Kansas City to give a poetry reading where a room in the women's dormitory was reserved for Chinaski. He was so surprised and happy that he repeated the phrase "in the women's dorm?" twice. He came there, sat and while drinking as usual, he thought "*hey, you're Chinaski, Chinaski the legend. You've got an image. Now you're in the women's dorm. Hundreds of women in this place, hundreds of them.*"²⁴³ His excitement to stay there gave the possibility to have sex with one of them or get pleasure by doing something. He later knocked the nearest door in the hall and said "*hey, I'm Henry Chinaski, the immortal writer! Open up! I wanna show you something!*"²⁴⁴ Chinaski was so eager to show the private part of his body, because that would give him pleasure. However, they did not open the door and he shouted: "*So. You're not going to let Chinaski in eh? Well, FUCK YOU!*"²⁴⁵ He was unable to slow down, therefore, first he tried all the doors on his floor, then all the doors on the second floor and finally all the doors on the first floor. With no luck, he returned to his room. Because the girls did not satisfy Chinaski in terms of his desire, he insulted them. Among the traits of a misogynist, since "*he will be prepared (unconsciously) to use anything within his power to make women feel miserable and he may demand sex or withhold sex in his relationships (...)*"²⁴⁶ he did not care what women wanted and whether they had a boyfriend or not. There was a fact that he had a sex attack by being an aggressor, for he bet on the door with it, and wanted to sleep with one of the girls,

²⁴² Bukowski, 1978, p. 44.

²⁴³ Ibid., 26.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

²⁴⁶ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mysteries-love/201502/12-ways-spot-misogynist> (08.03.17)

because he knew his dependence on women for sex. For Chinaski, a woman must have carried it out by being a submissive, hence, “*sexually, [a misogynist] likes to control women (...)*”²⁴⁷ The only thing that concerned him was being pleased sexually, however, if he was not satisfied by a female, he got his hostile attitude towards them by swearing. In a flight with his girlfriend Tammie to New York, Chinaski tried to wake her up by insulting her: “*You whore, wake up.*”²⁴⁸ Here, he assumed that she was dead. He wanted her to get up, but because there was no response and she did not relieve him emotionally, he used his repulsive language. Therefore, it is fairly just for him to be regarded as perverted.

According to Chinaski, women were sexual objects that came to the world to satisfy men. Apart from seeing females as a sex object, Chinaski, while offering them intercourse, used bullying approaches. These actions on women were so forceful that he might have disguised his insecurities: his looks, by creating a defense mechanism using sex skills. To create a dialogue with the writer, a woman called Lillian came to Chinaski informing that she was at his poetry and knew who he was. Chinaski, in response to her, suggested oral sex: “*I’d like to eat your pussy. I’ve gotten pretty good at it. I’ll drive you crazy.*”²⁴⁹ Although the woman tried to change the subject by asking him what he thought about American poet Allen Ginsberg, Chinaski, ignoring her question, continued: “*look, don’t get me off the track. I want your mouth, your legs, your ass.*”²⁵⁰ His approach towards women was aggressive. Before talking to them normally, that is, for example, asking for their names, he offered a sexual relation in the beginning of the conversation.

Throughout the novel, Chinaski used his popularity to sleep with a woman whom he met at his poetry readings. Not all the women could have rejected him. They tried to get his attention and after they had succeeded, he came with a suggestion to have sex and “*soon the relationship [ended] as fast as it began. As characters the groupies do not have a significant effect on the story: they are introduced, used and*

²⁴⁷ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-mysteries-love/201502/12-ways-spot-misogynist> (08.03.17)

²⁴⁸ Bukowski, 1978, p. 137.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

abandoned.”²⁵¹ He manipulated characteristically weak ones by using his appeal as being a famous writer. “*Women knew me beforehand because they had read my books. I had exposed myself.*”²⁵² So, the reason why women slept with him was his popularity. He was so aware of himself that “*Henry Chinaski [was], without a doubt, the greatest one-legged poet in the world.*”²⁵³ He was a misogynist, however, he succeeded to place his fame on the female gender such that despite his hostile actions, he slept with as many women as he could. And because, in his adolescence, he did not get into an intimate contact with women or failed to form any relationships, “*he [was] making up for no women with the abuse of many women.*”²⁵⁴ By scolding them, he tried to get the affection that he had never seen for years from women.

From the beginning to the end of the novel, Chinaski’s thoughts about women were the same. One of them was his belief that they could easily cheat men. He forced himself to find something in his relationships that led to betrayal, because he did not trust them ever. He had an insecure attitude towards the female gender such that in a discussion with Lydia, when Chinaski who envied her from one of their friends, Sammy, and told Lydia not to like people, she reacted: “*you’re jealous, you’re insecure. You think I want to go to bed with every man I talk to.*”²⁵⁵ Indeed, the negative and insecure inner feelings of Chinaski were ready to appear even with a slight movement of a woman. However, he ignored what he was doing. He broke up and got back together with Lydia several times who was in fact fed up with Chinaski’s disloyalties. “*During their off phases, Chinaski often [had] relationships with other women (...)*”²⁵⁶ For Chinaski, the vital point of the matter with women was that they could not even speak from a male gender. Two incidents in the book clearly showed how Chinaski made a discrimination between genders. Firstly, he and his girlfriend Dee Dee went to a trip to Catalina. When she offered him a walk on the beach, he refused in order to rest in the hotel room. She kissed him and left the room to walk. Chinaski walked to the window

²⁵¹ Lauri Leinonen, *Magic and Terrible: Female Characters and Characterization in Charles Bukowski’s Post Office, Factotum and Women*, University of Tampere, School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies, English Philology, Pro Gradu Thesis, Finland, 2014, p. 64.

²⁵² Bukowski, 1978, p. 75.

²⁵³ Ibid., 89.

²⁵⁴ <http://www.thewolvesden.com/journal/2015/11/12/charles-bukowskis-cry-for-help> (08.03.17)

²⁵⁵ Bukowski, 1978, p. 17.

²⁵⁶ Leinonen, 2014, p. 57

and saw Dee Dee sitting next to a young man. Seeing them talking to each other, Chinaski uttered as follows:

I was glad I wasn't in love, that I wasn't happy with the world. I like being at odds with everything. People in love often become edgy, dangerous. They lose their sense of perspective. They lose their sense of humor. They become nervous, psychotic bores. They even become killers.²⁵⁷

Here, there was no intimacy between Dee Dee and the man. From his point of view and his explanations, the innocent conversation seemed to turn into that of a sexual intercourse. However, lying on the bed with Dee Dee, a call from Lydia made his infidelity become apparent.

"Hank?"

"Yes?"

"Where have you been?"

"Catalina."

"With her?"

"Yes."

"Listen, after you told me about her I got mad. I had an affair. It was with a homosexual. It was awful."

"I've missed you, Lydia."

"I want to come back to L.A."

"That'd be good."

"If I come back will you give her up?"

"She's a good woman, but if you come back I'll give her up."

"I'm coming back. I love you, old man."

"I love you too."²⁵⁸

Despite Lydia's accusations of Chinaski's disloyalty for "*sleeping with numerous women, and [disrespecting] her countless times, she still stayed with him at the end.*"²⁵⁹ However, Chinaski, "the unbeliever of love" made Dee Dee so miserable by giving her up for Lydia. As a result, she committed suicide by taking a bottle of sleeping pills.

²⁵⁷ Bukowski, 1978, pp. 59-60.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 61.

²⁵⁹ <http://www.thewolvesden.com/journal/2015/11/12/charles-bukowskis-cry-for-help> (08.03.17)

There was a man who could not endure his girlfriends' speaking with a man and called them 'whore'; on the other hand, there was a man who preferred his previous love by giving up the current one. Secondly, Chinaski had sex with his friend Bobby's girlfriend, Valerie. She had very seductive sexual movements. While Bobby and Valerie were on the bed having sex, Chinaski interfered by saying: "*Wait a minute, Bobby, you're not doing it right. Let me show you.*"²⁶⁰ He showed Bobby how to do it, but Bobby did not answer. He just wanted Chinaski to leave. No matter what, such a movement was not morally acceptable. If there is a character accusing women as dishonest even when she speaks to another man, the action he does deserves more than being called double-faced. Hence, instead of him being a misogynist, the women who lived or had sex with him should have been a misandrist because of his dishonorable act.

It was clear that Chinaski wanted to create some certain ideas about women with respect to his novel. Depicting his thoughts and acting according to his feelings, he specified the portrayal of women. While he was speaking with his friend Billy about Cecelia whom Billy married, but soon they would be divorced, Chinaski, as if he totally knew all about women, said that "*they can love you, then something turns in them. They can watch you dying in a gutter, run over by a car, and they'll spit on you.*"²⁶¹ As the pages progressed, there was an inevitable reality that Chinaski never admitted that a good woman existed, but if there was even a slight possibility to possess one of them, the result did not change for him: "*And yet women – good women – frightened me because they eventually wanted your soul (...)*"²⁶² Towards the end of the novel, after having been with numerous women, Chinaski put forward his analysis on them as follows:

I thought about breakups, how difficult they were, but then usually it was only after you broke up with one woman that you met another. I had to taste women in order to really know them, to get inside of them. I could invent men in my mind because I was

²⁶⁰ Bukowski, 1978, p. 255.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 169.

²⁶² Ibid., 77.

one, but women, for me, were almost impossible to fictionalize without first knowing them. So I explored them as best I could (...) ²⁶³

While men were watching professional football or drinking beer or bowling, they, the women, were thinking about us, concentrating, studying, deciding – whether to accept us, discard us, exchange us, kill us or whether simply to leave us. ²⁶⁴

As if he understood women completely, he commented on them by uttering such sentences. Relationships with women had been problematic for Chinaski for years. Roughly, in the six-year span of the novel, he presented his experiences with more than twenty women in a misogynistic manner. The novel depicted the protagonist Chinaski's unfiltered and explicit views of relationships and sex.

All in all, Bukowski, using his hero Chinaski again, introduced his own troublesome relationship with women from the events of his life, because in an interview, when the question "*Why is Henry Chinaski the hero of all you write, instead of you?*" ²⁶⁵ was asked, he replied that he wanted to play with the reader and continued: "*They know it's Bukowski, but if you just give them Chinaski they have a sense of saying, 'Oh, he is really wonderful. He's calling himself Chinaski, but we know it's Bukowski'.*" ²⁶⁶ While the readers are reading the book *Women*, they are quiet sure that the protagonist is Bukowski himself. Throughout his life, Bukowski was generally remembered for his underground life style that consisted mostly of trouble with women. Although he said that, "*I wasn't a misanthrope and I wasn't a misogynist but I liked being alone. It felt good to sit alone in a small space and smoke and drink. I had always been good company for myself,*" ²⁶⁷ he had always continued to seek different women and showed his female hostility with a rough discourse by debasing them to sexual objects and inflicting physical and emotional abuse. The editor Joan Jobe Smith stated that, "*no male writer in the western world of literature that I know of has been as profoundly hated by women and as equally profoundly loved by women as much as*

²⁶³ Ibid., 227.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 241.

²⁶⁵ Calonne, 2003, p. 133.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Bukowski, 2007, p. 275.

Charles Bukowski.”²⁶⁸ Even though women hated and loved him at the same time, Bukowski only felt hatred. By publishing the novel *Women*, Bukowski depicted a direct picture of the reality of his life as a chauvinist womanizer.



²⁶⁸ Joan Jobe Smith, *Charles Bukowski Epic Glottis: His art & His Women (&me)*, Silver Birch Press, USA, 2012, p.119.

CONCLUSION

Charles Bukowski has been a prolific writer with a great contribution to the field of literature. He is the writer, poet, and columnist loved by the common people as well as by intellectuals. As we learn from his interviews, he got a huge number of letters from convicts and from people belonging to all the walks of life around the world. He has become the bestselling writer for many reasons. First, his diction was so clear and direct. His language did not make any demands on the audience. Second, he dealt with very brave subject matters. Women and the impoverished life of marginalized people were the top issues of his works. Then, bereft of any glamorization, he described his own life experiences directly and honestly in his writings, so nearly all of his works are autobiographical. Finally, the readers can see the reflection of the “real world” and find similarities within their own worlds while reading his works – the best reason for his popularity.

Bukowski, at the age of fifteen, decided not to be invisible and found a way to express himself through writing. As the years progressed, in the 70s, his reputation was increasing under the epithets such as dirty realist, avant gardist, and misogynist with his use of loose language. The moment he thought about women, snobbish wealthy men, society and politics was the moment he put them to writing. This was the Bukowski way of writing. His style allowed him to be categorized both positively and negatively. Even though he had lots of predecessors and contemporaries dealing with dirty realism in their works, it was Charles Bukowski who became the godfather of the movement. He did not want his readers to look at dictionaries to understand a word in his poems, novels and short stories. Instead, he preferred unadorned and direct language. With this language, he pioneered the skid row part of the community – lower-class people. However, he was not favoured by feminists. He was a perfect example of what may be called an ‘ogre’ due to his female hostility. Seeing women as a sex object, he abused them emotionally and physically, yet remained the legend Bukowski who had no rival in his promiscuity.

There is wisdom in his works and many of his ideas are quoted. Cultural issues concerning gender or sexuality, historical improvements, economic and political matters and the portrayal of problematic mankind are dealt with in his works. He got across being a cult figure in different societies by enlightening people's lives stuck in the underground. That is, he became the sounding voice of a culture where the people were traditionally muted. The first novel mentioned in this thesis, *Ham on Rye*, describes the events from his traumatic childhood to adulthood. The novel became a fine specimen to people who were exposed to the physical and emotional violence by their parents, became a prisoner at home and an outsider at school, faced a serious illness that reduced the possibility of having a relationship with a girl and who discovered the female gender for the first time. As a reference to the title, little Bukowski was trapped between his parents and the outside world. Therefore, he sought freedom and found his visibility by writing. The second novel of the thesis, *Women*, gets the readers to meet some of the women in Bukowski's life. The number of the women, nevertheless, was hard to count. However, Bukowski's brutal attitude towards them was easily noticeable. The readers acknowledge his clear thoughts of the female gender through this novel. Apart from being known as a 'womanizer', the novel gave him a second nickname; 'misogynist'. In depth, the two novels display Bukowski's perspective of women.

To sum up, Bukowski's life is as complex as his works are. He fought against his parents, friends, the bourgeoisie thought, the norms and the rules of society. Despite his failures in life, despite dirty vocabulary and themes in his literary works, he managed to become a prominent German born-American underground writer. The underground folk hero was alone in his battle with no connection to any group. The writer who never had any role model in his life, became a role model himself for the huge reading audience. With his well-known writings, he became a phenomenon in the world of literature and gave people the opportunity not to take life seriously.

Though the writer's works have been translated into Turkish, unfortunately, he is not well known to Turkish readers. The academic research on his work is not abundant either. Hopefully, the present thesis will spark the literature students' interest in further examination of Bukowski's timeless literary works.

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