

B.A. THESIS
AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEMALE IN THE WORK OF CHARLES
BUKOWSKI
Michal Mecner

Michal Mecner devotes himself to the female characters in the prose and poetry of Charles Bukowski. He identifies the main types of women in Bukowski's work, pointing out the author's misogyny. At the same time, Mecner defends Bukowski for 1) honestly depicting "the real experience of real men with real women in the real world" (46), and 2) confronting contemporary cultural trends, especially feminism. "[C]hauvinism and misogyny in Bukowski's texts," Mecner writes, "are not really an expression of their author's hatred. He rather consciously defines himself against feminist ideologies and engages in counter-culture efforts" (46).

Mecner's study is solid, well-structured, and clearly written. Bukowski's honesty should have been more problematized. Mecner mentions an instance of the writer's hypocrisy, but on the whole considers him "honest-to-the-bone and a keen observer" (47); a person who "did not write in order to secure eternal fame in the history of literature" (47). He ignores the fact that Bukowski—who came to own a house, a BMW, and a collection of luxurious wines—consciously exploited the tradition of sensationalist, pornographic, and macho literature (popular, but also obviously Hemingway, Miller, and the Beats). In his own words: "I wrote vile (but interesting) stuff that made people hate me, that made them curious about this Bukowski. I threw bodies off my porch into the night. I sneered at hippies. I was in and out of drunk tanks. A lady accused me of rape." Rather than being an original and honest critic of the mainstream society, Bukowski shamelessly benefited from it.

Second, the relationship of Bukowski and feminism could have been developed in more depth. At times, ideas are torn out of context, such as when Mecner assumes that Bukowski and de Beauvoir would agree on the question of marriage. De Beauvoir, in the 1940s, illustrated that through marriage women were controlled economically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually by men, who themselves maintained their freedom. Bukowski talks about marriage 30 years later, when women had greater economic freedom, contraception and abortion were available, and divorce was more common, so the union proved less and less advantageous for men. Bukowski's rejection of marriage is therefore incomparable with de Beauvoir's.

Finally, the thesis contains a few amusing statements such as, "[In relationships] men hope to find neither daughter nor a mother in the way women hope to find a new father" (6) or, "Comments on a lady's legs are the universal compliment and a method of courting her" (35).

Despite these shortcomings, Mecner's work—at B. A. level—can be graded as **"excellent"** (výborně).

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