

Abstract

The subject of the present thesis is the author Charles Bukowski and as the title suggests his portrayal of women and men in the chosen works. This thesis strives to avoid presumption of Bukowski's personal sentiments and views, and instead focuses on the written word itself, namely on the *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* and *Women*. By choosing *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* and *Women* we will be able to discuss changes in Bukowski's attitudes throughout a set period of his life, during a time when attitudes towards women were changing.

The pillars of the thesis are language and sexuality. Hence, this thesis challenges the image of crude and basic language not being worthy of literary acceptance. This thesis will show that such language was chosen deliberately. It will be explained, for example, that one of Bukowski's reasons for doing so, was to better reflect the minds of his protagonists. Similarly, sexuality, as one of the most discussed and criticised of Bukowski's themes will also be analysed. The object of this academic discussion is to show how Bukowski liberated the subject of sexuality by using humour and irony in his writing.

Consequently, the thesis will also contextualise Bukowski in terms of time, place and personal development, in order to show progress and development in his work. It will be shown that Bukowski, much like his works, could not be easily categorised. Nonetheless, Bukowski will be shortly considered among the Beat generation, as this allows us to consider Bukowski's political, apolitical (at the first sight) attitudes.

The second part of the thesis will analyze the chosen stories from *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*. The most questionable theme within the collection, namely sexuality, will be discussed. It will be done so to show that it is unjust to concentrate merely on sexuality within this collection as Bukowski tends to project his comments and opinions on the society in some of the stories. It is worth noting that this thesis admits that Bukowski can be vulgar, but the main aim of the thesis is to provide a deeper understanding and critique hidden in the vortex of sexual reference.

Following the discussion on *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*, the focus will be drawn to the analysis of *Women*. From early on, it will be established that if *Notes* was not just about sex alone, then *Women* is even less about sexuality and more centred around the frailty of human relationships. *Women* will demonstrate that Bukowski wants the reader to understand the behaviour of his characters and especially that of his main male protagonist, Chinaski. It

is done so, in order to demonstrate the devolvement in Bukowski's style. Essentially, by showing progress in his artistic expression, the thesis highlights Bukowski's insight into the human condition and shows him as more than just an author of some obscene stories.

All of the abovementioned examinations are brought together in the conclusion to the thesis in a defence to Bukowski's artistic right to create and develop the stories as he chose. Effectively, the prevailing argument rests on the fact that many critics were to overcome with emphasis on Bukowski's personal beliefs and his use of language that they often overlooked the deeper meaning in his fiction, and that is exactly what this thesis aims to combat.

Key words: Charles Bukowski, gender, chauvinism, politics, artistic freedom