

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT
BA THESIS
The Portrayal of Women and Men in Charles Bukowski's Fiction
Božena Valdajeva

Although Ms. Valdajeva's thesis has developed substantially during the past several months, unfortunately it has not yet reached the point when it could be awarded a passing grade.

Concerning the problems of the form, I have repeatedly asked Ms. Valdajeva to consult the formatting guidelines posted on our departmental website and recommended her to follow them carefully (regarding long quotes, quotes quoted in other works [e.g. on page 13], titles of long/short works, etc.), but she has failed to do that.

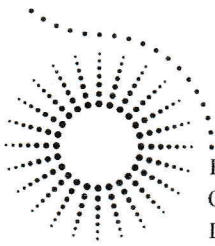
In addition, I have drawn the student's attention to many errors in the text, asking her to correct them, and also asked her to search for the remaining errors on her own because in my view, at this stage of study, it is also the student's responsibility to submit a text that does not suffer from major linguistic and stylistic problems on almost every page. Unfortunately, although Ms. Valdajeva took care of a number of errors, she ignored many others: for example, I clearly indicated her incorrect usage of commas in sentences such as “the aim of the thesis is to show, that Bukowski was wrongly unappreciated” (9) but the text does not always reflect my recommendations. Or, I drew the student's attention to her incorrect expression “on the first sight,” asking her to substitute it with the correct expression “at first sight”—to no avail. The most preposterous illustration in this context concerns the three literary works mentioned on page 48. The student has been asked twice to correct the titles and names of the authors, but here is the progression of her dealing with this issue:

First version: We see this in poetry, such as John Locke's 'Rape of the Lock', novels like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austin, and plays such as *A Street Car Named Desire*, by William Tennessee.

Second version: We see this in poetry, such as John Milton's “Rape of the Lock”, novels like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austin, and plays such as *A Street Car Named Desire*, by Williams Tennessee.

Submitted version: We see this in poetry, such as Alexander Pope's “Rape of the Lock”, novels like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austin, and plays such as *A Street Car Named Desire*, by Williams Tennessee.

Oversight is one thing; this suggests a serious lack of care about proofreading and formalizing the thesis.



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Finally, some erroneous passages were added only to the submitted version, e.g. “the prevailing argument rests on the fact that many critics were to overcome with emphasis on Bukowski’s personal believes 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” (7).

Concerning the content, I have expressed my disagreement with the idea of there being an “anti-Bukowski brigade” (9)—there may not be much criticism of Bukowski's work, but some serious criticism exists, so it is unnecessary to continually dwell on such a defensive position. Russell Harrison's *Against the American Dream* is a proof of this. At the same time, as I have also communicated to the student, even if Bukowski was not “writing mere sex stories” (11), it does not mean that he was not “degrading women to sex objects” (11) or that he “degrade[d] men and women equally” (49). In my view, Bukowski's treatment of women, both in his work and his life, was predominantly sexist and misogynist, and he made a career partly of that, which understandably angered many women as well as men. So if “there is a greater merit to his work than he is often given credit for” (48), as the thesis claims, it remains to be shown more clearly what the merit is (so far, there is little discussion of that and on the whole, the thesis tends to illustrate nearly the opposite).

In addition, I've also questioned the student's consideration of the columns gathered in *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* as “stories.” And last but not least, I have repeatedly drawn the student's attention to her incorrect generalizations about the 1960s and the countercultural scene of the period. It is not true that “[a] person who mocks counter-culture in the USA is often someone who diverges from the American Dream” (23); much mockery of counterculture has come from the Right and from those who believe in the functionality of the American Dream. It is equally erroneous to claim that “Bukowski continues to succeed to depict a picture of the 70” (44). Even if he may be read in relation to the counterculture of the period, including the Beats (which is what Jean-Francois Duval does), Bukowski is in no way representative of the struggles, commitments and creativity of those who were involved in oppositional cultures of those years.

Given the above shortcomings, regarding both form and content, I recommend that the thesis be withdrawn from the defense.

Pavla Veselá, PhD.
August 27, 2015