

PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of English and American Studies

Charles Bukowski

and his short stories in connection to the era

Diploma Thesis

Author: Bc. Kateřina Řehounková

Supervisor: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2018

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Charles Bukowski

a jeho povídky v souvislostech doby

Diplomová práce

Autor: Bc. Kateřina Řehouňková

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2018

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

Filozofická fakulta

Akademický rok: 2015/2016

Obor v rámci kterého má být VŠKP vypracována: Anglická filologie

Studijní program: Filologie

Forma: Prezenční

Obor/komb.: Anglická filologie - Ruská filologie (AF-RF)

Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta

PŘEDKLÁDÁ:	ADRESA	OSOBNÍ ČÍSLO
Bc. ŘEHOUNKOVÁ Kateřina	Tylova 696, Chlumeck nad Cidlinou	F150883

TÉMA ČESKY:

Charles Bukowski a jeho povídky v souvislostech doby

TÉMA ANGLICKY:

Charles Bukowski and his short stories in connection to the era

VEDOUcí PRÁCE:

PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D. - KAA

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

The present thesis is focused on the author's analysis of Charles Bukowski and his writing in connection to the era and his contemporaries. In part, it focuses on Bukowski's short stories.

SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:

Christy, Jim, Claude Powell, and Ladislav Senkyrik. Buk Book: Och Charles Bukowski. Praha: Pragma, 2004.
Duval, Jean-Francois, Jean-Francois Duval, and Charles Bukowski. Bukowski a Beatnici: Pojednání O Generaci Beatniku ; Interview Vecer U Hanka Doma. Hodkovicky: Pragma, 2014.
Locklin, Gerald, and Stepan Vrba. Bukowski: Zaruceny Tip: Texty, Rozhovory, Vzpominky, Clanky, Basne. Praha: Volvox Globator, 1999.
Miles, Barry. Charles Bukowski. London: Virgin Books, 2011
Sounes, Howard. Charles Bukowski: Blaznivy Zivot Charlese Bukowskeho. Praha: Pragma, 1999.
Sounes, Howard. Charles Bukowski: Locked in the Amrs of a Crazy Life. Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 1999.

Podpis studenta:



Datum:

26.6.2018

Podpis vedoucího práce:



Datum:

26.6.2018

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma *Charles Bukowski* vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V

dne.....

Podpis

I would like to thank PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D. for his help, suggestions, and guidance given while supervising my thesis and Mgr. Robert Hýsek for providing me with valuable sources for my thesis. And of course, I would like to thank my family and my partner for their patience with me during the writing process of my thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction and historical background.....	7
1.1	Introduction to the topic area	7
1.2	Historical background	7
2	Charles Bukowski.....	9
2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Childhood years	9
2.3	Teenagerhood.....	14
2.4	The Life he hoped for.....	15
2.5	Start and further development of Bukowski's writing career	17
2.6	Women.....	25
3	The Beat Generation	30
3.1	The movement and its important figures.....	30
3.2	Overall or common writing approach	37
4	Bukowski's short stories – the characterization of the examples.....	39
4.1	The Most Beautiful Woman in Town – a collection	39
4.2	Content	40
4.2.1	The Most Beautiful Woman in Town.....	40
4.2.2	Life in a Texas Whorehouse	42
4.2.3	The Fuck Machine	43
4.2.4	The Gut-Wringing Machine.....	45
4.2.5	3 Women and 3 Chickens.....	47
4.2.6	Twelve Flying Monkeys Who Won't Copulate Properly	49
4.2.7	The Birth, Life, and Death of an Underground Newspaper.....	52
4.2.8	Life and Death in the Charity Ward.....	55
4.2.9	All the Great Writers	56
4.2.10	Politics is like Trying to Screw a Cat in the Ass	58
4.2.11	The Fiend.....	59
4.2.12	A White Pussy	61
4.3	Summary of the tone of the stories and features of the era	62
5	The Beats and Bukowski.....	64
6	Conclusion	69
7	Bibliography	71
7.1	Primary Sources	71
7.1.1	Online sources.....	71
7.2	Secondary Sources.....	71
7.3	Works Consulted.....	72
7.3.1	Online sources	72
8	Annotation.....	73
9	Anotace	74

1. Introduction and historical background

1.1 Introduction to the topic area

The present thesis focuses on the author's analysis of Charles Bukowski and his writing in connection to the era and his contemporaries. It deals with Bukowski's short stories in the collection *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*. Although Bukowski presented himself as a loner or even outside of the literature of his era, and even though it might be very difficult, if not impossible, to connect him with any other writer or literary group, he was probably influenced by the overall cultural and political events of his time.

Bukowski (1920 – 1994) belongs to the same generation as The Beat Generation writers. In this movement were the sounding names of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) among the most known writers.

Bukowski was surely influenced by the similar world and atmosphere as The Beats. However, their life experiences seem differ and it may differentiate their attitudes towards life and writing. It can be added that not just the approach to literary work but the life experiences and life itself of any author himself are the basis of his work. That is the explanation why both historical background and Bukowski's life are elaborated on the thesis.

1.2 Historical background

The present chapter deals with the historical background relevant to Charles Bukowski's period of life and work. It comprises of different events of the worldwide importance as well as just merely American issues of the stated period.

After the First World War, the world including America underwent several changes. America lived through the roaring twenties, Charleston, gangsters, Charlie Chaplin era and a tremendous prosperity, which was bought off the backs of many people who had barely enough to make sure their families did not starve. On the other hand, there were those who were rich enough to

obtain shares of different companies and then suffer significantly when those fell sharply as the Depression era arose to be and the Wall Street crashed.

President Hoover was incapable of solving the situation and was followed by Franklin D. Roosevelt who promised "A New Deal" to the country, which started to flourish slowly. Unfortunately, the Second World War was to come, and while it helped the economy profoundly, it also created many conflicts that were to be shown in the run of the 20th century, such as the Cold, Korean and Vietnam War. Roosevelt did not live to see the end of the Second World War. His seat was taken by his Vice President, Harry Truman. His presidency started the era of abrupt changes, as the country had three presidents in the course of eighteen years, the other two being Dwight D. Eisenhower and J. F. Kennedy.

Many social changes took place in those critical years. One of such was the Security Act passed in 1935, which gave people government pensions and the system of unemployment insurance. Kennedy was unable to finish what he started, because of his assassination, but his vice president, Johnson, pushed the Civil Rights Act through and improved the position of Afro-Americans in the society.

2 Charles Bukowski

2.1 Introduction

Henry Charles Bukowski Jr. (16 August 1920 - 9 March 1994) was an American poet, short story writer, and novelist of German origin, famous mostly for his semi-autobiographical writing. He was born as Heinrich Karl Bukowski in Andernach, Germany, but his family moved to the USA when he was two years old. He grew up in Los Angeles and lived there for the majority of his life. Howard Sounes, the author of his thorough biography, wrote: "The author lived virtually his whole life in LA..., he wrote about life in Los Angeles from the working-class perspective, or perhaps more accurately from the viewpoint of the city's underclass", (Sounes xiii) which is the most common feature of Bukowski's work.

Charles Bukowski was an unbelievably prolific writer, despite the fact that his real writing career started quite late in his life. During his lifetime he published books of prose and poetry, all of which have been translated into many languages. Novels such as *Factotum*, *Ham on Rye*, *Post Office* and *Women*, short-story collections such as *Ordinary Tales of Madness*, *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*, *South of No North*, and others made him famous and his fame reached the highest point thanks to the movie *Barfly*.

Bukowski's family roots should not be omitted as they are considered to be a good starting point of his biography, yet also the undisputable source of his personality. That is because of a well-known fact that the personality of any human is most easily and most effectively formed until the age of 7, subsequently, the young Bukowski's personality seemed to be finished before his famous barfly time. Childhood and the period of becoming an adult is an important time if not the most important of everybody's life.

2.2 Childhood years

Sounes has brilliantly and straightforwardly written about Bukowski's family roots: "In his autobiographical writing, in interviews and letters to friends, Bukowski made it plain that his childhood was joyless and frightening... 'A

twisted childhood has fucked me up,' he [Bukowski] wrote. 'But that's the way I am, so I'll go with it.'" (10)

Charles Bukowski's (Hank's) grandfather Leonard emigrated from Germany to the United States in the 1880s after the defeat of Napoleon III in the war of 1870. After marriage with Emilie Krause, who was also of immigrant origin, they settled in Pasadena. Leonard started his own construction company in 1904, after being a carpenter for many years. It was a good business and it let him build a large two-storey house for the family. They had six children, John was the oldest one, Charles was second and Hank's father Henry was the third. Then came two daughters Emma and Eleonor, and the youngest son, Ben.

When Henry Bukowski, the writer's father, served as a sergeant of the American army in Germany after their defeat in 1918, he met Hank's mother. He had an office job and Hank later referred to him as a typist, who, however, had an advantage of fluent German over most of his fellows of American troops. He befriended Heinrich Fett there, the manager of the canteen for American troops, and he also had good relationships with Heinrich's family. He had glimpsed Heinrich's sister Katherine, but it was not easy to talk to her before he was invited to dinner with the whole family. Henry Bukowski and Katherine Fett had an affair which quickly resulted in her pregnancy. Though Bukowski junior (Hank) often claimed that he was born out of wedlock, the truth was slightly different. Henry and Katherine were married on 15 July 1920, after Henry's demobilization, and a month later, on 16 August, the future well-known writer Heinrich Karl Bukowski was born.

Katherine Fett's background was speculated over because her mother's maiden name was Nanette Israel, which suggests that she might have been Jewish. Being that way Hank would have been Jewish as the transmission is made through the maternal line. The family name of Bukowski also seems to be a Jewish one. Having it in mind Hank's flirtation with Hitlerian thoughts and Nazism in the 1940s was rather strange and he later claimed that it was just for the sake of opposing the majority.

Germany could have become the new Bukowski's family settlement, if it were not for the post-war inflation, caused by the after-war reparations, which brought the economy to the brink of the collapse and disabled sufficient living. Henry decided to sail back to the USA in 1923 on the SS *President Fillmore* headed to Baltimore. They spent some time there, but subsequently, they moved to Pasadena to join Charles Bukowski's paternal grandparents, Emilie and Leonard, who were, however, separated because of Leonard's drinking. (Miles pgs 6-11)

As the evidence of different biographies and Bukowski's own writing is clear, his childhood was not a lucky one full of joy and unconditional love from parents. It was rather horrifying and growing up in such an environment seems to be the source of his own kind of brutality and "outsideness".

Hank's parents considered themselves as something above the other neighbors and they forbid him to play with other children in order not to get his fine clothes dirty and not to entwine their lives of hope-to-be-riches with the low-class poor. This resulted in nothing different than Hank's feeling of being estranged by people who he first got to know in the kindergarten. Another typical feature of Hank is also rooted in his childhood, that being the problem of digesting and evacuation caused by his strict toilet training which simply said that everything connected to the bathroom was "dirty". Firstly, it resulted into complete refusal to use the bathroom in the kindergarten, afterward it changed into using it just partially and it ended in the problem of evacuating in different places (he needed to get used to the place). Talking and writing about this part of life might become interesting for Hank just because it was "dirty stuff". All that goes in accordance with the familiar fact mentioned above - that the personality and its typical features are formed till the exact age. Some of them remain till the adulthood and some of them might turn to be the source of disobedience in teenagerhood or a complete refusal in adulthood.¹

¹ loosely based on Sounes 10 and Miles 13-14

Nevertheless, the first years of childhood have also some bright sides and Hank remembered some good stories which he also reviewed in his works. As Miles mentioned in his biography: “Though we come to know his father as an argumentative, bombastic brute who dominated his cowed wife, Hank didn’t actively dislike him until he started beating him, something which appears to have begun after Hank had started school...” (15)

When attending school, Hank started to struggle with other problems than just not being social and able to play with other children properly. Today many children like him would be diagnosed with dyslexia and they are specially trained and treated in a completely different way than Hank was. Later Bukowski himself wrote a poem named *education* concerning this problem and his mother’s reaction to it.

‘education’

at that small inkwell desk
I had trouble with the words
“sing” and “sign.”
I don’t know why
but
“sing” and “sign”:
it bothered
me.

the others went on and learned
new things
but I just sat there
thinking about
“sing” and “sign.”
there was something there
I couldn’t
overcome.

what it gave me was a
bellyache as
I looked at the backs of all those
heads.

the lady teacher had a
very fierce face
it ran sharply to a

point
and was heavy with white
powder.

one afternoon
she asked my mother to come
see her
and I sat with them
in the classroom
as they
talked.

“he’s not learning
anything,” the teacher
told my
mother

“please give him a
chance, Mrs. Sims!”
“he’s not trying, Mrs.
Chinaski!”

my mother began to
cry.

Mrs. Sims sat there
and watched

her.

it went on for some
minutes.

then Mrs. Sims said,
“well, we’ll see what we
can do ...”

then I was walking with
my mother
we were walking in
front of the school,
there was much green grass
and then the
sidewalk.

“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
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 more like everything
else.

(The Boylan Blog)²

Sources vary whether Hank was beaten up by his father for the first time because of the poor results in school or the note Hank brought home because of a provoked fight at school. Either way, the first beating was “the incident [which] permanently alienated him from his parents” and furthermore beatings became as an integral part of Bukowski’s life as his more American nickname “Hank” given to him by the neighborhood children at their new home on Longwood Avenue. There started the usual Saturday horror of cutting the lawns and beating for not properly doing work or other silly little reasons, a kind of father’s sadistic game which Hank was never able to win. (Sounes 11-12 and Miles 17-18) Violence was something usual even among children and “In the childhood jungle you either bullied or you were bullied... The children passed on the sickness from one generation to the next... emotions were to be repressed; boys don’t cry; you have to be tough to survive. And as the Great Depression began to bite, this was ever more so.” (Miles 23-24)

² Part of a book of poems *You Get So Alone at Times That It Just Makes Sense*

2.3 Teenagerhood

However, before the Great Depression hit the Bukowski's family, "catastrophe" which completely changed Hank's life and personality appeared. Right at the age of starting sexual interest, Hank broke out with acne. Somebody could say that it is a normal part of growing up, but Bukowski's version of the skin problem was much more awful, medically called Acne Vulgaris. Hank felt miserable because his hoped-for time crashed again and he backed once more on the fringe of his peers. The acne was another thing which made Hank more separate from the rest of the world, since everybody seemed to be disgusted by his appearance. As Bukowski himself described it in his novel *Ham on Rye*, his grandmother tried to exorcise him. Nothing was working properly, even though the medical treatment in the hospital. Nevertheless, the serious skin problem probably made him into the person he was and brought him an almost endless source for writing, as it is for example perfectly seen in chapters from 22 to 35 in the novel *Ham on Rye*.

Meanwhile the teenagerhood was the time when Bukowski discovered his two lifelong passions, drinking and literature, both getting him more outside of the "real world". He tasted wine for the first time thanks to the high school friend Baldy and he liked it. Because of the withdrawal from the school in order to cure his acne, he had a lot of free time and discovered a Public Library where he started to read his most influential writers like Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, D.H. Lawrence, John Dos Passos and of course Ernest Hemingway and John Fante, his favorite writers. Nevertheless, he somehow went through the high school to the graduation, taking rather military training of ROTC instead of gym classes in order not to be seen naked in the showers. So much he was ashamed of his appearance. After the high school he unsuccessfully tried to find and keep a job, but he was rather hanging out the bars and enjoying the passion of drinking, although he was still living with parents. Yet, more disturbing at the time was his admiration of Hitler and of Nazism, which, as he later claimed was just for the sake of being different and provoking as a normal teenager (Sounes 15-19 and Miles 37-45)

Some may say that the Nazis attitudes, which followed and even strengthened during Hank's short time at a college, might be the reason for his parents to throw him out of the house. Yet, it was not the reason for them for to do so. Even his mother, a native German, admired Hitler, seeing him as a chance for the working-class people. The last straw on the camel's back for the throwing out of home seems to be his writing of short stories. Firstly, he wrote them as mere assignments at college, but he later started to write more than needed to be written at college. According to Miles, the stories, found by his father Henry, were the root of another clash at Hank's home and the reason for his father throwing his belongings out of the house, though the content of the stories is, unfortunately, unknown. (56-57)

2.4 The Life he hoped for

There is no wonder that after the moving out of his parents' house Hank started to live the life he had always hoped for. It was the life outside the mainstream, outside the "normal life", outside the era. It bore a striking resemblance to the fact that he was trying to live up to his fantasies about the low life. Therefore, he started to live like a starving bohemian writer in a small cheap flat before taking an exploring trip. Both Bukowski's biographers, Miles (51, 61) and Sounes (20), admitted very obviously that his behavior gave the impress of copying John Fante's model of a struggling writer who is trying nearly every possible low-paid job and living in cheap estates. There came the picture of Hank as a barfly, the man he hoped to be and whom he described in most of his writings.

Hank himself mentions on *The Bukowski Tapes* that, he "went on the road not like Kerouac, as a fulfilling [experience]. I went on the road because there was no place to go. I just moved on because everything was ugly. All I wanted to do was find a small room somewhere, find a bottle of wine, and start drinking". (cited in Miles 63)

The life of a barfly, a manual worker, a punter, a womanizer and of course a writer appeared on its brink. It was the life during which Hank met a lot of different people, whom he liked, loved, hated or whom he could not be

bothered with. Many of them felt the obligation to say or write something about the relationship they had with Buk after he became famous, many others scented the opportunity to line their pockets with him, either way, there are many books concerning Hank, his drinking, writing, and friends. And though the percentage of the reality in his own writings is not always satisfying, his works would still be the most valuable sources of his life experiences. For example, the early years of his barfly life full of different cities and low-paid jobs are described in the novel *Factotum*. It starts nearly calmly:

“I ARRIVED IN New Orleans in the rain at 5 o’clock in the morning. I sat around in the bus station for a while but the people depressed me so I took my suitcase and went out in the rain and began walking. I didn’t know where the rooming houses were, where the poor section was.

I had a cardboard suitcase that was falling apart. It had once been black but the black coating had peeled off and yellow cardboard was exposed. I had tried to solve that by putting black shoe polish over the exposed cardboard. As I walked along in the rain the shoe polish on the suitcase ran and unwittingly, I rubbed black streaks on both legs of my pants as I switched the suitcase from hand to hand.

Well, it was a new town. Maybe I’d get lucky.

The rain stopped and the sun came out.” (Factotum 1)

This picture of him corresponds with the one in Jim Christy’s book called *Buk Book: Och Charles Bukowski*, that Hank just had a cardboard case, no illusions and disillusionments, he was just going somewhere. There was no aim for him, he was not reckoning to earn a lot of money, he was not wandering just for the sake of feeling free, it was just a matter of doing something. (Christy 19-20)

“At the worst of times, in the worst of cities, if I could have a small room, if I could close the door of that small room and be alone in it with the old dresser, the bed, the torn window shade, I would begin to fill with something good; the unmolested tone of the singular self. I had no problem with myself, it was those places out there, those faces out there, the wasted ruined lives – people settling for the cheapest and easiest way out. Between church and state, the

family structure; between our educational and entertainment system; between the eight-hour job and the credit system, they were burned alive. Closing the door to a small room or sitting in a bar night and day was my way of saying no to all that.” (Bukowski on Bukowski 35)

His life had become a haphazard flipping from one place to another, changing one lost job for another, just going thru El Paso, San Francisco, St Louise, New York and Philadelphia. Yet it took a pinch of time and he might do it just to come back “home” to L.A. and on the top of it live with parents again. During the last years of the 1940s, he continued writing short stories.

2.5 Start and further development of Bukowski’s writing career

Since the first memories Bukowski was able to recall, he used his life experiences as the basis for his writing and his atrocious childhood became a nearly unlimited source. Hank was a writer of different forms of literature, and as it is mentioned above, he started with short stories, but he also wrote brilliant poems and novels. The beginning of his writing career was not that of happy or straight ones. Although he was a prolific writer, he struggled a lot in order to be published, especially in case of short stories, even though some of the early stories were printed. As he later discovered, when writing poetry, he was more successful in being accepted by magazines. And as Miles wrote in his biography: “Though he was [then] mostly writing poetry, he was working in the field of autobiography fiction where thinly disguised private life is presented as public life. It was the modernism of Ernest Hemingway, John Fante, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Marcel Proust, e.e. cummings, L-F Céline and Henry Miller that he now raided and made his own.” (114)

In the year 1950, he started another important period in his life; the post office accepted him as a Christmas part-time worker. After a nearly year and a half they changed it to a full-time job and, surprisingly, he stayed there for eleven years altogether. He dedicated most of the 50s and further to working for them, getting himself an unrepeatabe basis for his first novel, *Post Office*, published two decades later, not even mentioning so many short stories written while working there.

Another significant event of his stormy life is neither connected to wandering nor to writing, yet it is obviously connected to his lifelong heavy drinking. As Christy mentions, he had to visit a hospital again, but this time with more serious diagnosis than acne, even though his acne was one of the ugly ones. This time, what made him come to the hospital, was a bleeding ulcer which nearly killed him. (24) However, the bad health which caused the end of his job in the post office had brought him to trying the horse races and betting on them. That is the element which became another significant part of his writing themes.

His writing after releasing from the hospital and trying races changed and became more thriving when it came to the acceptance by publishers. Miles similes Hank's experience from the hospital to the transcendent experience, which made him slow talking, worse at memorizing and feeling like an old man. (113) Nevertheless, this might be the key to Bukowski's well-known works and his re-started writing career. There and then Hank drew on his previous memories, experiences and life episodes. It was so easygoing, something so natural for him, just sitting by his typewriter and rapping his life down on the paper.

"Once I sit there, there's no planning, there's no effort, there's no labor. It's almost like the typer does it by itself. You get in a kind of trancelike state..." (from New York Times Book Review, 11 June 1989, cited in Miles 113-114)

Because of the inheritance after his parents passing away, he started to care more about the money and finally matured. Concerning publication of his writings he was still stuck with little magazines, yet in 1960 he released his first chapbook *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* thanks to a minor editor Griffith. Miles mentions what is obviously nothing but true, that Hank was totally delighted to see his first printed book. "He was forty years old, and had returned to writing late, so the publication of his first book was a very emotional event after so many years of rejection and starvation for his art." (126)

Regardless of creating during the 1960s, a period when underground attitudes became prevailing and the cultural life was tumbling, he was not affected by that and just wrote what he knew, what he saw, of course slightly moved or changed. The reality in his works was appreciated by many and also hippies became fond of him and his picaresque descriptions of low life. His real feelings and smiles were also similar to the feelings of The Beats and hippies, of course, all did not like the consumerism of the time including e.g. Hollywood. Possibly this or something else gave rise to his fame. It is also important to know, that Hank did not become known for just one poem or a novel, but rather his whole writing brought him the fame gradually. Therefore, he could not be likened to Allen Ginsberg and his Howl.³

Hank was also published in the journal *The Outsider*, the famous Beat poets publishing place of Jon and Louise 'Gypsy Lou' Webb. Thanks to them he also got in touch with Blazek, who printed Hank's short stories in his magazine *Ole*, and who also helped him to publish a whole book of short stories, *Confession of a Man Insane Enough to Live with Beasts*, where the name of Henry Chinaski was heard probably for the first time. Blazek later admitted in an interview with Sounes that *Confession...* was one of the Bukowski's early writings which "was just a dry run for the more substantial works that John Martin published at Black Sparrow Press." (74-75)

He also became known to The Beat writers and "The Beat Generation readership" in the 1960s. Both thanks to the above mentioned Webbs, their journal, where they placed him on the same field as e.g. Henry Miller, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The publishing of his *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail*, a book of poems, was worthy of attention to contemporary writers. As Miles mentions in his biography, Bukowski was a bit confused about appearing in the same journal with such a group, which even does not look like a group, as "this was actually a press myth". (135-138)

³ loosely based on Miles 135 and 143

Hank did not like The Beats' need for brotherhood or sense of belonging, because he was rather living and writing on his own, like a lone wolf. However, he befriended some of the not so central figures of the Beat poetry such as Steve Richmond, Douglas Blazek, and Harold Norse. Yet according to Miles, it seems that Hank was kind of jealous of Ginsberg's fame, even though he was influenced by Allen's poems. (144)

The mid-1960s brought about success in publishing because *Confession...* was later followed by a very well-known book of short stories *All the Assholes in the World Mine* (1966). Most of the texts published in it were not matured students' work, yet ones like those might have been as clumsy as they were, because young authors may be clumsy. Although Bukowski was forty-five, as an author, he was young. (Christy 32)

Next stages of Hank's life are inherently intertwined with the name of John Martin, the owner of the Black Sparrow Press publishing minor writers. Martin started his press with the Bukowski's works and he remained Bukowski's publisher for the rest of Bukowski's life. Even after Buk's death, a lot of his work which has been asking for being printed was left. (Miles 165-166)

Yet they were totally different personalities, a boozing bohemian writer and his trusted, not drinking publisher with some notes of a businessman, Martin openly appreciated Hank's work. With the new publications also came regular money paid for them, concerning not just broadsides but books as well. (Sounes 78-81)

Nearly all the publications of Black Sparrow press would belong among the Buk's best works, having been carefully selected by John Martin, e.g. *Burning in Water Drowning in Flame* and *The Rooming House Madrigals*. Concerning the short story collections again the publications of Black Sparrow Press could be a good choice. However, the earlier collections published by other presses are still likely to be in favor of the readers. They are particularly *All the Assholes in the World and Mine* of 1966, *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* of 1969 and *Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions and General Tales of Ordinary*

Madness of 1972, which was later on divided into *Tales of Ordinary Madness* and *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*.

Thanks to John Bryan's newspaper *Open City* Buk became read more as a result of his weekly column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*. Bukowski himself wrote a foreword to the later printed book of collection of stories of the same name.

"Then one day after the races, I sat down and wrote the heading, NOTES OF A DIRTY OLD MAN, opened a beer, and the writing got done by itself. There was not the tenseness or the careful carving with a bit of a dull blade... Nor was there any need to simply tap out a flat and careless journalism... There seemed to be no pressures. Just sit by the window, lift the beer and let it come." (Notes of a Dirty Old Man 6)

The original *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* consisted of just 40 of his "hundreds of works he submitted under the "Dirty Old Man" rubric". Then came out collections of the other stories like: *Erections, Ejaculations and Other Tales of Ordinary Madness* (1972), *South of No North* (1974), and *Hot Water Music* (1983), as well the posthumous volumes *Portions from a Wine-Stained Notebook* (2008) and *Absence of the Hero* (2010), followed by *More Notes of a Dirty Old Man* in 2011. (More Notes of a Dirty Old Man 227-228)

Very interesting are the facts mentioned by Miles in his biography. *Open City* did not have a long lasting, since it started in May 1967 and existed just 92 weeks before it ended. Bukowski was their columnist for 87 weeks with his famous *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*. (172) Hank used the experiences with writing to deadlines in some of his stories, and also the struggling of people to set up and publish regularly an underground paper was a lifelong experience for him. Ending of the *Open City* is used as a theme of his short story "The Birth, Life and Death of an Underground Newspaper" published firstly in his collection of short stories *Erections, Ejaculations and Other Tales of Ordinary Madness* (1972). Later, after the division into two collections *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town & Other Stories* and *Tales of Ordinary Madness* the story stayed in the first half.

Hank's fame was clearly growing. Despite that, he was still in bad mental condition. Miles even called it as a fluctuation between suicides and self-confident periods. On the top of it, he added that suicide attempts were something familiar to Buk since the time he was a child. (182) The drinking perfectly fits the assumption of a slow, yet gradual way of killing himself. An advantage of it might be an ecstatic state of mind when a man feels unbeatable and it was a sort of escape from the everyday horrors. Hank himself commented it in an interview he gave to Robert Wennersten in 1974: "[D]rinking is a form of suicide where you're allowed to return to life and begin all over the next day. It's like killing yourself, and then you're reborn." (cited in Miles 183 and Bukowski on Bukowski 20)

The year of 1969 was not just the famous year of the first man landing on the Moon, hippie Woodstock festival or big demonstrations against the Vietnam war. These events did not seem to have as much importance to Bukowski as the fact that he became a full-time writer. Now after so many years it is clear that the decision to quit the post office job and start a writing career was not so straightforward. Buk was on the brink of being fired from the post office because of the too many days he had taken off and his publisher John Martin offered him the one hundred life support for the rest of his life if he wrote for him. Hank's biographer Barry Miles presented the situation with Martin offering this opportunity while giving the impression of that it was his own decision to made Bukowski quit the job for a small life fee, even if he did not write anything for him. (193) However, another biographer Howard Sounes described the same situation in a very different way. It starts with the same information of that John Martin did not know about the problems in the post office and that Hank was going to be fired. But it then continues with Bukowski going to Martin with a proposal concerning getting him from the post office and redeemed by the proposal of more written books than Martin could publish. On the top of it Sounes also gives the readers the report of the two considering together how much money Hank needed per month and however the amount of \$100 reached a quarter of Martin's own income, he believed Hank so much, that they finally agreed on that. (101)

Either way, the connection of John Martin and Charles Bukowski bore its fruit. As Martin suggested the novel as a kind of writing for Hank, he composed the first in just twenty nights. Later it was published under the title of *Post Office* and became very famous. Its popularity is mostly due to the honesty with which Buk described the postal environment. Maybe also the form of the simple storytelling attracted so many different people throughout the time. Miles adds that Hank used this form of the autobiographical fiction in his columns as well. This is the narrative which uses life experiences as the basic line of the story; it is simply a description of events and no development of the protagonist. He also draws an analogy between the form of *Post Office* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (197)

The resemblance of *The Decameron* is not used only once by Barry Miles as a description of Bukowski's work. He points it out again in his introduction to a different novel by Buk called *Women*, because this novel was segmented into 104 parts, exactly one more than *The Decameron*. (Women ix) Linda King, one of Hank's girlfriends, was the one who gave Buk a hint what to write about next when she was talking about how much he did not understand women. Therefore, he decided to collect his materials and write a new novel, *Women*. Miles also wrote in the introduction to *Women* that: "Bukowski was in his fifties when he wrote it and it reveals a thirties mentality towards women...a pre-hippie, certainly pre-PC view of women." (Women viii) That is the view reused so many times in most of, if not all, Bukowski's works.

Bukowski was slowly getting famous. Suddenly, he started giving public readings during the 1970s and on. The first took place already in 1969, where he could meet a lot of new people and got in touch with his contemporaries. Being the contemporary of The Beats, he was quite often mistaken as one of them, too. Although The Beats knew him and appreciated him in a way, he hated the mere idea of joining their "club". (Sounes 141) The form of his autobiographical writing was another similarity with The Beats. Miles adds that Bukowski's Henry Chinaski has the same real base as the Kerouac's Duluoz. (198)

Getting back to the poetry reading, Hank started it just for the money, regardless of the fact that he had criticized it previously as well as the people who did it. He disliked everything about it and considered it just acting; he was not a good actor at the beginning. Yet later he realized what the thing people wanted from him was - they would like to see the man who wrote the *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* column. (Miles 200-201) Consequently, the standard appeared, he was the writer who got drunk quickly, insulted nearly everybody and for that, he got his money. He appeared in another dead-end job which he disliked a lot.

Another milestone of Buk's writing career started during the last years of the 1970s and climaxed with the signed contract, all dealing with the screenplay to Barbet Schroeder's movie about Buk's life, in 1980. As Sounes pointed out in his biography the screenplay of *Barfly* "was an amalgam of the years Bukowski lived in Philadelphia, hanging out at the bar... and also when he lived with Jane in Los Angeles." (192) In the film were starring young Mickey Rourke with Faye Dunaway as Henry (Hank) and Wanda (Jane).

Meanwhile, the film was to be made, Barbet Schroeder taped sessions with him and made a document out of it named *Charles Bukowski Tapes*. Hank did not stop producing writings and his travelogue about a trip to Germany, *Shakespeare Never Did This*, came into existence. His well-known masterpiece novel, *Ham on Rye*, concerning his childhood was published in 1982.

After all, *Barfly* was released in 1987 and it, even more, boosted Buk's writing career and fame. Buk tried to be near the filming cast during the whole procedure of making the film and on top of it, he appeared in a small part of a barfly of the bar where Wanda and Chinaski meet. He subsequently started writing his next to the last novel inspired by the filmmaking of *Barfly* and named *Hollywood*, which was finished in three-quarters of a year and published in 1989, despite his very poor health. (Sounes 213-218) No one would be surprised that Bukowski's body was affected by his whole-life drinking, smoking and improper diet. Buk was diagnosed with tuberculosis

and later on he also suffered from leukemia, yet irrespective of that he stayed prolific nearly until his last days.

During the time of recovering from the first attack of cancer he wrote his last novel *Pulp*, which is the only one not based on his life, but a kind of a detective story. Towards the end of his life he decided to definitely quit drinking and smoking as well. As long as he was willing to try nearly anything to help him recover, he started practicing meditation and alternative treatments of Deepak Chopra. However, the cancer returned again in 1993 and he knew the death was coming. In the end, his last battle came and although he was fighting tooth and nail the Death was a stronger rival and seventy-three years old Charles Bukowski died “at 11.55 a.m. on Wednesday 9 March 1994”. (Sounes 234-241)

2.6 Women

In the preface to Bukowski’s novel *Women*, Barry Miles commented that Hank needed to have complicated relationships: “In fact, he liked the rocky road: he needed the screaming rows, the broken glass, his books and clothes strewn all over the yard. His strict emotionless childhood had turned him into what he called ‘the frozen man’. It took a lot to get through to him. All the bar fights and drinking were an attempt to actually feel something. His relations with women had to be tempestuous in order to be real. But when he fell in love, he fell deeply.” (*Women* viii)

Women always meant a lot for Bukowski and even though it might look like being vice versa he had nearly no real sexual knowledge till a quite high age. There are different opinions who the lady with whom he had lost his virginity was. Christy (22) writes about a fat woman Hank met in a bar in Philadelphia, yet Sounes (29) mentions her as being a prostitute in the same city. Miles goes further calling the lady in his biography “a ‘300 lb whore’ whom he picked up at the bar”. Even more interesting is the fact that Hank was already twenty-three years old by this time (70), which seems quite old for such a writer of low life and sexually motivated literature.

However, he was thinking of girls and women from very early on according to his own quotes and writings. He was a real women lover and womanizer, their appearance was the thing he noticed immediately, yet, as Miles mentions on page 65 of his biography, he was initially afraid of women, being too shy and frozen, because of the years of father's tyranny. Nevertheless, he most probably adored and admired them not just for the appearance but also for the experiences he had with them. As it happens, his muses got into his autobiographical writing under different names.

The first important muse to come was Jane Cooney Baker, a woman 11 years older than him, whom he met in a bar and with whom he tried to set up something like an average relationship. She became the fellow of Hank's alter-egos used as main characters in many of his writings, as for example in the short story "The Most Beautiful Woman in Town", in novels *Post Office* and *Factotum* and also in the screenplay prepared for the movie *Barfly*. (Sounes 27-28) Although she was obviously addicted to alcohol and he did not know much about her, he fell in love with her deeply and nearly in an instant. Yet, it was a difficult relationship which left ill opinions about all women in him. Jane was more than a woman for him; she was a kind of a drinking sparring partner and introduced him to horse races as well, which stayed to be one of his main topics through his whole life. Thought to be separate for a broadly speaking long time, he was the person who was near in her last hour, who organized the funeral and mourned her practically for the rest of his life. As his biographer Miles remarked about Bukowski's feelings after Jane being dead, Hank was shaken by it and very obviously it changed him and turned his life upside down. "Only with Jane dead was he able to express his love for her; as a living breathing woman, he had been too scared, too afraid of rejection... He mourned her deeply and, in his grief, he wrote some of his most moving poems... He had not had such strong feelings before but this grief broke through his frozen carapace and shook him to his center." (92-111, 134)

The second significant woman was an editor Barbara Frye, who became Bukowski's first wife. She edited *Harlequin*, which later became Hank's main

publishing magazine, because he was co-editing it with her. Even though they were married, they soon became unwilling to live together any more, something that was barring other things also was caused by the root fact that Barbara wanted children and Hank did not. Apart from the bunch of short stories, she or more precisely her leaving, inspired him to write a well-known poem *The Day I Kicked Away a Bankroll*. (Sounes 38-41)

According to Miles, nearly their whole story, which means publishing his poems as quickly as she saw them and her millions too, was just a made-up fiction. "Barbara Frye was from a quite wealthy family but was hardly a millionaire. Also, it appears that Harlequine didn't publish anything by Bukowski until long after they married. Dorbin's usually authoritative bibliography only lists one issue of Harlequine: volume two, number one, printed eight poems and three short stories by Hank but that was dated 1957 and by then he was co-editing the magazine with his wife." (118)

Third important woman of Bukowski's life was called FrancEyE. She was a partner for a part of life and most importantly a mother of his only child. Daughter Marina became his lifelong love and Hank developed into a loving father supporting her and her mother a lot during the time they lived together as a family as well as after he and FrancEyE decided to live separately. They had different ideas attitudes towards life and way of bringing Marina up. Hank wrote a poem which is probably concerned with their differentness *I can't stay in the same room with that woman for five minutes*, but they always seem to get on well, creating loving environment for their daughter. (Sounes 59-77) Yet, according to Miles, their love was strong at the beginning, even though Hank himself tried to trivialize and demean their cohabitation. (152)

In 1970 another femme fatal of Bukowski's life came, the sculptures Linda King. She was not struck by him at the beginning because she told Sounes that when she met him for the first time, he was pretty ugly, however, she developed a crush on him when modeling a sculpture of his head, although it took some time before they started their relationship. The fact that she dug him out of his deep depression was the most important thing about meeting her. The following year, 1971, was going to be more successful, after a year

of preparations the novel *Post Office* was finally released. His now partner Linda took care of his health cutting him off sleeping drug Valium and alcohol together while persuading him to diet and exercise, in consequence of which he became slimmer. (Sounes 111-114)

Linda told Sounes that: "He was nice when he was sober. I think his true self was when he was sober. But when he was drunk, it was like a demon took him over - Bukowski the Bad." (130) Harold Norse, a friend of Bukowski and a Beat poet, once wrote about Hank that there were two kinds of Bukowski who were separated by the fifth o'clock. Before that hour he was as shy and kind as a lamb, yet after that time he was full of tartness, mockery and desire to destroy the others. He was never tired of boasting and attracting attention to himself. (420-421)

This refers us back to thinking whether he had a split personality, which could be rooted in his necessity to use Henry Chinaski as an alter ego. It is more likely to see Chinaski as the worse of the two because most probably there are not many, if any, sober stories concerning him.

Nevertheless, it was so nice of Linda to try to improve his health and living conditions, however, as it was revealed further on, they were like chalk and cheese, or more precisely like water and oil trying to be inseparable. Unlike the need they felt when being with each other, their mutual presence was an explosive one, full of ups and downs, jealousy, fighting and constant break-ups and reunions.

Hank was not mourning Linda King's leaving long, he was having other women including a bunch of fans too. Among the usual screaming fans wanting to sleep off with him, there was an interesting woman, another Linda of his life, Linda Lee Beighle, the owner of a health food restaurant. Erelong they were seeing each other without having sex, because he was still involved in other acquaintances. After some hard times, Hank finally understood and stopped seeing other women in order to make something more out of his then friend Linda Lee. (Sounes 152-172)

Buk considered her to be the right woman for him and not surprisingly he married her after two years. His friend Steve Richmond was happy for him, wondering if the book of poetry *Burning in Water Drowning in Flame* is a hint of the mutual relationship between Hank and Linda Lee, as long as he knew that she was the water element of Scorpio and he was the fire element of Lion. Therefore, it seems he was burning in her water and she was drowning in his flame. (Richmond 106)

She was his second wife and the last woman of his life. She provided him with a loving home at San Pedro and was near when the hustle around his only film and screenplay begun. Linda Lee remained with Hank until the end of his life.

3 The Beat Generation

3.1 The movement and its important figures

The movement of different cultural and literal personalities named as The Beat Generation came to be important in the 1950s, yet its beginning goes back to 1940s. Also, it later gradually changed into the underground hippie movement of the 1960s. Neither of these two remained under the ground of the mainstream culture and both movements were very popular with the young generations. Because of the rise of disillusionment during and after the World War II, nearly everybody was trying to find something new, something good, some redemption from insufficiency. Some people were actively finding the American dream through the means of a well-paid job, wealth and conformity, but the then coming young generations would rather try to fly away from it. They needed more than just banal working and living relatively peaceful lives, something what their “fathers” were happy for after the horrors of the great wars.

The origin of the name “The Beat Generation” and the word “beat” itself is not as easy to deal with as it may seem from the first sight. According to M.J. Poynter’s extended essay *Bukowski and The Beats*, the name of “The Beat Generation” originates in a conversation between Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes in 1948, four years before The New York Times presented Holmes’ article “This is the Beat Generation”. The article explained the word “beat” as a word for rawness, wear, yet nakedness of mind and soul. The same is also claimed by Allen Ginsberg in the foreword to “The Beat Book” edited by Ann Charters. He explains that Herbert Huncke was the one who introduced the later Beat Generation to the underground culture of the Times Square and signaled them to the word “beat”. There and then the phrase “Man, I’m beat,” [meant to be] without money and without a place to stay.” The word “beat” was also “interpreted in various circles to mean emptied out, exhausted, and at the same time wide-open and receptive to vision.” (The Beat Book foreword xiii-xiv) Kerouac himself used the word “beat” as a characteristic of Dean Moriarty in his novel *On the Road* and by “The Beat

Generation” he sees strongly dissatisfied young people. Poynter further elaborates in his essay, that: “The Beats regarded society as suffering from a collective psychosis where symptoms had manifested themselves in the form of the Cold War. Feeling alienated from their own country, The Beats held a romantic notion of rediscovering America in an attempt to find self-satisfaction through writing, traveling and experimentation with drugs, alcohol and Eastern religion, in an attempt to find spiritual fulfillment.” (24-25)

The new generation started to invite controversy as a normal way of expressing themselves against the establishment. Although the core of The Beats had met in college or thanks to college relations, they aimed out of the academic style of literature to the flow language and improvisation inspired by jazz, expressionism, and spontaneity. The search for the meaning of life and life itself were the subjects of their experiment, not just the language and literature. They used a lot of different means helping them in the search such as art, drugs, different experiments in sexuality and also new or newly discovered religions, briefly called together as a new way of living, new lifestyle. Irrespective of the relatively short period of The Beats reigning on the cultural throne, they influenced different types of arts and various cultural layers coming after them. (Weidman xi-xiii)

As Ginsberg wrote, The Beats were fond of using drugs not just for the sake of running away from the reality they did not like. They saw it as a way of education or getting to know the real world, which helped the discussion about drugs to be led. “Our interest in psychedelic substances as educational tools, particularly marijuana, mushrooms, and LSD, led to a more realistic approach to drug laws, recognizing that tobacco and alcohol are physically more destructive than all other drugs except cocaine. Thus, the junk problem should be decriminalized and medicalized...” (The Beat Book foreword xvi)

Among the most important figures of The Beat Generation movement should definitely be enlisted Jack Kerouac (1922-69), Allen Ginsberg (1926-97), William S. Burroughs (1914-97), Neal Cassady (1926-68), Lucien Carr (1925-2005), Gregory Corso (1930-2001), and also Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919-). They all belong to nearly the same generation, although they had quite large

age differences between them. Particularly there was a 16-year gap between the oldest key figure of William S. Burroughs, born in 1914, and the youngest key figure of Gregory Corso, born in 1930, which could be considered as a half-generation gap.

The Beat writers were unconventional in not just their personal lives, but also in their style of writing. They refused the “traditional” values to become more sensitive, spontaneous and free in style which resembled the jazz. Allen Ginsberg’s *A Definition of the Beat Generation* can be seen as the real manifesto of the group. However, Burroughs saw the continuity in the same ideas, not in the literature itself. Yet the freeness or spontaneity is felt both in beat poetry and prose, poetic free verse was widely used by Allen Ginsberg and “spontaneous prose” was present in Jack Kerouac’s works. (Weidman 19-20)

Also, according to Weidman’s elaboration on The Beat Generation there were other common characteristics of them. For example, working together on one piece of work, or in other words collaboration, was well known to Beat writers. Autobiographical features used both in prose and poetry were present in their works. Both phenomena were going straight against the before used traditional formal modernism. The then typical values based on well-to-do middle class were openly rejected by The Beats. Even though the core of The Beats had met in the college or thanks to acquaintances made by it, they saw colleges as factories for the same-thinking “nonidentities”, something what Kerouac used in his *The Dharma Bums*. The above-mentioned freedom in writing style mingled with life itself, because The Beats’ vision of nature of living was also filled with freedom or openness. That is the reason for wandering around the country, trying to find something new, some real individual experience, nothing presented by others beforehand. This is the link made between classical tramp hobo literature and The Beat Generation presented in the Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*. The wandering across the country also helped the ecological thoughts to be introduced to wider population. And of course, the religious thoughts must not to be omitted, because the whole Beat Generation opened the door to the Eastern religions, specifically to Buddhism and Zen, both teaching calmness of a mind. (19-28)

Material base of the typical Beat was not usually that out of a wealthy one. Just like Charles Bukowski, they were rather switching one low-paid job for another, or even living on welfare, both most likely in order not to support the well spread consumerism, obsession with possessions and aimless working for people, institutions or companies which, in fact, the people did not like. Their lifestyle became their main protest against the establishment and society. They were scraping along just in order not to become a part of the consumer society. The places where they lived were witnesses of their lifelong opposition to institutionalism and horrifying “molochlike” society.

On the other hand, The Beats, as they were crawling for more openness, they were explorers in the drug usage field, even though many people think that drugs are more connected to the successive hippie movement. The drugs were such a daily occurrence that most of The Beat Generation core works were written on some performance enhancers. For example, William S. Burroughs’ novels are typical representations of the addict themed works since they were written mostly about his personal experiences with drug use.

Among the most widely used drugs with which The Beats experimented were: Benzedrine, marijuana, morphine, different psychedelics of chemical and biological origin and of course common cause of addiction, alcohol. Kerouac was well known for his alcoholism, which caused his lethal hemorrhages. Burroughs experimented with nearly every then available drug, more specifically he used marijuana, amphetamines, opioids, and hallucinogens, because of which he even searched for the old native peoples’ drugs like Peyote cactus and travelled to South America to get to know the now famous ayahuasca or yage, hence the name of the collaborative work by him and Ginsberg *The Yage Letters* (1963).⁴ On the top of this, Burroughs was an on-and-off heroin addict. He once said in a TV interview that “...the experience I had, that’s described in ‘Junkie’, later led to my subsequent books like ‘Naked Lunch’. So, I don’t regret it [using heroin]. Incidentally, the damage to health is minimal – no matter what the American Narcotics Department may say.” (cited in Weidman 169)

⁴ loosely based on Weidman 26-27, 167-174

Jack Kerouac is sometimes “referred to as the ‘Father of The Beat Generation’” (Weidman 2). That may be because he was at the very beginnings of the movement at Columbia University where he met the other key figures. His friend Lucien Carr had introduced him to Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Nevertheless, Jack Kerouac is considered an icon or exemplary member of The Beat literary movement not only because of his brilliant masterpiece novel *On the Road* (1957). His other writings are also included in the golden fund of The Beats. Works like *The Dharma Bums* (1958), *The Subterraneans* (1958), *Doctor Sax* (1959) *Maggie Cassidy* (1959), *Big Sur* (1962) and *Desolation Angels* (1965) need not have to be omitted. His works are primarily based on his own experiences and just the change of names and a bit of shaping pushed them away from the core autobiographies. On the top of it, Kerouac himself explains in his note to “Big Sur” that his work “comprises one vast book like Proust’s except that my remembrances are written on the run instead of afterwards in a sick bed.” (cited in Weidman 21-22) Therefore, it is obvious from this statement that Kerouac was using his own experiences throughout his whole writing career. At the end of his life Jack Kerouac, who besides prose also wrote poetry, did not have the luck of Charles Bukowski and died in 1969 of hemorrhages after heavily drinking for years. Although he passed away just on the brink of the time when The Beats were contributing to the process of recasting their thoughts into the hippie movement, he influenced many young people and gently forced them to travel around the States and keep finding their own way of life. This is most probably the reason why Weidman stated in his book “The Beat Generation FAQ” that the process of finding how to live is fundamentally the most important idea of The Beats. And that the biggest difference between The Beats and the Lost Generation that emerged after the World War I. was searching for the meaning and purpose of life itself after so much pain, deaths and consequences of the war. (53)

Another influential Beat writer, mostly poet with a very innovative style of writing, was Allen Ginsberg, the most visible member, speaker, and advocate of the drug use and the whole Beat movement. He once wrote to *Gargoyle* magazine that “Poetry is not an expression of the party line. It’s that time of

night, lying in bed, thinking what you really think, making the private world public, that's what the poet does." (cited in Weidman 102) And the inner self expressed in not just poetry but also prose is so common in the literature of the time, especially in case of the Beats and Bukowski too.

Allen Ginsberg was born to second-generation Russian-Jewish immigrants, and most probably he was searching for his true self through the whole lifetime. As it was mentioned above, he met other two Beatnik icons at the Columbia University thanks to his friend Lucien Carr. Following his willingness to any controversy he became involved in many public events where he read, sang or just "ohmed". Being publicly known, was like being in his element and he loved to be controversial and being admired for it. Maybe all that resulted in a publicized trial caused by the publication of his famous poem *Howl* and paradoxically, helped him win the freedom to expression. After living for some time in the famous Beat Hotel in Paris, he came back and created the bridge from The Beat Generation to hippie counterculture with friends Timothy Leary, Ken Kesey and the group of Merry Pranksters. He was strongly against any war and he advocated for the usage of drugs and new religions in order to find the enlightenment with the same keenness. Rich Weidman cites in his book Kenneth Rexroth's comment from his *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, that "Ginsberg is the only one of his immediate associated who outgrew the nihilistic alienation of The Beat Generation and moved on to the positive counter-culture which developed in the Sixties." (5)

Appreciated by friends and admirers of his kind of writing, yet also introvert and rather a loner, was the third most important Beat, William S. Burroughs. He was the oldest Beatnik and Bukowski was making indirect fun of him for his wealthy family, because of his grandfather's invention of the adding machine. Burroughs tried perhaps all the then available drugs, became an addict, and wrote his famous novel about the experiences of an addict named *Junkie*. He was constantly dropping on and off the addiction. He was a prolific author, also wrote a very famous and controversial novel *Naked Lunch*, yet, according to Weidman, apart from writing and using various drugs he had many different interests and could be easily seen as a Renaissance man.

Weidman also mentions that Burroughs lived for some time in the famous Beat Hotel, then he rather chose to live in “The Bunker” without any window, and finally he found himself in a stone farmhouse. Despite that, he was not avoiding company completely and on the top of it all he appeared in some movie roles and did advertisements for Nike. (7) The way he lived and the places where he lived seem to be silent witnesses of his never-ending search for himself and the purpose of life, a common feature of the whole Beat movement.

The Beat Generation is the pivotal theme of a diploma thesis by Ms. Veronika Badinová defended in 2015 in Brno. She looked at this movement from the point of view of culturology and investigated if The Beat Generation movement was a counterculture. She brought many arguments for and against which resulted in a statement that it was. Among the most obvious arguments for were: the environment in which The Beats lived was penetrated with petty crimes and the loud and public disagreement with the mainstream society. The disagreement with the society of the day was mainly manifested in the requirement of the truth, which was nearly impossible to reach at the times of growing bureaucracy. The Beats were also strongly against any race and minority intolerance, and as counterstrike, they publicized unconventional relationships and buried the traditional look of a family. (68-71)

The above mentioned are the facts which prove that they disagreed with the mainstream society on overall attitudes. They also violated the conventions of the time in order to point out the problems. Ginsberg, for example, criticized the establishment quite profoundly in his famous poem *Howl*. According to Weidman, Ginsberg’s intentionally included features in this poem were: “obscene language, the frank depiction of homosexuality and reference to drug use and criminality” (92) All of these are typical manifestations of the rebelling youngsters altogether with going insane because of the society heading to the more mechanized, industrialized one. That is the vivid portrayal of the big robotlike Moloch, our society which is going to be eaten by itself.

Also, having in mind that all three above mentioned Beat writers were connected to homosexual desires, it is obvious that they were openly against the traditional view of a family. It is widely spread that Ginsberg was living with his partner Peter Orlovski. Jack Kerouac had a very close relationship with Neal Cassady, yet with no evidence that it was sexual, however, he lived for some time together with him and his wife Carolyn. And even though William Burroughs was more attracted to women, he did not also incline to traditional marriage and family because the marriage with his second “wife” was not formalized and she lived with him as his common-law wife.

Thus, it is evident that The Beats were a part of the counterculture which later became so famous that even Bukowski considered them as being a new mainstream.

3.2 Overall or common writing approach

There is no doubt The Beats shared not only the rejection of the previous and the then current mainstream, or middle-class values and lifestyle, but also the desire for the spontaneous and free style of writing and literature itself. From the very beginning, it seemed that The Beats might be romantic dreamers influenced firstly by jazz and later by eastern religions and drugs. “A Definition of The Beat Generation” appeared in 1982 in *Friction* No. 1 and “summarized the “essential effects” of The Beat Generation as: spiritual liberation, sexual revolution, liberation of the world from censorship, demystification, and/or decriminalization of cannabis and other drugs, evolution of rhythm and blues into rock and roll as a high art form, spread of ecological consciousness, respect for land and indigenous people and creatures, opposition to the military-industrial machine civilization, and the developments of a “second religiousness” within an advanced civilization.” (cited from Weidman 19) Although it may seem that The Beats had a common program of creation, it was not so and even William S. Burroughs himself admitted in an interview with *New Letters* in 1986, that “The Beat movement was more sociological than literary. Of course, the Beat writers have something in common, but not

a great deal from a literary point of view, despite a certain continuity of ideas.”
(cited from Weidman 19)

The cravenness for the total freedom in creating led to the kind of real picturing of the world around them with its inner and outer obscenity and low-life including the above-mentioned drug use, as well as to the propagation of homosexual orientation and petty thieving too. The Ginsberg’s “Howl” is the perfect example of it as long as it includes everything mentioned concentrated in one vast poem. You can also find autobiographical features there because of references to personal experiences, like his Blakean vision, friends and other Beats, and his mother. This, together with description and advocacy for drug use, which were also common among the Beats, created the perfect example of the Beat literature out of this poem.

Either way, the most common feature of The Beats’ writing was the spontaneity and freedom. They needed to feel that they can write whatever they wanted, irrespective of any controversy or obscenity. Ginsberg became a fond user of free verse, which was even more prominent thanks to his natural voice and freely expressed ideas. This kind of freedom also spread into prose in Jack Kerouac’s appreciated theory of “spontaneous prose”. It seems that this followed the modernist “stream of consciousness” style of writing. It is partially true because it is based on the writer’s free will to write whatever he or she wants.

4 Bukowski's short stories – the characterization of the examples

4.1 The Most Beautiful Woman in Town – a collection

This is a collection of short stories of very different kinds. Originally, it was a part I of *Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions and Other General Tales of Ordinary Madness* from 1972, “which reprinted columns from Open City and Los Angeles Free Press, as well as stories written for sex magazines, that John Martin [his publisher in Black Sparrow Press] rejected.” (Miles 227) Yet, the vast book of stories was later split into two smaller books of stories, *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* being one and the *Tales of Ordinary Madness* another.

The attitude of M.J. Poynter which fairly sums up the facts mentioned in previous chapters cannot be omitted. It claims that: “Bukowski has successfully based his writing on a combination of reworked personal experiences and myth, creating a carefree and self-destructive attitude towards life. As a solitary writer of drunkenness, vomiting, and despair, Bukowski's tales of ordinary madness have inspired many readers to recognize a sense of heroism within their everyday lives.” (16) And here he was for so many readers through the times, presenting the low-life without masking the harshness of it.

This attitude could be undoubtedly extended to the whole of Bukowski's writing because it seems that mainly the theme of everyday heroism is something that attracts so many readers even nowadays. We all need a kind of redemption from the conformity and Buk provided us with his cynic, black humorous point of view which helps its readers to smile in situations which are normally distressing and serious. Maybe we, as his readers and admirers, just need to know that there once was somebody more depressed, more insane, more powerless than us, who just went through life and withstood it with a mocking smirk on his face.

4.2 Content

There are 30 short stories of various length and topics in this collection. They are written in ich-form and er-form as well, in other words, some stories are presented from the point of view of the main character, the narrator, some stories are presented as a narrated story of someone different from the main character. As usual, they are partly autobiographical and concern the typical Bukowski's themes and features just like the L.A. bars, alcohol, sex, horse races and more or less realistic depictions of violence and brutality. Hereafter are mentioned some of the stories with the author's personal analysis and opinion.

4.2.1 The Most Beautiful Woman in Town

The Most Beautiful Woman in Town is story of a young girl, who, although being very beautiful, does not like it. A storyteller is an unspecified man who meets Cass, the young girl about whom the story is about, and makes her his girlfriend. Yet, he never understands her willingness to hurt herself, even though he seems to be horrified by it. Nevertheless, he is inactive and somehow cold in revealing emotions, which disables him from soothing her and it all ends tragically. The young beautiful lady in the story kills herself and the man is accusing himself of her death at the end. Yet, he stays somehow frozen, maybe because he knows there is nothing to do since she is dead.

The bar theme, Bukowski's typical one, is present in this story as well. The meeting of a woman in a bar seems to resemble Hank's real meeting of his first partner Jane Cooney Baker. Even the sentence: "What the hell difference does it make?" (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 3), which Cass used as a response to the storyteller's question about her name during their intercourse, is most probably the same sentence Jane used herself, as it is mentioned in Sounes biography of Bukowski (29) Therefore, Bukowski's typical usage of the personal experiences appeared as the basis of the story, a usual feature of any autobiographical writing. He wrote nearly everything with autobiographical features in it the same way the Beat writers did. That is their common approach to creating literature out of their own life experiences.

Typical Bukowski is describing the relationship between a man and a woman from the point of view of the bottom of the society, where no ideals exist. There are no romantic feelings, no big gestures, no long mournings of death, because life is too hard and too short. Bukowski is not seeing and describing anything less than the doomed reality of the poor people, that is the main difference between him and The Beats, as they were always searching for something more, for some redemption. Yet, Bukowski is writing in a way, that there simply cannot be anything else than just the poor life. That is what also Duval mentions in his book *Bukowski and the Beats*, that there still is a big difference between Kerouac, The Beats and Bukowski. The Beat Generation believed that they were the bards of the new era. Kerouac was headed to the God, somewhere, where the paradise should be. He believed his wanderers were of higher thoughts and ideas and on the top of it he called The Beats as the angel generation. For him there always was a potential fullness behind the emptiness, in other words, he saw the glass half-full instead of half-empty. His work is imbued with kindness, happiness and heart beating. On the other side there was Bukowski, considering himself as describing the grotesque and bad side of the reality, picturing the ugly just as Hieronymus Bosch would. (103) Even more appealing is the inner criticism of society in this story. The storyteller, by extension Bukowski himself, describes the main protagonist Cassy with many superlatives even though he is indicating that the society was not treating Cassy in a good way and rather they hated her. Mostly women hated her because of her beauty; it was an act of jealousy. It is likely that this kind of behavior was typical then and beautiful young ladies were treated as if they were taking advantages of their beauty and there was nothing more than the surface. It can be seen as a metaphor of the whole society, which was built upon the surface and gloss. This theme intertwines with nearly the whole collection of the stories.

An interesting cultural note about this story is that it was also used as the basis for Marco Ferrari's 1981 film *Tales of Ordinary Madness* starring Ben Gazzara, an American actor, as a poet Charles Serking. And though Hank was initially glad that someone was willing to shoot his story, he was later disgusted by the outcome. He became very angry because it did not meet his

expectations and saw the movie as being completely out of his world and way of thinking. (according to Sounes 195-197)

4.2.2 Life in a Texas Whorehouse

This short story is most probably based on Hank's personal experience from a Texas town Forth Worth mentioned by Miles (64). It concerns Hank's living in a very cheap room of a whorehouse and wanting to meet a girl with whom he traveled by bus headed to New Orleans, yet who left the bus before him. He went his own way, however later he returned to the Texas town where she left the bus and tried to contact the girl via the local newspaper.

Although their meeting resulted in nothing rather than a happy ending, which should be exactly the same way as it happened in reality, something very interesting is in the story. It is the use of Bukowski's own name. He appears there as himself, as a writer, not as his usual alter-ego or character named Henry Chinaski, a barfly and a brawler. Bukowski dared to use his real name there, something that for example Kerouac was not allowed to do, because he was made to change the names in all of his works on the requests of his publisher. (The Beat Generation FAQ 21)

Either way, the theme of the cheap small room and an unspecified bar follows the typically used ones of Buk's works, even though the situations here were not going in his favor, unlike the Chinaski's stories. Irrespective of the good consequences and conclusions for the mostly used protagonist Chinaski, Bukowski is familiar to the depiction of the bad or even evil side of the society. This and the above-mentioned themes were something unfamiliar to The Beats because, according to Weidman, they were usually using an entirely different theme of hope for redemption from the displeasing situation via the teachings of Zen Buddhism, or they were describing the world around under the influence of drugs. (19-28) Therefore according to the temporal state after the usage of drugs, they were describing it differently, yet definitely from a better point of view than Bukowski.

Nevertheless, Bukowski's attitude towards fighting in a war against Hitler is also mentioned in the story, and it seems to be his real personal opinion. More specifically, he was not willing to take a part in such a military conflict at all, even though he admired the German dictator. Having been born in Germany he somehow felt the need to promote the thoughts of his fatherland. The admiration of Hitler might be rooted in his mother's attitudes toward the dictator, as Miles wrote in his biography, because she openly admired him at the beginning. Still, Buk's father was strictly against Germany and Hitler and propagated the American way of thinking, something what a young man might revolt against. (40) Also, Bukowski acknowledged the reality of not passing the draft for the war in the story. The root cause of this is mentioned in Sounes' biography of Bukowski and it was the fact that he did not pass the psychiatric test. (21)

This story follows the theme of mocking the society. This time it is mostly connected to criticism of women and their different behavior. Their manners seem to be confusing to Bukowski because he usually assesses all of them being the same and wanting a sexual intercourse. He is full of prejudices, most likely because he usually gets in contact with the women who are of the more willing ones. Therefore, it appears that he misunderstood a girl weeping on a bus, by which they went the same direction and travels back to her hometown following the vision of their affair. However, she was actually weeping over his ugly appearance. Nevertheless, the prejudices are mentioned there more times. Most visible are the prejudices of the editor of the local newspaper concerning Bukowski living in a whorehouse, as he is asking why he lives there. Buk might aim to show how much the society of the time was stringent by the ideas of the middle-class, the mainstream, yet the lowest classes were living differently.

4.2.3 The Fuck Machine

There is a bunch of themes in this rather fantastique story of two men willing to try the new woman-looking machine, invented by a German scientist. Among the usual Bukowski's themes used there were a bar, barflies and

having unusual sexual experiences. Yet the most provocative and appealing theme seems to be the castration-like-end of one of the men, while the other, his friend and an unspecified storyteller, was watching it.

The fantasy of castration is not Bukowski's common theme, because it is used only once in this collection of short stories. Yet, it is such an interesting theme that even his biographer Barry Miles investigated this urge of picturing such a kind of violence to a man and his manliness. He sees it as Buk's castration complex which is something like a culmination of his inability to express love, as well as jealousy and the power which women seem to have over him because of his feelings towards them. (Miles 101-102) From this point of view it just seems that Hank was afraid of women because of their power and control of him. Either way, also according to Miles, Hank used the theme of castration several times in his poems and short stories, e.g. poem *True Story* and story *No Way to Paradise*. Thus, it is clear, that the metaphor of castration is not uniquely used in this story and more or less it might reveal an inner problem of Bukowski.

It is also inevitable to know the writer's own words concerning this problem:

"I've been wondering about this castration complex of mine. I've written a couple of poems about it too... I think it's more symbolic than actual. In other words, it's... at times we all try to figure out ways to escape the female and the power she has over us. I would never take that route; it's probably a symbolic gesture though. It's the only thing I could think of at those moments, you see, of frustration and panic and dominance and loss. It just happens to my characters." (from the interview done by Douglas Howard in 1975 and cited in Miles 102)

But the above-mentioned theme seems not to be the only one interesting in the story. Although Hank himself said that "faith is all right for those who have it. Just don't load it on me. I have more faith in my plumber than I do the eternal being." (Bukowski on Bukowski), his storyteller of this piece is wondering "where do men go when they die...". (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 35) On top of it, the storyteller mentions the human spirit and true

self, both things more typical of Beat writers than Bukowski himself, especially at his times of being barfly. That can be said, because of the chapter above about Bukowski's life, where it is clearly stated that he inclined to a spiritual life at the brink of his last years. Obviously, the thoughts of the era that there is something more than just living mundane lives, penetrated furthermore into literature.

Another very interesting feature of this story is the stoic calm with which the protagonist is taking the whole situation, a friend's death of ripped genitals, intercourse with a fabricated woman and even with a plastic "woman". Someone could see it as a meditative way of living like nothing could really throw him off balance, yet in Hank's way, it should have something to do with the crazy childhood which taught him to be tough and even emotionally frozen. That is utterly different from the meditative, stoic calm of eastern religions which The Beats appreciated.

The story is a way of mixing the attitudes of the era, of The Beats and Bukowski's own. It was something that also might be mixing in the real persons' attitudes; the desire for a better self is mixed up with the disgust of the world around and yearning not to be a part of it, to disappear from the mainstream life. According to it this story perfectly fit in Bukowski's way of dialogue with the world around.

4.2.4 The Gut-Wringing Machine

The sixth short story in the collection may seem to be as fantastique as the previous one, yet a bit more far-fetched. It is concerned with two main characters, friends working together for a long time in an agency providing perfect employees whom they wrung their gut out before. They do it in order to make people perfectly prepared for the American way of living as a never-ending hunt for more work in order to have more money, more estates, and more luxury for the sake of building their American dream.

It seems Bukowski used his imagination about how the system of the "normal" American life is sucking out everything from the people. From one point of

view the agency seems to be helping the people to fulfill the life they would like to have, yet on the other hand, they are stripped of their rank, their own true self, their freedom of will. Obviously, this is once more a proof of something strongly similar of Buk and The Beats, as long as they all appreciated not being a part of the mainstream and revolting against it, but each in their own way. Bukowski preferred to stay in the society and try to fight with the inconveniences, yet The Beats were more or less supporters of leaving the society they did not like. In a simplified way, Bukowski was like the boxer fighter who is afraid that the opponent could kill him, yet who knows that there is no other life for him, so he fights tooth and nail. On the other hand, there were The Beats, who gave the impression of rebelling good boys who just would like to live in a different way than the mainstream. They gave up any heavy fighting; they rather chose to amuse themselves.

Irrespective of the very funny ending where one of the main characters Danforth squeezes a bit more gut out of his friend Bagley than promised, just because "It's fine for the blues or for extemporaneous thinking." (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 54) However, more interesting in this story are the other characters standing a bit aside of the main two. The characters of Herman Telleman and Barney Anderson appear there first as pictures of a beat like thinking persons who are not willing to work and who are deeply appreciating rebels as heroes. After they are "properly" wrung again, they appreciate work for the state, believe in it, God, family, establishment etc. They even like policemen and consumer lifestyle. The present issue is the criticism of the mainstream society and their values. The story shows with the aid of exaggeration how much is the middle-class blind because of the never-ending hunt for more estates. However, it does not improve the lives of the employees but the employer and establishment itself, that is the pungency of the whole depicted mankind.

As it was mentioned above, this story seems to be another example of mixing the attitudes of the era and generation from which The Beats and Buk came. The readers may have a contradictory feeling of works like this. Somehow it is disgusting that anybody is overusing his power and creating sheep-like

people without inner self and personal opinion, on the other hand, this story might be a criticism of the typical American mainstream way of life when some people are abusing the masses. So, an inattentive reader might find it difficult to catch whether Buk endorsed this way of living, however more obviously the story is an example of criticism through showing up the exaggerated reality. It looks like the Bukowski's way of anti-utopia.

4.2.5 3 Women and 3 Chickens

Both these stories are likely to be rewritten experiences of the life with Hank's first partner Jane Cooney Baker, yet the second one might probably be just a story of someone else which Hank reused as their mutual experience.

The opening of the story *3 Women* should be a personal experience, as long as it is remembered in both Sounes' and Miles' biographies. (Sounes 30 and Miles 98) It concerns a body falling past a window and Jane's vomiting after seeing the death on the ground. Something that Hank himself commented on in the story as being usual at places like the hotel of the story. Also, another part of this story, the narration about two (or three) other women with them in an apartment has a kind of real basis. Miles mentions the probability of Jane living with other women in one house belonging to a man named Willie or Wilbur. They were regularly going to stay on his yacht before she met Hank and slightly at the beginning of their relationship. Once, when they all were on the yacht with Hank, the owner was not in a good mood and left. (97) There and then the story of him sleeping with all of Jane's friends may have happened, but, of course, it could be just his imagination or wishful thinking. However, the same story is also used as a part in Buk's novel *Factotum* (49-60), only with a slight change of names because in *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* he is addressed as Mr. Bukowski and in *Factotum* he is already Henry Chinaski. Also, as usual, the female protagonist is named by differently, first she is addressed as Linda and then in *Factotum* as Laura and her friends also changed from Jeanie and Eve to Grace and Jerry. This reveals and confirms Bukowski's typical re-usage of the same stories, something that is not known about the Beat writers.

Probably the most important and impelling feature of the story of *3 Chickens* is the picaresque depiction of Hank's cohabitation with his girlfriend. Again, it surely should be his fellow Jane, because their relationship was one of the most described in his writings and also it was both the most vivid and cruel relationship he had with a woman. Two themes which most probably appeared in their mutual life are mentioned in the story, since it is described in Miles biography (100-101) and in Buk's novel *Factotum*.

The first situation of Bukowski coming to the bar angry and slapping his girlfriend out of a bar stool is more presumably to be his own experience because of many colorful descriptions of his difficult relationship with Jane from different sources. In the collection of stories relevant to this thesis, she is called Vicke, yet in *Factotum* she is Jan. Nevertheless, it could be found, that Hank probably really knock-outed her of a bar stool when she was flirting with another man. The other theme is of lifting the Murphy's bed with Hank's girlfriend in it, because of her never-ending argumentative assaults that caused her arm to fracture also looks like to be Hank's own.

Yet his biographer Miles tends to think that Hank was not really that type of women tormenter, and rather sees this as a reused story of some of his friends or an exaggerated one of his own. Miles further elaborates that the fact that Hank hated women in reality and in his literature might be caused by his drinking. Most importantly Miles elaborates on the fact that Hank was confused about the feelings he had towards women, especially jealousy and feeling of such strong attraction, which, as he feared, were his big problems. Miles presumes that this was the root problem of not expressing love properly, trivialization and even negation of any feelings. (101)

This all may be rooted in Hank's abusive childhood. He considered the unexpressed feelings of his mother, as he described them in his novel *Ham on Rye* (e.g 33-35) as if she did not have any passion for him. Also, being set aside at school because of his acne, may have created feelings of alienation from the whole world and especially with girls and women, who preferred good-looking boys and men. (also used in *Ham on Rye* 131-136) It seems that even though he loved women and they loved him, he was scared of such

manipulating feelings and rather preferred to wipe them out or drown them down in alcohol and through speaking and writing.

4.2.6 Twelve Flying Monkeys Who Won't Copulate Properly

The unusually called story is narrated from the point of view of the main protagonist, most probably Charles Bukowski himself because he is called here "Hank" by a friend, a common name his friends were using when referring to him. Also, the plot confirms that the narrator and the main character is Bukowski. It revolves around the struggles of the protagonist with writing a story about twelve monkeys in order to earn some money by publishing it. Yet, the writing process is constantly being interrupted by a group of men. They simply cannot be considered as friends because he only knows one of them and he is not happy at all to have them in his home, and even tells the one he knows: "Look, Jack, I thought I was rid of you." (84)

The plot is as simple as a description of Bukowski's normal experience could be. The author is struggling to write something and he is thinking about the story of twelve monkeys over and over again, something representing an urgent idea of any writer to write something particular, which is obviously not working. Then there is another story of an unwanted visitors coming to Hank's, the writer, home. A disliked friend of his, Jack, retells the experiences from the Venice Beach, where he had a lot of multicolored pills, most probably a kind of amphetamine, panicking thinking there could be some policemen and running with a girl of him into the house of a mutual friend of Jack and Hank. The plot seems to be restlessly interrupted by inner thoughts, further descriptions of the narrator, which are making an impression of the narrator coworking with the reader, as if he was introducing the persons to the readers and then the plot goes straight back to the "reality". Later the unwanted guests finally leave Hank's place and after a short time their mutual friend Borst calls. He is sick of living in Florida and would like to travel a bit because he had lost his sponsors. The story is concluded with a description of a boat trip with young kids who persuaded Hank that they know each other from a party and he promised them going on a boat together. They consider

him to be a great author, but Hank is sick and even vomits twice. The inner game of the story with the reader is concluded with the idea of future Hank drinking bourbon in Hollywood by the time somebody would be reading the story. Then there is phantasmagoric idea of the company on the boat heading to Ireland or Japan, which is simply closed with a brilliant sentence degrading the whole story: "To hell with it." (The Most Beautiful Woman 88)

The narrator is full of doubts and urges himself to write something good, something obscene that would earn him money. He is constantly thinking about his leaving from normal work at a post office, where he should have stayed. That is something that was definitely a description of Bukowski's own thoughts approximately at the time immediately after leaving the monotonous work in order to dedicate himself completely to literature. His determination claiming that a good story needs to be controversial, not even phantasmagoric, is sometimes very amusing because it is such an obvious depiction of Bukowski's own reality, even though exaggerated or a bit far-fetched. However, it was him, his fans and admirers who have been appreciating it for ages. It was something like his own brand or trade mark.

Nevertheless, there are other persons mentioned in the story, or to be more precise in one of the stories, since the short story consists of two intertwined stories. The process of writing the story of twelve monkeys is one part and the story of the writer and his unwanted guests is another connected together by his later trip with unknown kids on the boat. Hank is also describing some personal details of his friends "Crazy Jack" and Borst. Both of them resemble more or less the representatives of The Beat Generation. The personality of Crazy Jack arouses an impression of being Jack Kerouac himself. It is not just because of depiction of the same name, which would be quite unusual in case of Bukowski's writing, but more because of his living with mother, drinking wine and using so called "rainbows", which was a nickname for multicolored pill, most probably a kind of amphetamine. Kerouac was known for living with his mother, even though it was not at the beginning of his writing career and more importantly Jack was not supported by her, more likely it was vice versa They lived together during the last few years of

Kerouac's life, mainly because she once had a stroke and became invalid, yet they also shared a wonderful relationship between them, even though his biographies described it in an utterly opposite way - as a relationship of an overprotective mother and a son who could not stand her. (Weidman 216-217) Kerouac's fondness of drinking, especially grown up after publishing "On the Road" was known as well. Later it developed into heavy addiction to alcohol and finally led to his death caused by bleeding ulcers. The only thing not certain about Kerouac in connection to the mentioned descriptions by Bukowski was the usage of other drugs than marihuana. According to Weidman's book "The Beat Generation FAQ" Kerouac wrote while on Bensedrine, marijuana and alcohol, but there is no evidence of him using anything like amphetamines or LSD, even though he was connected to Merry Pranksters, an anarchic group actively promoting the advantages of using drugs wandering across the states in their psychedelic bus. (167-171)

Also, the features of Hank and Jack's mutual friend called Borst resemble the features of a Beat writer. There is again mentioned the support of a mother and a fixed idea that he is simply doing nothing more than watching TV, eating and jogging. This coalescence with Bukowski's attitude towards the whole Beat Generation movement was based on his thought that they had never come to know the reality of the working-class people, for which they would like to write. Jean-Francois Duval describes it in his book *Bukowski and the Beats* as the fatal gap between Bukowski's reality of the working environment experienced during the long years of low-paid jobs and then maybe even longer period of routine at the post office, an idea of hell on one hand, and the light-minded Beats living somewhere between the middle- and lower-classes, not simply belonging to any of them on the other. (Duval 24-25)

The reality that they did not know the same bottom of the society as Bukowski did, made him maybe crazy, maybe jealous and he rather made it up in a simpler way, that they were just supported by somebody. The depiction of the representatives of the contemporary art may have a deeper meaning in criticism of the society and the underground to which it gave rise. It is

because the marginals are always somehow shaped by the mainstream, within the meaning that the marginals revolt against the mainstream. However, Bukowski was most likely revolting against everything, because The Beast seemed to him as if they did not know the true society and its problems. He kept true to an old proverb: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." and for him, it seemed that he really did the same as the other lowest of the society, yet he did not believe The Beats and rather thought that they were just pretending it.

4.2.7 The Birth, Life, and Death of an Underground Newspaper

The longest one of the stories embodied in the collection concerns Bukowski's experiences in contributing to an underground journal called *Open Pussy*. To the readers who know Hank's biography, it is clear that this story is about Hank's contributions to the *Open City* newspaper. That was the piece for which he wrote his famous short stories column *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*, which is mentioned in the story under the same name. Yet, the newspaper owners in this story, Joe Hyans and his wife Cherry, could seem to the readers to be the real owners and printers of the *Outsider* magazine, Jon and Gypsy Lou Webb, which were, however, dedicated to poetry, not prose columns.

Yet they also could imply the real publisher of the *Open City* John Bryan and his wife Joan. This is definitely the correct outlook, because as it is revealed later, it was written about John Bryan and the *Open City*. Even more, it exposed that nearly all of it was true, as also Miles has reminded in his biography. There is also cited John Bryan's attitude towards Bukowski: "*We knew the bastard was an asshole but we also knew that he was a GREAT asshole. Bukowski was born lucky. He had endless energy and style. He could produce unimaginable quantities of first-rate prose and poetry at a single sitting. He had a certain loathsome charm. How can we hate a talent like that? ... He betrayed me... What hurt the most was that I went to Bukowski as a friend when I was fighting for my life and what I told him in strict confidence were my most hideous secrets and my darkest nightmares. I*

needed help. I was on the verge of self-destruct. Bukowski laughed and sneered and told the world.” When Hank died, John Bryan concluded with a comment that Bukowski was: “*a great writer and a lousy human being.*” (cited in Miles 173-177)

During the time described in the story Hank was still working for the post office, and as it is truly portrayed there, he was investigated because of the *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* column by the post office manager and even by FBI. Hank overstated there the gap between him representing the working class and the management representing the wellbeing middle class, the manager, and agent who never had to work in low paid jobs in order to live. As it is all elaborated by Miles and used in the story as well, this may be the reason why FBI started to monitor the real newspaper *Open City* with the aim of finding something for a trial against them. Of course, they did and the trial and fees brought the paper as well as John Bryan on its knees and. That was the beginning of the end of one underground newspaper.⁵

Stories like this, which prove to be for the most part true leave, the readers under pressure of a surmise that everything that Buk wrote was so much based on true experience. May it be his inner intention to show just enough stories about which the truth can be proven? Sometimes it seems like he was solely writing what came to his mind, yet occasionally it looked more probable that he was composing the stories on purpose. Spontaneous writing in his case meant that some stories were completely fabricated with just a pinch of the realistic base. Other works were so well based on truth and brilliantly composed, that they could be called “the chronicle of his life”.

Spontaneity and autobiography of a narrative were also connected to The Beats, yet the meaning and purpose of usage were slightly different. They were searching for redemption out of the everyday hardships, but Buk was just picturing the life as it was. The attitudes of the working class towards the deputies are perfectly described in the story, the middle-class well-being people who do not know anything about the real life: “*Only the poor knew the*

⁵ loosely based on Miles 175-177

meaning of life; the rich and the safe had to guess.” (113) These seems to be so-called left-wing attitudes. Also, the names given to other protagonists, the post office manager and an agent from Washington (most probably an FBI agent) follow the mocking attitude towards the establishment. He called them Mr. Los Angeles and Mr. Washington as if they were not humans, but rather the positions in a system, slightly antiutopian version of the traditional Bukowski’s writing. Wonderful protest against the power is represented by the words about the new critics of poetry and the reaction on them: *“Then I asked: ‘Are we to consider the postal officials as the new critics of literature?’ ‘Oh, no no,’ said Mr. Washington, ‘we didn’t mean that.’ I sat and waited. ‘There is a certain conduct expected of postal employees. You are in the Public Eye. You are to be an example of exemplary behavior.’ ‘It appears to me,’ I said, ‘that you are treating my freedom of expression with a resultant loss of employment. The A.C.L.U. might be interested.”* (116-117) However, still it is a very tepid protest, which looks more like a warning that he is not the man, with whom they could treat like dirt.

Yet still, it was just a description of the past reality in which the main protagonist gives the readers impression as if it is not his business. The presented distance between the happenings and the narrator seem to be of importance in the story. The Charles Bukowski of the story is something like an eye of the hurricane, when everywhere else raged the storm. The post office would like to get rid of him because of the newspaper column he was writing and the same paper was on its own way to hell, because of the trial against their writings.

Bukowski is a quiet observer and storyteller of all the happenings, he represents the stoic calm, just waiting for the things to happen around him and to him, yet without him. He behaves as if it needs much more energy than he has, so it appears for him that it is better to wait until the real end. He might be affected by a saying, which states that everything is going to be good in the end, so if it is not good, it is not the end and we have to wait for it. This kind of calmness is more similar to the one important in eastern religions and which Beat writers appreciated. Thus, it appears to be a connecting link

to the contemporary generation, even though The Beats are known for the calm because of the religion and conciliation with the fate, and Buk is more surely calm because of the resignation from any redemption from the bad low life.

4.2.8 Life and Death in the Charity Ward

The story concerns itself with his experience of a bleeding ulcer, a similar health problem which caused Jack Kerouac to die. Bukowski's ulcer was the result of drinking huge amounts of cheap whiskey inducing him with terrible stomach pains, which he ignored and splashed with more and more whiskey. Such an ignorant attitude toward health, some may say, yet maybe it was calculated behavior for the purpose of leaving this world not just temporarily, but definitively. In other words, it could be a slow way of a suicide attempt, as it is elaborated in the chapter about Bukowski's adulthood.

The narration begins in the ambulance full of the same charity cases as Bukowski was at the time. He found himself in a situation where his life was clearly falling apart, which may have been worsened by the fact, that he did not have any blood credit, however at the end it all ended quite happily, because his father did and he gave the permission to give some of this blood to Bukowski Jr. The real threat of a death does not seem to affect Bukowski much because immediately after they released him from the hospital, he went to a bar and drank beers, though then he was more careful about drinking spirits.

Nonetheless, the condition of the health care for the poorest ones is the theme which has the highest appeal to the readers of this story. Bukowski's very realistic depiction of the behavior of medical staff is visible throughout the whole story and it completes the tragic picture of the people on the edge of the society. Even those people have their desires and a serious discussion was opened about allowing a cigarette to Bukowski's deadly ill roommate Harry, who rightfully admitted that: "I'd rather die happy than live in misery." (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 137) This story easily puzzles up into

Bukowski's typical writing concerning the low life unvarnished, something what The Beats did not typically use.

The theme of the criticism of society, which pervades the whole collection, appears again in this story. This time it is depicted as the indifference of the medical staff or even their hatred towards the hopeless cases from the bottom of the society. They behaved just as if the patients were some kind of tiresome insects, not people. The overall conditions of the charity hospital are so alarming that the readers may wonder if it was not a miracle that Bukowski recovered there. And that could be considered his subliminal criticism of the society through the realistic portrayal of the care provided to the poorest ones.

4.2.9 All the Great Writers

Rather ironic title of the story hides a mockery of the would-be writers, who came to the publisher, such as the main character of the story. The pivotal theme of publishing gives an impression of the story being a twin to *The Birth, Life and Death of an Underground Newspaper*, yet this time presented from the point of view of a publisher. Henry Mason, the publisher, assesses the writers and their pieces of work not in the range of well or badly written, he just sees the potential of sales in it because he knows that there are many publishing houses and he needs to be competitive. Other characters are represented by two examples of typical writers going to such publishing houses. James Burkett, a self-confident or even narcissistic minor writer, is not satisfied with a rejection stand on his work because he considers himself to be one of the greatest writers, although the publisher Mason is confident that Burkett's works would not generate him sales. The actuality with which the story is written seems to be rooted in Bukowski's own struggles to publish anything at the beginning of his career. That is something what nearly every writer comes into contact with at the beginning of their career. Not even Jack Kerouac, the later icon of The Beat Generation, came to the spotlights without having been rejected many times, more precisely, as Weidman notes in *The Beat Generation FAQ*, it was Kerouac's literary agent who struggled six years

in order to find a publisher for Jack's masterpiece *On the Road*. (118) This means that Hank's concept that The Beats had it all on a silver platter was misleading, they all struggled to be published at the beginning, mainly because they represented the underground or edgy culture which needed to get among the other people before they could roar.

Even though, Bukowski himself is mentioned in the short story as a writer whose work is already selling even though his writing is poor. What a self-criticism he used there, and he is known for being critical of everyone, even himself. As it is shown in the next chapter, Bukowski critiqued The Beats a lot, even though they had much in common with him. And Mason's thoughts about Burkett and his kind of writers are the perfect example of such criticism: "a bunch of damned extroverts, they were worse than clothing salesmen, brush salesmen..." *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* 148) "those guys were dangerous – absolutely insane and vicious – especially those who were always writing about LOVE or SEX or the BETTER WORLD. *jesus. jesus.*" (*The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* 151) The three marked themes of writing could be seen as the typical ones of The Beat Generation.

The second writer with whom Mason met in the story is Mr. Ainsworth Hockley, a rather "bukowskian" type of a writer as for the themes of unusual sex tales. He had already been published and paid for a story by Mason and he had a new idea for writing. It is a mixture of sci-fi theme because of a ship travelling through space with people and a computer - together on it, and of course the sex theme, which was so popular in those days. That's why Mason sees a potential in publishing such a story and gives Hockley a cheque of advance in exchange for a promise of complete story in a week. Those very tight deadlines were typical for the writers and publishers at the time, Bukowski himself struggled with them not once as it is shown in above mentioned stories *Twelve Flying Monkeys Who Won't Copulate Properly* and *The Birth, Life and Death of an Underground Newspaper*.

To bring the story to its conclusion, Bukowski made the publisher Mason realize that his receptionist is a hot girl and they go on an early lunch together. There in the restaurant the waiter is also an unrevealed writer, who

is frustrated with how many manuscripts he has, yet nobody is publishing them. What a shame that he did not know who he was serving. Perhaps Bukowski is pointing out the wickedness of life, specifically of the lives of writers who need to do low paid job in order not to die and who are writing with no publishing. That is something similar to all the writers on the edge of the mainstream, thus exactly where Bukowski and The Beats were

4.2.10 Politics is like Trying to Screw a Cat in the Ass

This story is presented as a response to a reader's question why Bukowski was not writing about the politics and world affairs. Hank found it so appealing that he wrote a short story about it and explained his attitudes towards the contemporary happenings, something very rare of him. He is explaining zealously why he does not believe in the US government, or governments at all: "the good dream gone, and when that's gone it's all gone. the rest is horseshit games for the Generals and money-makers.... the difference between a Democracy and a Dictatorship is that in a Democracy you vote first and take orders later; in Dictatorship you don't have to waste your time voting." (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 176)

Specifically, he comments on a U.S. bomber fallen from the sky full of H-bombs and the following poor explanation of the Government, even their attempt to let any information about it disappear from the news. Another commented event is taking of U.S. Navy Ship by North Koreans which caused a wave of patriotism and anticommunist attitudes in the American public. Bukowski even suggested that Hitler would be happy about the unstable situation in the world. And he brilliantly depicted the whole situation about the affairs or crisis of the world: "are there good guys and bad guys? some that always lie, some that never lie? are there good governments and bad governments? no, there are only bad governments and worse governments... instant death is nothing new, nor is mass instant death new. but we've improved the product; we've had these centuries of knowledge and culture and discovery to work with; the libraries are fat and crawling and overcrowded with books; great paintings sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars; medical

science is transplanting the human heart; you can't tell a madman from the sane one upon the streets, and suddenly we find our lives, again, in the hands of the idiots." (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 179)

According to Bukowski it is always better for everybody to be responsible for their own lives not other's. He would rather die for prostitutes, horses and drinking than die for Freedom, Democracy and Humanity and other "Bullshit", something that interested The Beats more and then the Hippies movement. It is well known that he is not a fan of the establishment, but more likely a critique of it even though in a different way than The Beats as it is elaborated further in the next chapter about the similarities and differences among Bukowski and The Beats.

This story is again an example of social criticism because it reacts to contemporary issues in a rather mocking way. The brilliantly depicted difference between Democracy and Dictatorship, mentioned above, seems to be Bukowski's straightest counterstrike aimed at the establishment. Also, we can see Bukowski's attitudes towards the army and the whole picture of Americans protecting the lives of the other Americans and nations in the world. He sees the foreign policy as nothing more and nothing less than the "games for the Generals" and he wrote as if the governments and their armies were just pieces on a little boys' playground. Unfortunately, the reality is not so different even nowadays and it is easy to feel like being pushed around by the "players" above us, and Bukowski perfectly understood the situation and portrayed it not just in this story but in most of his writings.

4.2.11 The Fiend

It is inevitable to summarize the plot of this story, even though it is one of those the readers might not prefer because of the used theme of pedophilia. Martin Blanchard, the unemployed protagonist is Bukowski's twin regarding the fact, that he likes drinking and being estranged of the society. Yet Martin later appears to be interested in a small girl playing on the street where he also lives. He is gravely obsessed with her ruffled panties, which makes him aroused and finally leads him to lock himself up in a garage with the little girl

and her two friends, little boys. When the work of destruction is done Martin simply goes back to his apartment, watches the crowd gathering outside and he is found there by cops who beat him up and take him to the station. The ending of the story remains open as if Bukowski did not know how to resolve it.

This Bukowski's story stands out among the others, not just because of the terrible theme of pedophilia, which is a rather provocative stand than the real desire of the author. The story is very unusual because it is so well assembled and organized, that even an occasional reader of Hank's works would notice it. The plot is developing gradually and punctuation is so proper, that it is more than obvious that somebody edited the story before it reached the collection. It might be Hank's publisher John Martin from the Black Sparrow Press. However, the so well-organized structure of the story also may serve there as the artistic feature, more precisely as the total contrast of the content of the story. Yet as long as Buk never gave any attention to the literary features and to punctuation at all, it is more than obvious that the editing was surely done.

As for the theme, sexual act is so much connected to Bukowski's works that it cannot catch the readers off guard, but the specification of the act done on a small girl seems to be too much even in the case of Bukowski. Most likely this is the reason why it was edited in order not to shock so much, although it shallowly smooths the appellate tone. When we would like to connect this to anything similar done by The Beats, it would be a lost battle. Beat writers were controversial, describing homosexual desires which were unusual in those times, yet pedophilia was too much for them. This brings us to the conclusion that Bukowski was even more of a marginal writer than those of The Beat Generation. It perfectly fits him, the lone wolf on the edge of the society, just like the protagonist of this short story: "His desires were simple – he liked to get drunk as much as possible, alone, and he liked to sleep long hours and stay in his apartment, alone... The longer he could remain separated from the human race, the better he felt." (The Most Beautiful Woman in Town 207) This description of the protagonist from the opening of

the story is so fitting that Bukowski needed to write it exactly about himself. Nonetheless, the following happenings of the story are surely not out of his own experiences, because there is no evidence in his biographies about any longing for little girls.

This is probably one of the few short stories that does not deal with criticism of society as such. It would be better to say that it depicts a personal downfall of a middle-aged loner. However, in some way, it represents the downfall of the whole mankind, because of the loose manners everywhere. The disharmony of the form and content, which is also mentioned above, completes the picture of the society which is presented there in accordance with an old proverb "Shiny apples are often rotten inside".

4.2.12 A White Pussy

The very last short story of the collection *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* is one of Bukowski's thematically typical stories concerning a bar and a drunker. The unnamed narrator is most probably Bukowski himself again and he is having a bar conversation with a strange Mexican about a loan he is trying to get from Buk.

The conversation is also intertwined with hints about the temporary political happenings such as assassinations and the Black Revolution, which is something sporadic in Bukowski's works. The Mexican asks the narrator if he thinks that the Blacks are right about their revolution and his answer is probably the most important information of the whole story: "...I think that one of the finest things about the Black Revolution is that they are TRYING; most of us white panty-waists have forgotten how to, including me." (*The Most Beautiful Woman in Town* 239)

Yet, the Blacks are not the only ones whom the narrator appreciated, because also the Mexicans seems to be daring even though the Americans stole their land from them, as the narrator notes in the story. So, it seems that although Bukowski lived with the lowest, poorest ones for the bigger part of his life like a "brother", he still sees the differences between the races.

Nevertheless, he obviously appreciated the struggling poor regardless of their tone of the skin and country of origin. Most probably it is rooted in their cowardice, inability to act and improve their life conditions.

4.3 Summary of the tone of the stories and features of the era

The first-person narration is widely used there in the collection, the third-person one is used more rarely, so the stories bring the overall tone of being parts of one vast memory of the author. Also, as it is obvious from some comments on the stories, many of these were rearranged as for the main character, others changed into Henry Chinaski, the Bukowski's alter ego, and they were used as parts of the writer's novels *Factotum* and *Post Office*.

Personal experiences or tales derived from them create the stable basis for the stories' plots, even though not everything can be proven to have happened in reality and it might be just his inner thoughts or imagination. The cognizant readers know that Hank's biggest desire in writing was to shock his publishers and readers as well. That is why he uses so many controversial themes such as unusual sexual longings, even deviations, and a lot of brutality in his works. Yet, all his writings are comic in a way, because they are depicting the low life of the poorest people and how they deal with their fate. His own attitudes presented in the stories are rather nihilistic, rooted in the feeling that there is no redemption from the bottom, and the comicality is rather bitter, when your smile is more a grimace than a result of pleasant happiness.

Among the most used themes surely belonged sex acts of different kinds and jobs, or rather the unemployment of the protagonists and their dealing with the lack of money. Bukowski's attitudes towards the Government, Establishment and upper classes of the society were also quite often in the stories of the analyzed collection. The bar theme, alcohol and alcoholism are used there as well, because they played significant roles in Bukowski's life and were massively extended among the whole spectrum of the society. Many people were like Hank, drinking in order to handle their situation with lesser mental problems.

Another very important theme of the short stories is the criticism of the society. Sometimes it is needed to read between lines, yet it intertwines with the whole collection. Bukowski is a critic of the whole society just as its parts or groups of people. The common targets of his time to time objective criticism can be the establishment, women, above all prostitutes, employers and also the contemporary writers and The Beat counterculture. Even though seeing the shortcomings of the low-life, Bukowski is advocating it to a certain level, simply because it represents the only reality for him. The gloss of the middle- and upper-classes was unattainable, but for him also unwanted, because he preferred simplicity and truth to falsity and blind pursuit of possession.

5 The Beats and Bukowski

Although many people tried to add Bukowski into The Beat Generation movement, he actively remains on its margins or even totally outside of it. Bukowski knew The Beats and openly appreciated some of them, yet it was very rare. The Beats also knew about the existence of contemporary writers including Buk, yet they seemed to be scared of his nihilistic portrayals of deprivation and degenerated low life of people who did not choose to be on the social edge but simply had no other possibility. That was something totally different from the traditional beat point of view of being outside of the society, just because they did not want to be “eaten up” by the consumerism and mainstream of the so called “Moloch”. That is Ginsberg’s view of the then society, visible in his famous poem *Howl*. It means that the society is too much industrialized and rid of humanity and that people are going to chase after the possessions up to the certain extent leading to the total collapse of the system.

Common features of Bukowski and The Beats can be found in portraying drunkenness, poverty and despair. Yet, according to Poynter, Buk presented the life just as it was for him with all its advantages and disadvantages, while The Beats usually made a protest out of depictions like this. (20) Poynter also comments on Buk’s using his famous autobiographical alter-ego Henry Chinaski. Poynter sees that “Bukowski creates a morbid impression of the world of work in which Henry Chinaski is exposed to the exploitation of ruthless employers, bad working conditions, and low wages, and refuses to accept this world of hierarchy, authority and domination as normal.” (21) This could be extended to the entirety of Buk’s work. The mentioned dreadful working conditions belonged to Buk’s life experiences and they were reused many times in different works with not solely Henry Chinaski as a protagonist.

Interestingly enough, Bukowski described the meeting of one of the most important Beats William S. Burroughs in a hotel before a literary reading. This situation is mentioned in Hank’s famous novel *Women* from the point of view of Henry Chinaski, the well know Bukowski’s alter ego. Their mutual friend

asked them both whether they would like to meet the other one and they both agreed that they would not. Nevertheless, Bukowski needed for his beer to be cold and went out of his room. "I walked out to look for an ice machine. As I walked by Burroughs' place he was sitting in a chair by the window. He looked at me indifferently. I found the ice machine and came back with the ice..." (Women 190) From this tiny excerpt, it is more than clear that their indifference (or disinterest) in each other was mutual.

Jean-Francois Duval associates Bukowski to punk, following after The Beats, rather than to The Beat Generation itself. He calls his style "destructive mythology" because he looked to be destructed with all those wine bottles and beer tins around him. According to him, Buk's fame does not accidentally coincide with the so called "No Future" philosophy. (21)

Even though Buk could be ranked anywhere, he was an undeniable part of the same underground as all his contemporaries. Most probably Buk and The Beats were formed to be two opposing parties just because of the simple difference between them mentioned by Duval in his book *Bukowski and the Beats*. The undisputable difference consists of the fact that Hank knew more about the real low life, he experienced the everyday difficulties of the working life. The Beats were bohemians and described the working-class lives too, but from an entirely different perspective, resembling observation from a bird's eye view or from a safety distance. The Beats saw everything from the perspective of the writers and they presented themselves and their work as a product of culture, yet Buk did not seem to present himself in any way at the beginning, and later he was just trying not to be ranked among The Beat Generation.⁶

The problem was that The Beats romanticized the low life and just copied it, but Buk lived in it with the other low paid people first handedly. Thus, it can be said that The Beats saw the society from a different point of view than Bukowski. Maybe that is why The Beats were always trying to find some way out of society and Buk was just presenting how to survive in such an

⁶ loosely based on Duval 21-25

unpleasant environment. Also, Poynter sides to this view with his comment that Bukowski wrote more in compliance with the reality of gloomy social prospects of the working-class than The Beat Generation with their high-minded views of the prosperous future and far-fetched idealization of the working-class life. (27) A big difference between The Beats and Buk can be seen in an attitude towards the very lowest layers of the society. Bukowski was a typical member of it thanks to his switching of low-paid jobs.

Buk saw The Beats as a group to which he felt an urgency of delimiting himself from, irrespective of the fact that he was able to express admiration to the first Beats. The original small group had kept an idea, according to Hank, yet the “beatness” became something different with good-looking men, searching for a free base, as long as being homosexuals, exhibitionists and rogues writing doggerels. That was Hank’s view of the evolved Beat Generation.

Public performance of The Beats was a thorn in Hank’s side as well. He saw in those the immaturity of The Beats because of their search of the life outside. Hank was convinced that the writer who needs to go out in order to see what is going on out there has no idea about the life. He believed that a writer should be just on his or her own in a room and write, just write and do nothing more and nothing less.⁷

Poynter’s research shows that although Bukowski could have admired The Beats when he had a light moment, there was something compelling about them, what disheartened any of his probable intentions to join them. They were the representatives of the middle-class youngsters, who would like to change the world even though not knowing the reality. They gave the impression that fame and everything around it was more important than the writing itself. (29) That was the feeling of a big chasm rooted in their different class grounds. Buk represented the opposing party of a man who experienced the social bottom and the people there.

⁷ loosely based on Duval 26-27

Thus, it can be claimed that the picture of the society was unlike for The Beats and Bukowski. The Beats were always aiming for some better mankind and see it as reachable. Contrary to that, Bukowski was a kind of grouch who repeated that there was no redemption from the bottom of the society and we all just had to get used to it and try to survive.

According to Locklin in his *Charles Bukowski: A Sure Bet*, Hank bears a striking resemblance to Jack Kerouac in the decision not to participate in World War II, the fact that later they both did not want to be part of The Beats and they both were definitely zealous drunkards. However, Locklin's reference to the Bukowski's and Kerouac's mutual usage of spontaneous writing method is more important. Reportedly Bukowski told Locklin that he had written the novel *Post Office* in twenty days, and then his next to the last novel *Hollywood* had been written in a very drunken moment and never changed. Both Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski were being criticized, Jack because of the attitudes towards the Vietnam War and Buk because of his lack of interest in politics. (11-12)

Poynter puts Kerouac and Bukowski on opposing sides, as for their spontaneity of writing. He claims that Kerouac imitated the everyday speech with maintaining the casual things and writing his prose like a collection of memories. Nevertheless, according to him, Bukowski was using the same composition in a kind of refusal of the traditional way of writing. (30) Bukowski's narration is very complex and quite often is developed into something different than what it looked like at the beginning. Even though Buk could mention anything serious, he nearly always humiliated it by a cynical comment or outcome of the story. That could be seen as Bukowski's typical unconventionality.

The exact example of demonstration of this unconventionality is remembered by Duval and concerns Buk's appearance in the movie *Poetry in Motion*, where he is placed side by side with resounding names of The Beat Generation. On top of the obscurity, Buk opens the whole recording, yet he encloses the introduction with a declaration that all is just a "beer shit", as is very typical of him. (23)

The fact that Buk took an opposing side to conventionalism led to his transformation into a model or idol of many people of his generation and many other further on. As well as Kerouac, Bukowski created the alternative to the traditional way of life and, just as Poynter writes in his essay, Kerouac inspired people to go out on the road of the life and experiment, Bukowski gave people just the drinking, fights and women of dubious morals. (31) Thanks to Hank, the low life and underground look like a normal and standard way of living. He presented it, lived it and liked it himself.

The mentioned mutual usage of spontaneous writing is very interesting and very probable. Both Kerouac and Bukowski wrote about their life experiences, but with different aims. Kerouac's works looked like he was daring the readers to leave everything behind and sink to the bottom of the society in order to be free and satisfied because there lay the redemption from the appealing world problems around. On the other hand, Bukowski was opposing that there is nothing happy about the society on the bottom. It is the last station to nowhere, where everything ends., There was no other redemption than drinking in order not to kill oneself. There was no other solution for the people on the edge of the society, they had no other place to go and nothing seemed to be the solution to their despair. They just tried not to become insane and lived their lives the best way they could. Bukowski is not proposing any kind of heaven after the miserable life ends, not even during the life itself, just like The Beats were trying to find something freeing them from the everyday struggles. It simply seems that Buk just wanted to warn us, everybody, that the low life is something so hard that nobody can survive it. However, he never told or wrote it openly, he used his own literal wit to demonstrate the hardships with a knowing mocking smirk on his face, just as if he were the only one person to know what was going to happen next.

6 Conclusion

The analysis of Bukowski's life, writing and connection to the era shows he is deeply rooted in the society of his contemporaries. The readers can see that he is influenced by The Beats and by the contemporary events as well, simply because nobody can escape the world completely. Bukowski and The Beats were using the same or very similar literary features such as the semiautobiographical writing, spontaneous developing of the plots and also the picturing of the same social layer, yet with different outcome.

Their life experiences were so different mainly because The Beats themselves decided to join the bottom of the society and they romanticized it while trying to find some enlightenment in the life out of the consumerism. Yet Buk appeared on the edge because of not having any money, trying one low paid job after another, therefore he has more actual starting point depicting the real people of low life. However, the fact that The Beats were involved in various public events made them more visible than Bukowski.

The criticism of the society was common for both The Beats and Bukowski. The Beats were accusing the society in ridding of humanity and too much industrialization, just like Ginsberg in his famous poem *Howl*, yet they were describing the reality with the aid of complex figures of speech. On the other hand, Bukowski's works evince more realistic features. Hence, they see the society from different point of views and consequently described it and criticized it in accordance with those.

Bukowski was formed by his twisted, frightening, joyless childhood, which made him a tough or even cold guy, who chose to describe the horrifying harshness of the social bottom rather than embellishing it with hopes of redemption. That was what The Beats were trying to find in wandering and drugs. They were crawling for some purpose in life without the then well spread consumerism, obsession with possessions and aimless working for people or establishment whom or which they did not like.

The main connecting link of their generation is the controversy manifested in both The Beats' and Bukowski's living and writing. Their mutual aim was to show the lostness of the mainstream people and they did so by shocking them with the themes, style and language used in their works. All of them made their private lives public in order to show their attitudes and thoughts. Even though The Beats were more focused on finding how to live and Bukowski's desire was to survive, they all depicted the low life and showed the world that there is not just the mainstream and society is strictly diversified.

7 Bibliography

7.1 Primary Sources

Bukowski, Charles. *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town & Other stories*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1983

Bukowski, Charles. *Ham on Rye*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001.

Bukowski, Charles. *Women*. London: Virgin Books, 2009.

Bukowski, Charles. *Factotum*. London: Virgin Books, 2009.

Bukowski, Charles. *Bukowski on Bukowski: "Bukowski in His Own Words"*. Edited by Rikki Hollywood. London: Little Lagoon, 1998.

Bukowski, Charles. *Burning in water, drowning in flame*. Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1988.

Bukowski, Charles. *Notes of a dirty old man*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1973.

Bukowski, Charles, and David Stephen Calonne. *More notes of a dirty old man: the uncollected columns*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011.

7.1.1 Online sources

Boylan Blog, The. "'education" by Charles Bukowski." The Boylan Blog. January 01, 1990. Accessed June 12, 2018.

<http://boylanblog.blogspot.cz/2014/02/education-by-charles-bukowski.html>.

Ginsberg, Allen. "Howl by Allen Ginsberg." Poetry Foundation. Accessed December 1, 2018.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49303/howl>.

Badinová, Veronika. *Beat Generation: Americké Kontrakulturní Hnutí*. Master's thesis. Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2015.

Accessed December 2, 2018.

https://is.muni.cz/th/m8pic/DP_finalni_verze.pdf.

7.2 Secondary Sources

Sounes, Howard. *Charles Bukowski - Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2010.

Miles, Barry. *Charles Bukowski*. London: Virgin Books, Ebury Publishing, 2011.

Weidman, Rich. *The Beat Generation FAQ: All That's Left to Know About the Angelheaded Hipsters*. Milwaukee: Backbeat Books, Hal Leonard Corporation, 2015.

Waldman, Anne ed. *The Beat Book: Writings from the Beat Generation*, foreword by Allen Ginsberg. Boston: Shambhala, 1996.

Poynter, M. J. *Bukowski and the Beats*. The USA: Create Space, 2015.

Christy, Jim, and Claude Powell. *Buk Book: Och Charles Bukowski*. Translated by Ladislav Šenkyřík. Praha: Pragma, 2004.

Locklin, Gerald. *Bukowski: Zaručený Tip. From Bukowski A Sure Bet* translated by Štěpán Vrba. Praha: Volvox Globator, 1999

Richmond, Steve. *Vzpomínky na Bukowského*. Translated by Jan Brázda. Praha: Pragma, 1998

- ois. *Bukowski a Beatnici: Pojednání O Generaci Beatníků*
ky: Pragma, 2014.

7.3 Works Consulted

Bukowski, Charles. *Tales of Ordinary Madness*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001.

Charters, Ann ed. *The Portable Beat Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

Charters, Ann ed. *The Portable Jack Kerouac*. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

Thomas, John. *Bukowski Ve Vaně: Vzpomínání Johna Thomase Na Charlese Bukowského*. Translated by Štěpán Vrba. Compiled by Philomene Long. Praha: Volvox Globator, 1999.

7.3.1 Online sources

Anvil Press. "Jim Christy." Anvil Press. Accessed August 18, 2018. <http://www.anvilpress.com/authors/jim-christy>.

8 Annotation

Author: Bc. Kateřina Řehouňková

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Name of the thesis: Charles Bukowski and his short stories in connection to
the era

Supervisor: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 74

Number of appendices: 0

Language of the thesis: English

Keywords: Charles Bukowski, The Beat Generation, Allen Ginsberg, Jack
Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Henry Chinaski, short
stories, criticism of society, spontaneous writing

Abstract: The thesis concerns the author's analysis of Charles Bukowski, his life and writing in connection to the era and his contemporaries of The Beat Generation. It deals with the short stories in the collection *The Most Beautiful Woman in Town*. The works of Bukowski and The Beat Generation show interesting resemblances and differences.

9 Anotace

Autor: Bc. Kateřina Řehounková

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Charles Bukowski a jeho povídky v souvislostech doby

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Počet stránek: 74

Počet příloh: 0

Jazyk práce: Angličtina

Klíčová slova: Charles Bukowski, Beatníci, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Henry Chinaski, povídky, kritika společnosti, spontánní tvorba

Abstrakt: Práce se týká autorčiny analýzy Charlese Bukowského, jeho života a jeho tvorby v kontextu doby a jeho vrstevníků z generace Beatníků. Zabývá se povídkami ze sbírky „Nejkrásnější ženská ve městě“. Tvorba Bukowského a Beatníků vykazuje zajímavé podobnosti a odlišnosti.