



Women's objectification in Charles Bukowski's *post office*

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Abstract: This study aimed to evaluate the discourse of women's objectification as portrayed in Charles Bukowski's Post Office novel. Many problems occur in the story, especially problems that revolve around women. They receive adverse treatment from men, both physically and mentally, and are also sexualized. It is critical to consider how literary work contributes to resolving social problems such as women's objectification, male gaze, sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse. The portrayal of women's objectification is traced through Stuart Hall's theory of representation, notably Michel Foucault's discursive approach. The findings of this study demonstrate how the Post Office novel objectifies women as a type of sexual freedom. The Post Office solely shows the female body's external features, focusing specific attention on the sexual organs. These features of women's unfavorable behavior help to objectify them. Bukowski assumed that women are prepared to be mistreated, particularly as sexual objects, in the name of sexual freedom. The Post Office represents male characters, objectifying female characters. Furthermore, some female characters normalize the way they are sexualized, from self-objectification to condescendingly stigmatizing other women. Female characters in the story face sexual objectification, rape, and sexual abuse in the name of sexual freedom.

Keywords Discourse, Objectification, Representation, Sexualization

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INTRODUCTION

Bukowski's debut novel, *Post Office*, was written three weeks after he resigned from his job as a mail clerk. It was published in 1996. The *Post Office* becomes the subject of analysis because Charles Bukowski creates a compelling character and society in the novel. The novel tells the story of Henry Chinaski and his time working for the United States Postal Service. Chinaski, like Bukowski, works as a mail carrier for years, then leaves to survive by betting on horses, and eventually returns to the post office as a mail sorter. He then resigns and seeks a career as a writer. Henry is a middle-aged alcoholic who is eager to defy any system and is ambitionless, despite his great brain and reasoning. Henry muses on a career that has physically destroyed him and the sexual and gambling antics that have sustained him following a horrible drunken spree.

A work of literature represents a society (Wellek & Warren, 1970). Literary work cannot be detached from society's influence. This study is necessary to comprehend the social issues raised by literary works, especially issues regarding gender. Bukowski stated that most of his literary works were based on the actual events of his life. Ninety-three per cent of his works are directly derived from his life events (Sounes, 2010). Meanwhile, the remaining seven percent is improving. This blending of fact and fiction blurs the line between the real and fictional worlds. Based on that supposition, Charles Bukowski's perspective on social conditions and ideology will be scrutinized, as depicted in *The Post Office*. It is critical to consider how literary work contributes to resolving social problems such as women's objectification, male gaze, sexual harassment, etc. thereby scrutinizing the novel's social

context and the author's background to determine how they influenced Bukowski's work and ultimately resulted in the novel's ideological construction. The female characters in the novel are portrayed as lesser than men. Debra, Iris, and Mary Lou receive harmful treatments. They only became a cheap pleasure for Chinaski as an opposing sex (Bukowski, 1996).

There have been many previous kinds of research on women. A woman subjected to violence is the result of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation in her pursuit of equality with men. In a patriarchal society, problems arise due to the influence of the surrounding society (Gunawan, 2020; Hlavatá, 2019; Sugiarti, 2021). Hlavatá's analysis focuses on the potential disparities in the representations of women in Bukowski's novels, taking into account the time differences between each novel and the author's aging. The descriptions have sexist overtones and are mainly based on the unique features of women while disregarding their inner selves (2019). Women cannot free themselves if society has accepted patriarchal values and norms (Darojatin, 2015). In a patriarchal society, problems arise due to the influence of the surrounding society.

This research about women's objectification is essential because women are objectified because of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation in their pursuit of equality with men. Hence, the novel represents the worry of a member of society. The research focused on how men treat women based on the social and political conflict at the time. Darojatin (2015) researched subjugated proletarian citizens in the 19th century in French. In *The Second Sex*, she utilized Simone de Beauvoir's perspective on female oppression and the correlation between social life and fictional literary work. From Simone de Beauvoir's point of view, Victor Hugo represents the oppression of proletarian French women in the nineteenth century. The main focus of her research is to explain the novel's depiction of proletarian French female oppression. She explained that Hugo describes it through the female character, Fatine, who lives in a wretched state throughout her life. This research will assist in conducting this research due to the similarity of the topic, which is female subordination.

The portrayal of women's objectification is traced through Stuart Hall's theory of representation, notably Michel Foucault's discursive approach (Hall, 1997). By using this theory, the narrative statements, events, and situations in the form of words and sentences are analyzed to find the discourse behind the story of the *Post Office*. As a result, the portrayal of women as objectified is tied to American society. In the history of America, there is also the history of sexual assault and rape. Under Jim Crow's Law, the position of black people, especially women and children, is not protected. Sexual assault and rape are used as a form of social control to maintain power and remain black "in their place" (Thompson-Miller & Picca, 2017). The trial was even more disrespectful to the sexual assault survivors, even becoming the second rapist for the victims (Stern, 2022). In addition, the author's critical stance may be seen in the dialectic between how women are objectified in the novel and how it is formed in American culture, where women, especially black women, are mistreated under Jim Crow's Law.

METHODS

The qualitative method of research is the one adopted in this study. This study also refers to earlier scholars' written essays and research notes relating to the item. As a result, the information used in this research takes the form of words, phrases, and sentence expressions from Charles Bukowski's novel *Post Office*. Primary and secondary data references were used to gather the data references for this analysis (Sharan B. Merriam & Robin S. Grenier, 2019). The source is taken directly from the novel itself. In comparison, secondary data references are data references from journal articles, research papers, or other books that are still relevant to the research topic.

The data collection technique used by the researcher is descriptive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) that focuses on data collected from the novel related to women's objectification. All the collected data is then divided into two categories. The first category contains information about the novel's women's sexualization and subordination, while the second category contains information about the novel's social context and the author's social background. These data are identified and analyzed in order to provide an answer to the objectification of women.

The quotations are organized and classified to determine how the discourse of the objectification of women is constructed. The analysis focuses on the novel's representation of women, specifically the sexualization and subordination of female characters by male characters. By analyzing the data, we will eventually be able to answer how the novel's discourse on women's objectification is constructed. Using Hall's representation theory, the discovery of the discourse of women's objectification in the novel was related to a contextual analysis to locate the discourse in the context. It is possible to obtain an answer to the discourse of women's objectification in the late 1950s and early 1970s in the United States of America using representation theory and Foucault's discourse.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sexual objectification is one form of gender oppression in which the individual is not seen as a complete individual (Samji & Vasquez, 2020). However, it is intertwined with many other oppressions that women face, ranging from workplace discrimination and sexual abuse to trivializing women's work and accomplishments. Objectification refers to depictions of women in different ways and contexts. They are objects to be looked at, ogled, even touched, or used; anonymous things or commodities to be purchased, taken, or discarded, often replaced by a newer, younger edition; certainly not treated as whole human beings with equal rights and needs.

A woman's objectification is treating a woman only as a mere object of pleasure that can be looked at, touched, and used, leading to the degradation of a woman's value (Nisa & Andalas, 2021). Following that, the analysis is about the objectification of women in Charles Bukowski's *Post Office*, which is set in the late 1950s and early 1970s in America. The sexual assault happened in the late 19th century, especially under Jim Crow's law. In the 1920s, every state raised its age of consent from twelve to eighteen. But the statutory rape laws were originally intended to protect young white women who were sexually innocent from coercion from older men. Over decades, young women were more likely to seduce than to be seduced (Smith, 2014). In the 1970s, the start of reformation of the rape law to protect people, not gender (Yung, 2017).

Through close reading, characters endure being objectified, and the characters that do the objectifying. Objectification, a form of oppression experienced by female characters in the story of the *Post Office*, comes from physical or non-physical sources. The main character of the story is Henry Chinaski. Chinaski gets a terrible job at the post office, working 12-hour shifts with unrealistic targets and a vile boss. Chinaski has a drinking and gambling problem to deal with. He drinks until 2 a.m. and then goes to work at 5 a.m. He spends a lot of time having sex with random women.

One character cannot adequately describe the objectification of women discussed in the 19th century. In order to reveal the actual state of how women are objectified, it must describe and analyze various characters and circumstances. This study focuses on how women are objectified through the actions of male characters who objectify and female characters who normalize objectification.

Women's Sexualization by the Main Character

The relationships between the main character, Henry "Hank" Chinaski, and the female characters are one example of the representations in society of how women were objectified and treated like sexual objects during that time. Chinaski had a relationship with some female characters, such as Betty and Joyce. Not just with Betty and Joyce, Chinaski also had a relationship with other female characters, but not as intimate as the relationship with the female characters.

Henry Chinaski, frequently nicknamed "Hank" by other characters, is the first-person narrator in most of Bukowski's novels. Chinaski is a narrative agent who also participates in narrated events. In the story's first section, Henry applies for a job at a Christmas letter delivery service. While he worked there, he met a woman. He described the woman physically, especially the sexual parts of her body. Chinaski describes the woman as having a big ass and tits, and how big she is in every suitable place. Even though he thinks that she's a bit crazy, he keeps staring at her, underscoring her physical point and disregarding her as a whole being (Bukowski, 1996, p. 77). Chinaski's depiction of the woman appears to be degrading the woman to the point where it's only the physical appearance of the woman that's important; as a matter of fact, it's the

object of visual pleasure. He also had several times of sexual intercourse with the woman, despite them both having their own relationships.

Chinaski then applied for the job as a mail carrier, and he passed both the exam and the physical test. Chinaski is then appointed as a substitute mail carrier. One day, on his day of mail delivery, Chinaski meets a woman on his route. The woman regularly gets "a special" every night (Bukowski, 1996, p. 11). He addresses how sexy the woman is dressing, and he also places a dirty thought on his mind while giving the mail to her. The woman is portrayed as "a manufacturer of sexy dresses and nightgowns," for she would wear sexy dresses every night. Whenever the mail carrier delivered the "special" at night, she would wear a sexy dress and let out a gasp while standing very close and reading the "special," not letting the mail carrier leave until she finished reading it. Chinaski also says that mail carriers would "trott off with a dick like a bull's" when they leave (Bukowski, 1996, p. 11). The meeting between Chinaski and the young woman above shows how Chinaski views women. There is no romanticized notion through metaphors or symbols; only a simple description, omitting the face and focusing on the body and its parts, elicits an attraction. The woman mentioned in the quotation above did not play any role in the narration, yet Chinaski emphasizes the superficial aspect of the woman and explains that everyone would lust over her if they met her.

Before treating women, men survey them. As a result, how a woman appears to a man can influence how she is treated. Women must contain and internalize this process to gain control over it. The part of the woman's self that is the surveyor treats the part of herself that is being surveyed in order to demonstrate to others how her entire self would like to be treated. And her presence is defined by her exemplary treatment of herself. Every woman's presence governs what is and isn't "permissible" in her presence. Every one of her actions, regardless of their direct purpose or motivation, is interpreted as an indication of how she wishes to be treated (Berger, 2008).

Another female character that Chinaski met during his mail delivery job is a woman that he deemed to be "crazy" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 27). Chinaski ascribes information about her solely to her physical appearance. Chinaski describes the woman as wearing "see-through negligees and no brassiere." "Just dark blue panties" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 27). Her hair is uncombed and looks unmaintained. She has an unhealthy look and pale white skin. Her mouth is hanging open, she has a bit of lipstick on her lips, and she is built all the way (Bukowski, 1996, p. 27). At first, Chinaski didn't engage in any sexual intercourse because, in the narration of Chinaski, the woman is crazy: "I looked at her breasts and the rest of her and I thought, what a shame she's crazy, what a shame, what a shame" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 27). After a confrontation from the woman when Chinaski tries to get out from her house, but the woman blocks his way out, Chinaski decides to push her behind a wall, and they engage in sexual intercourse. Chinaski then indulges in sexual intercourse with the woman while she screams about being raped. Not only the woman experiences the male gaze, which is a form of objectification, but she also goes through a sexual assault. Chinaski doesn't deny the fact that he is raping the woman when she screams "Rape! Rape! I'm being raped!" (Bukowski, 1996b, p. 28) in which he answers, "She was right" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 28). However, even though she screams while being raped, she shows that she complies with what Chinaski is doing with her: "She lifted her legs high" (Bukowski, 1996b, p. 28). This represents how entitled Chinaski is, making him more superior to another gender as if they meant to play along with the assaulter. After doing the assault, Chinaski just left her alone without giving any concern regarding the woman: "I finished her off, zipped my fly, picked up my mail pouch and walked out leaving her staring quietly at the ceiling" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 28). Surprisingly, Chinaski just gets away with it, not once showing any remorse towards the woman. Although she participates in sexual activity, her pleasure is not the goal. She was overwhelmed by male dominance, was not given space for her own needs, and was not even allowed to protest when she disliked the process.

Rape was defined as "carnal knowledge of a woman 10 years or older, forcibly and against her will" in early American colonies. Temperance and suffrage activists successfully advocated in the late 1800s to raise the legal age of consent from 10 to between 14 and 18, depending on the state. The anti-rape movement emerged nearly 100 years later, as violence against women became a focal point in the second-wave feminist movement. The 1960s and 1970s saw significant advancements in American rape law. Rape came to be viewed as a weapon during this period, motivated by a desire to exert control over women. Prior to the 1970s, many rape laws exempted marital rape, or the raping of one spouse by the other (Bishop, 2018).

Hostility toward women is also prevalent in the novel. Chinaski has been working at the post office to replace a worker suspected of sexual misconduct against a child. The accused colleague, G.G., is not guilty of the wrongdoing leveled against him; he is simply a kindhearted old man who enjoys giving candy to children on his routes. A new family on his route is unfamiliar with G.G. and his manner, so the mother of a young girl believes he is a paedophile when he offers sweets to the girl and talks to her. Later, when the postmaster attempts to explain to the little girl's parents that everything was a mistake, Chinaski expresses his feelings on the subject. Chinaski states that the postmaster should not suck up to the woman because the woman has a dirty mind. He also states that "half the mothers in America, with their precious pussies and their precious little daughters, have dirty minds" (Bukowski, 1996b, p. 33). He also says that the postmaster must know that G.G. is old and he cannot get his penis hard (Bukowski, 1996, p. 33). In various other instances throughout the story, Chinaski is hostile to women, and the language is harsh and filthy. Chinaski's female friends are all generally alluded to as "bitch" or some such equivalent, giving the impression that Chinaski has serious issues with the opposite gender.

Chinaski's first relationship is with Betty, an unemployed woman who binges on alcohol along with Chinaski. Chinaski refers to her as her "shackjob." The term "shackjob" is a slang term for mistress. My mistress, in this context, is a female partner in an extramarital relationship, generally including sexual relations. Chinaski then indulges in a sexual relationship with Betty, which leads her to become an object of sexual pleasure. This can be proven further when Chinaski dreams of a tough day at work. Chinaski mentioned Betty as "my shackjob Betty and I drank; there was hardly money for clothes" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 7) and "I had been up until 2 a.m. drinking and screwing with Betty" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 9). Chinaski is disloyal to Betty because he indulges in sexual relationships with women he met while working as a mail carrier, despite Betty waiting for him at home. Chinaski fantasizes about Betty after a long day at work: "I kept thinking of a hot bath, Betty's fine legs, and—something to keep me going—a picture of myself in an easychair, drink in hand, the dog walking up, me patting his head" (Bukowski, 1996a, p. 20). As the story goes, he says, "All I wanted was to get in that chair with that glass of scotch in my hand and watch Betty's ass wobble around the room" (Bukowski 1996: 20) and "Betty, baby, I'm coming!" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 20). As a final point, Chinaski "made it back to Betty's ass" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 22). Chinaski's act of longing for Betty is not based on the act of actually longing for Betty as a whole, but instead he longs for Betty as a relief from stress after a rough day at work. This represents that Chinaski refers to Betty as a mere object of pleasure, and her sole purpose as a woman is to satisfy men. When Chinaski has had enough of his work, he decides to resign from his job and try his luck at horse race betting while Betty becomes a typist (Bukowski, 1996, p.39).

Chinaski has won a lot of bets on the track, and he earns a lot of money, so much that he could pay the rent and food for Chinaski and Betty. "I'm paying the rent." "I'm buying the food!" "I'm making it at the track" (Bukowski, 1996, p.40). When Chinaski's at home and he's not on the track, he would flirt with the neighbors: "I got up around 10:30 a.m., had a leisurely cup of coffee and a couple of eggs, played with the dog, flirted with the young wife of a mechanic who lived in the back, and got friendly with a stripteaser who lived in the front" (Bukowski, 1996, p.39). Betty hates the fact that Chinaski is not working but she is the one who is working despite Chinaski paying their rent and food. Even though Betty is mentioned often in the very first chapter, she has not a voice, a power to talk and act. She acquires voice at the start of the second chapter, after she is hired as a typist.

Betty uses her voice to end the relationship with Chinaski the moment she is given one. Chinaski deals with this issue from the perspective of Betty wanting to end the relationship since traditional gender roles have indeed been reversed in Chinaski and Betty's relationship, making her the one who works (Bukowski, 1996, p.39). Betty, on the other hand, appears to have alternate grounds for ending the relationship with Chinaski, despite her support for traditional gender roles. As they are breaking up, Betty says that she won't sleep again with Chinaski that night. "It's over," she says. "I'm not sleeping with you another night" (Bukowski, 1996, p.40), whereby Chinaski replies with, "All right." "Keep your pussycat." "It's not that great" (Bukowski, 1996, p.40) which portrays that he does not need to conduct any sexual act with her anymore and feels dissatisfied with her. Betty, after which she makes the decision to leave Chinaski. Betty is not seen again by Chinaski until the third chapter.

Later, Betty has lost her job and her dog has been run over and killed. She also gets another job as a waitress which she loses the job because the café she works on is demolished to build an office building. Currently, she is living in a small room of a "loser's hotel" (Bukowski, 1996: 78). She also works there to pay the rent by changing the sheets and cleaning the bathrooms. She has also become more alcoholic than before. When she meets Chinaski again, she suggests that they get together again, but Chinaski declines her offer, saying that he is just getting over a bad relationship. Betty then goes back to her room, putting on her best dress and high heels to cover up her sadness (Bukowski, 1996, p. 78). Despite her breakup with her lover, Chinaski, Betty still lingers toward him, demonstrating her dependence on him despite all of Chinaski's wrongdoings.

The story continues when Chinaski visits Betty and discovers her "sitting in her room, drunk, at 8:45 in the morning" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 94-95). Chinaski then explains that Betty has two children who never come to see her and never write letter to her. Betty is just a scrubwoman in a cheap hotel. When Chinaski met Betty for the first time, Betty's clothes had been expensive, trim ankles fitting into expensive shoes. She was "firm-fleshed" and "almost beautiful" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 94).

The first facts about her are that she is Chinaski's lover and that she has a history of alcoholism. She is portrayed as having fine legs, and Chinaski consoles himself while on the job by saying that he will soon be back in bed with Betty. However, after she breaks up with Chinaski, Betty loses all of her good criteria, such as having a fine leg and being firm-fleshed, and all of her sexual qualities that were deemed good by Chinaski. Betty then tries to get back together and repair her relationship with Chinaski, in which Chinaski shows disinterest. Since their split-up, Betty has gotten older, and her sex appeal has been stripped away from her: "Betty had gotten old fast." Heavier. The lines had come in. Flesh hung under the throat. "It was sad" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 78), "I watched her walk to the bathroom and saw the wrinkles and folds under the cheeks of her ass." Poor thing. Poor poor thing. Joyce had been firm and hard—you grabbed a handful, and it felt good. Betty didn't feel so good. "It was sad, it was sad, it was sad" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 80). Despite her condition, she still tries to enchant Chinaski, trying her best to make herself look more charming: "She went back to her room and put on her best dress, high heels, and tried to fix up." "But there was a terrible sadness about her" (Bukowski, 1996, p.78). For many women, growing old is synonymous with becoming unattractive and unlovable. Aging women are instructed that, in order to maintain social regard, they must remain in the objectification limelight (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1996). A week later, Betty ends up in the hospital and dies because of her alcoholism.

In his sadness over Betty's death, he bought a wreath of flowers for her. It turns out that the lady of the flower shop, called Delsie, was a friend of Betty. Delsie is also objectified by Chinaski: "I had always wanted to get into Delsie's pants, but I never made it" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 96-97). When Delsie calls Chinaski regarding the wreath of flowers he ordered, Chinaski then asks Delsie to console him: "Why don't you come by and console me?" to which Delsie replies that she has to bring Paul, who is her husband: "I'd have to bring Paul" (Bukowski, 1996, p.97). By console, I mean that Chinaski wants Delsie to comfort her, particularly in a sexual way, since Chinaski refuses Delsie when she wants to bring his husband with her. This represents Delsie as an object of sexual relief for Chinaski, who is mourning for Betty.

Later, in his work at the post office, Chinaski is faced with a problem with his alcoholism. He then called to face his superior at the old Federal Building. There he is faced with a woman to whom, unsurprisingly, he ascribes physical attributes the first time he meets her. According to Chinaski, the woman looks a bit sexy and is melting into the age range of 38 or 39. Her flame of sexual ambition has died out, and there is not any sex in her eyes. Chinaski thinks that he could "give her a ride" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 82). Not only did he attribute her physically, but Chinaski merely focused on her sexually, and he then came to the conclusion that she has a sexy figure even though she is melting into an old age of 38 or 39. Chinaski thinks that he can offer her a ride, which refers to a sexual act. After having a conversation with her, Chinaski concludes that she doesn't have any sexual urges. Despite having a higher position and being older than Chinaski, the woman couldn't escape the objectification done to her, as Fredrickson & Roberts (1996) stated: "Women's bodies are looked at, evaluated, and always potentially objectified."

Later, Chinaski has a problem with his lousy record at work in the post office. He then calls the Personnel Department in the Federal Building in order to solve the problem. The one who is in charge of

dealing with Chinaski is Miss Grave. There is no description whatsoever about Miss Grave; the only information we get from the story is that Miss Grave is the one in charge in the Personnel Department. Despite that, she also gets objectified to the extent that Chinaski is indirectly sexually harassing her. In addition to that, Chinaski also calls Miss Grave a "bitch" while he strokes himself, fantasizing about sexual activity with her: "There she was." The bitch. I fondled myself as I spoke to her (Bukowski, 1996, p.90). This act of degradation reduces the woman to the status of mere instruments, where she only exists for the use and pleasure of others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1996). But unlike other female characters that get objectified, Miss Grave was not directly objectified by Chinaski but rather fetishized. Teng and colleagues (2015) research about objectification suggests that power might protect women from certain consequences of sexual objectification. However, it is worth noting that their findings also do not suggest that power can protect women from any adverse effects caused by objectification.

The next woman with whom Chinaski has a short relationship is a woman called Mary Lou. Chinaski meets her at the race track. When he meets her, he thinks about how God or somebody keeps creating women and tossing them out on the streets. He evaluates the women that "have been tossed by God as having an ass that is too big, how one's tits are too small, how one is crazy and the other is mad, how one is a religionist and able to read tea leaves, how one cannot control her farts, how one has a big nose, and how one has boney legs" (Bukowski, 1996, p.119). Chinaski then continues by saying how "a woman, now and then, walks up, full blossom bursting out of her dress" (Bukowski, 1996, p.119). He also adds that woman is "a sex creature" and "a curse" (Bukowski, 1996, p.119). The time Chinaski met Mary Lou, Mary Lou was a bit drunk, and the bartender wouldn't serve her another drink for it. Mary Lou then begins to bitch, and she is about to get kicked out of the bar when Chinaski saves her (Bukowski, 1996, p. 119). Chinaski then spends the night in a seaside hotel with her. The following day, they travel to a guesthouse in which Mary Lou is currently living. Hector is a "little dark guy in there with a wart on the side of his nose" and "looks dangerous" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 122). Chinaski looks in the mirror seeing how hung-over he is after a brief conversation with Hector (about how Chinaski is stealing Mary Lou), and occurs to see Hector charging towards Chinaski with a dagger. Chinaski then throws a used beer bottle at Hector, who then collapses.

When Chinaski latches her eyes on Mary Lou, he can't help but think about women. Along with thinking about women, Chinaski also makes some speculation about their physical appearance, disregarding their non-physical traits, making them a mere object of visual pleasure for men. Chinaski even calls them "sex creatures" and "curses" (Bukowski, 1996, p.119). This represents one form of sexual objectification of being treated as a body collection for consumptions of others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1996).

After the incident with Hector and Mary Lou, Chinaski continued his work in the post office. One day, Chinaski caught a sickness that he calls "dizzy spells" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 129). He suffered pretty badly for it, and he couldn't work properly in the post office. Chinaski then makes an appointment with a doctor, and Chinaski gets his blood pressure, heart rate, and overall health checked by the doctor. Unfortunately, the doctor could not find anything wrong with Chinaski, so he decided to do a special blood test to figure out his sickness. The doctor tells Chinaski to wait some time for the result to come out. While waiting for the result, Chinaski wanders around to pass the time.

When Chinaski wanders around, he meets a woman, whom he then, as per usual, inspects for her physical appearance and ultimately objectifies. When Chinaski lays eyes on her, he concludes that she is one of the "rare ones." The woman is showing plenty of legs, which Chinaski then savors to the point where he cannot keep his eyes away from her. When she gets up, Chinaski follows her, and he is "hypnotized" by the big ass of the woman. When she enters a post office, Chinaski follows her and just stands behind her. When he is done with his activity, he leaves the post office, and she is getting on the bus until the bus carries her away, and that was the last time Chinaski gets to enjoy her "delicious legs and ass" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 129).

Just like any other female character in the story, the woman also gets ogled, observed, and ultimately objectified. The woman is a stranger to Chinaski, and they do not have any particular relationship whatsoever. Despite that, Chinaski still treats her as a sexual object, evaluates her physical appearance, and gets "hypnotized" (Bukowski, 1996, p.129) by her. This event leads to Chinaski's act of following her around and feasting on her eyes, turning the woman he puts a tail on into an object of gratification. Chinaski's behavior of following the woman and ogling at her is called "stalking." According to New Mexico Highlands

University, stalking is a "pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear." Fundamentally, stalking is considered sexual harassment. The perpetrator gazes at and gives unwanted attention to the victim, objectifies them, and treats them as a physical object. Chinaski does not feel any remorse or guilt after indirectly harassing the woman. After that, Chinaski returns to the doctor for the final result of the test, and it turns out that nothing wrong is found in him.

Long after that, Chinaski's condition got worse and worse. As his dizziness gets worse and doesn't get any better, Chinaski's tendency toward alcoholism gets even worse. Despite his sickness, Chinaski still smokes and consumes booze as if there is no tomorrow, to the point where he becomes "mad as a March hare" (Bukowski, 1996, p.165). Chinaski then gets visited by a pre-med student, Wilbert, who will be his personal physician to help deal with his problem. Wilbert then does some basic medical check-ups, and Chinaski gets a bit hostile during the check-up because he's still under the influence of alcohol. When Wilbert checks his blood pressure, Chinaski complains about his life problems to Wilbert, and he also complains about how the post office is "driving him crazy" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 165) and how he needs "A good young piece of ass" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 165). In his current problematic life of wallowing in misery and constant abuse of smoking and alcohol, Chinaski still thinks that women are the answer to his problem. Unfortunately, the way he refers to women is merely about their sexual qualities rather than their qualities as a whole human being. This act degrades women and makes them lesser than the opposite gender because their plus point is their sexual parts.

On his days drowning in misery, Chinaski gets a visit from his friend, who brought a woman for him. Chinaski doesn't recognize the two people who visit him, but then the man explains that they are friends from a party Chinaski attended. Even though Chinaski knows that the other person is a "black girl" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 166), The man introduces her as if her gender is unrecognizable: "She is a woman. Don't you remember us? from the party?" (Bukowski, 1996: 166). Unlike any other woman in the story, she is treated as if she is a different being; the man even has to point out that she is a woman. It is also implied that the woman is actually a prostitute. This can be proven by the conversation between the man and Chinaski, where the man tried to remind Chinaski about the woman, and he said that Chinaski "wanted to fuck her" (Bukowski, 1996, p.166). Instead of getting angry with this conversation, the woman just "laughed" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 166). Another proof that she is an actual prostitute is that money is involved. The woman does "a nude floor show" (Bukowski, 1996, p.166) for them, and they indulge in threesome sex. After they finished their business, they drove Chinaski back home, and Chinaski decided to write this novel.

The chain of events that occurred in the story are degrading to women. The acts of degradation of women, which are sometimes even dehumanizing, such as making an observation towards women and addressing them physically without considering their value as human beings, to the extent of sexually harassing them, In the story, these kinds of actions are normalized, and there is no consequence for the perpetrators. The normalization of sexual violence is called "rape culture." According to (Gustar, 2015), Rape culture is a culture in which sexual violence is normalized, male-dominated environments encourage and sometimes rely on violence against women, the male gaze and women as objects-to-be-looked-at contribute to a culture that accepts rape, and rape is one experience along a continuum of sexual violence that women face on a daily basis.

While the term had not yet been invented in 1966, Bukowski was clearly aware of the existence of such a culture. Even though Bukowski's *Post Office* was published in 1996, the sequences of stories in *Post Office* were actually fragments of Bukowski's life when he was working in the post office. Hank Chinaski, the main character in the novel, is the alter ego of Charles Bukowski (Blanco, 2017; Hlavatá, 2019; Leinonen, 2014). Rape culture is a culture in which rape or sexual violence is normalized through persistent and pervasive attitudes toward both men and women—attitudes based on imagined and received gender identity constructions. Rape culture blames victims for their own assaults and for sexualized violence in general, and it envisions a heterosexual economy based on masculinized dominance and active desire as well as feminized passivity and acquiescence (Sugiarti, 2022). Rape culture ignores the psychological and social consequences of sexual violence. Oddly, it also justifies gendered violence as a "natural" result of female

passivity or female sexual desirability, twisting its logic in such a way that it de-authorizes men and implies that they are not in control of their sexuality but are subordinate to it (Gustar, 2015).

Prior to the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Allyn, 2016), State laws define rape as the victim not being married to the accused. This meant that if a woman postponed sexual fulfillment until marriage and then married a rapist, the law would be unable to aid her. Unlike her unmarried sister, who would almost certainly not be believed because of the law's mandated distrust of victims, the married woman raped by her own true love would not even have the chance to tell her story to a jury. When her trust was proven to be misplaced, the raped married woman, who had been taught that sexual fulfillment should go hand in hand with love and commitment, had no recourse. Indeed, the law deemed marriage an irrevocable consent to sex, and only a specific married man's decency and compassion could prevent him from forcing himself on his spouse. The problem is that even if women intend to be chaste until their wedding nights and even if they avoid flirting at work, men will prey on them before and after they marry. Men are generally more powerful than women regarding status and physical strength. As a result, if men want to engage in sexual misconduct or rape, they do not need an invitation or consent.

Women's Sexualization by Supporting Male Characters

Another issue of women's objectification arises from the supporting male characters in the story. Just like Chinaski, the way supporting male characters appear to be degrading to the women (Szymanski, 2020). The acts of observing, ogling, touching, or even using the woman as a means of pleasure or lust are also done by supporting male characters in the story. These actions dehumanize women, lowering their status as whole human beings and eventually making them less than the opposite gender. One example is from Chinaski's co-worker from the post office, Butcher.

There is something wrong with Butcher's head. Butcher would scream and yell at people. Because of this, no one actually wants to bother with Butcher; not even the supervisors want to deal with him. One example of his action is when a young woman comes to the post office and sits down at the end of the aisle. Butcher would scream, "Yeah, you cunt!" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 84). Furthermore, he also says, "You want my cock in your pussycat, don't you?" "That's what you want, you cunt, don't you?" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 84). Not only harassing her, Butcher also calls her a "cunt," making her the equivalent of a "bitch." On the other side of the story, Butcher also yells, "You're on my list, mother!" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 84). He then also adds, "I'm going to get you, you dirty mother!" "You rotten bastard! Cocksucker!" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 84). Butchner then continues again with his blabbering: "All right, baby! I don't like that look on your face! You're on my list, mother! You're right there at the top of my list! "I'm going to get your ass" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 84). This event continues to the extent that Chinaski has had enough with Butcher and challenges him to a fight. Butcher does not respond to any of Chinaski's challenges, and he just stares at the ceiling and blabbers repeatedly. Butcher's language represents how hostile the environment is for women. His words are demeaning towards women, making them less than the opposite gender.

Another case of objectification done by a male supporting character is by David Janko, who is also a colleague of Chinaski at the post office. Janko is a white young man who is in his early twenties. Chinaski and Janko both have the same taste in classical music. When Joyce divorced Chinaski, he mistakenly "packed two volumes of *The Lives of the Classical and Modern Composers*" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 110) in his suitcase for him to listen to. When Chinaski and Janko exchange opinions about Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, Janko grasps the idea that Chinaski is actually a learned man, and then he complains and rants to Chinaski about how poor his life was. Chinaski gets tired of Janko's rambling to the point where it amplifies Chinaski's sickness. Janko is a smart man and also a "great lover" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 111).

One day, Janko tells Chinaski that he was "trapped in hallways by beautiful young women who followed him down the streets" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 111). Unfortunately, this is perhaps a made-up story by Janko because Chinaski never saw him talking to women at work, nor did women talk to him. In one event, Janko boasts to Chinaski about his experience getting a "head job" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 111). According to Chinaski, Janko "didn't speak; he screamed." Janko screams: "JESUS CHRIST, SHE REALLY ATE ME UP!" AND YOUNG TOO! "But she was really a pro!" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 111). Chinaski gets tired of Janko's questionable boast about his experience meeting women and starts ignoring him. Meanwhile, Janko

never stops. He continues boasting about meeting two “classy” women in a drugstore and how one of them sits on each side of Janko. After confidently telling Chinaski about his experience, Janko hands Chinaski a novel he wrote and asks him to read it. Chinaski then goes back home and reads the novel while drinking a beer.

There is nothing special in the first section of Janko's novel, but things go south when Janko bumps into a "cultured, dainty, beautiful thing" at the opera. Nothing happened between Janko and the woman at first. Although the woman is wandering around, she is actually married to a doctor who doesn't have any interest in opera. From the bumping of Janko and the woman, something developed, and they had a "quickie" afterwards. After their affair ended, the woman doesn't know what to do because she loves both her husband and the hero, Janko. She then left both Janko and the doctor by committing suicide (Bukowski, 1996: 114). The way Janko shamelessly boasts to Chinaski about his experience meeting women and having sexual relationships with them shows how low their statuses are in the story. The mannerisms of Janko in explaining how a random woman casually gives him a "head job" and how she would eat him up are very demeaning towards women, making them an object of lust. Another issue is when Janko writes a novel where the woman has sex with him even though they just met. Not to mention that the woman also has a husband who is a doctor. Janko portrays the woman as disloyal because she would have sex with a stranger even though she has a husband.

Another case of objectification done by male supporting characters is Chinaski's black co-worker. When he tries to get Chinaski's attention, he calls, "Hey, poor white trash! Hey, boy" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 131). Chinaski hates the way the black man called him "boy." The black man then refers to Chinaski as "white me" and invites Chinaski to hang out on Saturday night because the black man has a "nice white gal with blonde hair" with him, to which Chinaski sarcastically replies, "And I got myself a nice black gal." "And you know what color her hair is" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 131). The black man then furiously answers, saying that Chinaski and his people have been screwing with black women for centuries. The black man also says that his people want to catch up to white people, and he says that he would stick his "big black dick" into a white gal. Chinaski then just replies, "If she wants it, she can have it" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 131). From the point of view of men, women are treated like objects to be used at will. Objectifying images of women of color are frequently infused with racial stereotypes. African American women, for example, are frequently depicted not only as objects but also as animals (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women of color are treated not just as an object of sexual pleasure but also like animals, which can be contested.

The story also depicts a hostile work environment. According to (Gupta & Garg, 2020), the issue of sexual harassment is not so much about biological differences between men and women as it is about the gender or social roles that men and women are assigned in social and economic life, as well as societal perceptions of male and female sexuality. The issue of sexual harassment is not so much about biological differences between men and women as it is about the gender or social roles that men and women are assigned in society as well as societal perceptions of male and female sexuality. Acts of hostile environment can range from insulting female employees to sexual assault or rape. One day, Chinaski is "sitting next to a young girl who doesn't know her scheme very well" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 150). As per usual, Chinaski surveys the woman. After making an observation, Chinaski concludes that the woman is "a little on the plump side, but she was ready" (Bukowski, 1996: p.150). Despite that, Chinaski does not show any interest in the woman, for he has enough with women. Since the woman does not know that well about her scheme, she asks Chinaski for guidance, which Chinaski gives her without batting an eye. A supervisor then gets close to her and starts talking to the woman, trying to get familiar with her: "You say you're from Kansas City?" "Both my parents were born in Kansas City" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 150) which the woman simply answers, "Is that so?" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 150). The woman does not show any interest in the supervisor, and she continues to ask Chinaski about her work instead of the supervisor. The supervisor then "stands really close to her" and continues to ask her personal questions, such as whether she lives far from work and whether she likes her job, which she would answer with a simple yes or no, indicating a disinterest in him. Knowing this subtle rejection by the woman, the supervisor moves to Chinaski and begins to question Chinaski's work, which then leads to his fall into trouble.

As the story goes, the objectification of women drives further to the extent that women do not just get objectified visually but also physically. After Chinaski gets into trouble with his post office job, he signs a paper stating that he has been counseled. His superior then sends him to deliver more mail and emails and continue his work. During that time, some scandals happened at the post office. A guy got caught peeking at a woman's skirt in the stairway. There is no detailed information about the incident. The only information that can be acquired from the text is that the man was caught while he was doing his sinful act. Another scandal that happened in the post office was when a woman who worked in a cafeteria was not paid properly. The general foreman then promised to pay her salary if she provided "oral copulation" to the general foreman and three mail handlers. Despite agreeing with the general foreman's terms, she still does not get paid. This situation then gets found out, and the woman along with the three mail handlers get fired, while the general foreman only gets demoted to supervisor (Bukowski, 1996, p.154).

Workplace sexual harassment is defined as any recurring and unwanted rhetorical or sexually explicit derogatory statements. Even unwanted physical contact made by those in the workplace who are hostile to the employee interferes with the worker's productivity, negatively impacts job security, or creates a threatening or daunting working atmosphere (Gupta & Garg, 2020). Sexual harassment is frequently used as a power play to intimidate, manipulate, or degrade another employee. It is a kind of objectification that is raising concerns in the workplace. In hostile work environments, women are vulnerable to objectification.

Normalization of Sexualization by Female Characters

The construction of objectification towards women is not just done by male characters but also by female characters. They may normalize sexualization done to them in a variety of ways, including not trying to resist any form of objectification, self-objectification, and having an objectifying viewpoint of other women. Female self-objectification is best characterized by limited exposure to objectifying experiences that socialize women with self-objectification, and as a result, they integrate this perception of themselves as an object or collection of bodies (Kroon Van Diest & Perez, 2013). One of the female characters that helps construct objectification in the story is Chinaski's first lover, Betty. When Betty and Chinaski had a fight, Betty pointed out that Chinaski had been cheating on her physically. She specifically points out how big the tits of one of the women Chinaski cheated with were. According to Betty, the woman loves to walk around with "her tits hanging out" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 39). Betty also calls her "big white cow-tits" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 39). Betty calls the other woman a "whore" and says that she would "screw anything with a cock" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 40). In addition to that, Betty calls Chinaski's new partner, saying that the woman Chinaski has a relationship with is not suitable for her.

Another female character that helps with the construction of women's objectification in the story is Joyce. Joyce was also Chinaski's lover, whom they met on the horse track. On the day they first meet, Chinaski makes an observation about how beautiful and sexy Joyce is. There are also dozens of "jerkoffs" that would sit very close to her. Despite this kind of action, Joyce just sits there, not showing any resistance to the "jerkoff" that slides closer and closer to her. Chinaski, on the other hand, tells the "jerkoff" to go away and take Joyce to another seat (Bukowski, 1996, p. 41). Chinaski and Joyce then marry, and they move to Texas, which is Joyce's home town. When Chinaski, Joyce, and Joyce's grandpa and grandma are hanging out, the grandpa named "Willy" asks Chinaski if he has seen a buffalo or not, and Chinaski says no to the question because he thinks that buffalo are about to go extinct. Wally then proves him wrong and says that they have plenty of buffalo around. Joyce then joins the conversation and says, "Show him, Daddy Wally" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 43). Chinaski is surprised that Joyce calls Wally "Daddy," even though Wally is not her father. Joyce addresses Daddy in a lewd manner to Wally in this case. Despite having a husband, Joyce playfully acts immorally towards her grandpa. Chinaski is a bit unhappy with her wife's behavior and calls her a "silly bitch" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 43).

Another case of the normalization of objectification by female characters is the woman Chinaski encounters when he enters the wrong room. Chinaski's room is supposed to be number 409, but he made a mistake and entered room 309. There is not much information for the woman. The only information that can be inferred is Chinaski's observation of her. According to Chinaski, the woman "looked all right," is young, has a good pair of legs, and is also a blonde (Bukowski, 1996, p. 87). Chinaski then looks around and

figures out that the room is different from what he remembered. Chinaski has no idea that he is in the wrong room. Chinaski then says hello to the woman and asks her for a drink. The woman, without having any suspicion towards the man who just randomly entered her room, says hi back and accepts Chinaski's offer. When Chinaski tells the woman that he likes how the place is fixed up, the woman answers that she fixed it up herself. They then continued to drink together. Chinaski put his beer can down, "gave her a kiss," and put his hand on her knee (Bukowski, 1996, p. 87). Surprisingly, the woman did not show any resistance to Chinaski's actions. Chinaski then makes a comment: "I really like the way this place looks." "It's really going to lift my spirits" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 87), which the woman replies with, "That's nice." "My husband likes it too" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 87). Chinaski is surprised by the woman's statement, and he asks her what the apartment number is. It turns out that Chinaski was in the wrong room. His room is supposed to be room 409, but he entered room 309. Despite this, the woman does not tell Chinaski to go out right away, but she rather tells Chinaski to "Sit down, sweetie" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 87) which Chinaski would refuse. Chinaski then grabs the remaining beers, and the woman asks, "Why rush right off?" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 88). Chinaski does not want to risk it because he thinks that "some men are crazy" because "some men are in love with their wives" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 88). The woman then laughs and tells Chinaski to come again: "Don't forget where I'm at" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 88).

When men or women focus on a woman's appearance, they essentially objectify themselves. Women performed less proficiently on a sequence of problems after the full-body gaze. Women become even more passive when others are fixated on their physical bodies, and they are less willing to take a stand for women's rights once they recall being ogled or receiving sexual comments from a man in the past. Eventually, women begin to act as objects (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2014).

Another example of the normalization of sexualization is from Vi, Chinaski's friend from the central post office. Chinaski met Vi at the bar near the horse track. After recognizing that the woman is Vi, Chinaski then calls her "Vi, baby" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 99). Responding to Chinaski's call, Vi then comes over to Chinaski while also leaning "a lot of leg and breast" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 99) against Chinaski. After a brief conversation, they choose to bet at the horse track together, and they win the bet. After winning their first bet, Vi then asks Chinaski to bet once again: "Let's see you get the next one" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 100). While asking Chinaski to play another bet, Vi also puts her "leg and breast" up against Chinaski (Bukowski, 1996, p. 100). After they finished betting at the horse track, they moved to Vi's apartment. After arriving at Vi's apartment, Vi tells Chinaski to grab the drinks and wait. After a while, Vi comes out wearing "earrings, high heels, and a short skirt" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 102) as if she is trying to impress Chinaski. Vi brings a drink and proceeds to sit on Chinaski's lap while kissing him and putting her tongue in Chinaski's mouth (Bukowski, 1996, p. 103). After drinking for a while, Chinaski and Vi decide to indulge in fornication. Unfortunately, Chinaski is too drunk to perform, so they decide to call it a day and go to sleep instead. Chinaski then wakes up and is surprised because Vi is stoking him up and riding him. Chinaski then tells Vi to go away because he is too tired and drunk, but Vi just looks down on him with her "little greedy eyes" (Bukowski, 1996: p.103).

According to Chinaski, he feels like "being raped by a high yellow enchantress" (Bukowski, 1996: 104). Chinaski then reprimands Vi: "Shit." Get down, baby. It's been a long, hard day. "There will be a better time" (Bukowski, 1996, p.104). Things then calmed down, and they went back to sleep. When Chinaski opens his eyes in the morning, he still feels the dizziness from alcohol linger. Vi then tells Chinaski to get out of Vi's apartment because her roommates are about to come home. While Chinaski dresses up, he then blames Vi for his bad performance at sex: "You make me feel like a washout" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 105) which Vi would reply: "I can't be that bad!" "There must be some good in me" (Bukowski, 1996 p 105). Vi feels inferior because of Chinaski's comment that she even has to stress out the fact that she has "some good" in her. After finishing his dressing, Chinaski goes to the bathroom and cleans up. He then goes to Vi and says not to be pissed out because he finds out the reason, he could not perform well in bed is because of alcohol, not because of her. Vi understands Chinaski and tells him not to drink too much because, according to Vi, "no woman likes to come in second to a bottle" (Bukowski, 1996: 105). Chinaski then proceeds to ask Vi whether she needs any money, and he reaches out and takes twenty dollars from his wallet and gives it to Vi. Vi is happy with the money that Chinaski gave, and she expresses her gratitude: "My, you are sweet" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 105). In addition to that, Vi also shows her gratitude towards Chinaski by touching his cheek and

kissing him gently along the side of his mouth. Following this, Vi and Chinaski part ways, and Chinaski goes back to the horse track.

Berger stated that a woman must evaluate everything she is and does because of how she might seem to others and, subsequently, how she might seem to men, which is critical to what is commonly regarded as her life's accomplishment (2008). Her own sense of being is overtaken by another's appreciation of her as herself. Furthermore, [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#) contend that habitual self-conscious body monitoring caused by self-objectification is best viewed as a strategy developed by many women to help decide how other people will treat them, which has profound consequences for their quality of life.

Critical Position of the Author

Charles Bukowski was born in Germany in 1920, the son of Henry Charles Bukowski, an American soldier of German ancestry, and Katharina Fett, a local sewer. Because of the 1923 financial crisis, they decided to relocate to the United States, specifically to California. The future nettle of the Beat generation and a frequent setting in Bukowski's stories ([Sounes, 2010](#)). Because of his father's physical neglect, which usually included harsh criticism of Charles, he describes his childhood as a miserable and harmful time. Henry also abused his mother. In contrast, Charles Bukowski found no tranquility in her demeanor as she constantly defended his father. As a result, Bukowski's first image of a woman was tragic: a woman accepting the violent behavior of a man—sadly, her husband, who should be a support—being vulnerable and favoring obedience over dignity or trying to help her kid ([Hlavatá, 2019](#)).

A job cannot be separated from the author's social, political, and cultural background. The author's experiences and the audience to whom the author wishes to convey the message are reflected in the message in his book ([Muyassaroh, 2021](#)). The Post Office is more than just a product of Bukowski's imagination; it is a reflection of society at the time the novel was written. His first novel, *The Post Office*, has piqued the interest of both the general public and critics. Henry Chinaski, Bukowski's autobiographical anti-hero, is introduced in *The Post Office*. It chronicles Bukowski's life from around 1952 to his three-year resignation from the United States Postal Service, his return in 1958, and his final resignation in 1969. This novel successfully portrays the thoughts and motivations of a man drifting through life with the burden of alcohol addiction and who, in the end, has a genuine love for Betty, his first common-law wife, though he is unaware of it until it is tragically too late. While the book contains a lot of pathos, Bukowski never loses his sense of humor and irony. He starts by presenting the strict postal service code of ethics and then shows how reality contradicts the regulations.

Bukowski belonged to the Beat generation, according to his age and location. Bukowski was an alternative to the alternative group, and if he must be included, he is punk post-Beatnik ([Miles, 2005](#)). Despite having lived a similar bohemian lifestyle for some time—traveling without a full-time job—his perspective was different, and he claims he could not have the carefree mindset. Bukowski was opposed to romantic and sentimental portrayals of the world.

Women, in particular, were expected to conform to the system in the 1950s. The only option was to stay at home and raise a family. Being beaten was far more appealing to the women profiled here than being chained to a brand-new kitchen appliance. The liberal arts educations these young women received, for the most part, bred a natural preference for art and poetry and for living a life of creativity rather than limiting it to the occasional hour at the symphony. Nothing compares to joining this chorus of individuality and freedom, abandoning boredom, safety, and conformity ([Knight & Bree, 1996](#)).

Being equal to male writers in the postwar United States, according to [Knight \(1996\)](#), was extremely difficult. Men founded the Beat generation, with the core group consisting of Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, William Burroughs, and Allan Ginsberg ([Gair, 2008](#)) and as a result, women were not expected to express their thoughts and emotions and were frequently underestimated by male Beatniks as incapable of living such an adventurous and tentative life. Furthermore, many important representatives of the Beat generation had homosexual relationships, giving the impression that masculinity is favored over femininity. Bukowski expressed his feelings about being a female who possesses feminine traits as a gender that deserves less than the opposite gender. Chinaski sits beside Fay while she gives birth. When Chinaski notices a spot of blood on the left side of Fay's mouth, he wipes it away with a wet cloth. Chinaski mumbles to himself as he wipes

the blood: "Women were meant to suffer; no wonder they demanded constant declarations of love" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 134). Bukowski's view on women giving birth, a quality of becoming a woman, is harsh. As a result, according to Bukowski, women are designed to suffer. Furthermore, Bukowski stated that women constantly ask for declarations of love, which he considers a weakness. Bukowski stated the statement negatively rather than positively.

Bukowski sees women as objects, precisely sexual objects endowed with human qualities. The male gaze explicitly objectifies women and puts them in a passive position over which women have no control, making them replaceable possessions of men. The degradation of women continues. Bukowski provides little insight into the female psyche and how female characters perceive attraction and sexuality rather than depicting these women as the muted object of the Beats' general disregard for the female as an active agent. Betty, Chinaski's first lover, is one example of Beats' disregard for women. Betty does not have a voice or the ability to speak for herself until later in the story, when she becomes a typist (Bukowski, 1996, p. 39). Even Chinaski admits that when a woman gets a job, which translates to power, "you notice the difference right away" (Bukowski, 1996, p. 39). Betty is treated as if she were a passive agent—a muted object—rather than an active one before she gains power.

This approach is notable in female character characterization, which is characterized by a simple depiction of their outer beauty, generally full of sexual allusions, and *Post Office* appears to lack a note about their inner qualities. This is an outer description from the male's point of view, emphasizing specific distinctive characteristics of the female body, particularly related to their sex parts. Despite being sexually liberal and accepting, the Beat generation's tolerance did not result in a compassionate attitude toward women, and this social and literary movement became male-centered.

Furthermore, the male gaze is sometimes attached to female possession, as evidenced by how the main male characters treat female characters, exploiting them for their pleasure and ditching them when they become bored with the women. This shift is usually precipitated by the presence of another male character or the meeting of a new woman, so women serve as a replaceable object for which men have little regard. Bukowski's point of view is an example of extreme social and moral irresponsibility, as well as a free license and fallacious justification for rape and sexual abuse committed in the name of "sexual freedom."

The term "sexual revolution," according to Allyn (2016), was initially coined in the 1960s to define the presumed impact of a newly invented birth control pill on the behavior and attitude of white, middle-class female college students. The term "sexual revolution" had taken on new meanings with each passing year by the early 1970s. It was created to explain the screening of hard-core sex films in first-run cinemas as well as the growth of private sex clubs. It was used to capture both the new swinging single lifestyle and the growing popularity of open marriage. Sexual behavior and radical sexual thinking shifts have repeatedly been regarded as crucial to the Sixties revolution (Schaefer (Ed), 2014). The sexual revolution simply means sexual intercourse whenever and wherever they wish for those in the counterculture. Over the twentieth century, modernization and secularization contributed to de-stigmatizing birth control in America. Whether or not there were laws in place, the discovery of the oral contraceptive in the late 1950s changed public discourse about birth control. The birth control pill, invented in 1957 and certified by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960, gave women more "sexual freedom" than any contraceptive device before it. Just as the availability of penicillin in the 1940s finally freed sex from the potential risks of sexual disease, the discovery of the birth control pill appeared to free sex from the dangers of unintended pregnancy (Allyn, 2016).

As the social environment changed, so did the number of sexual possibilities. Marriage as an institution was in serious trouble. By 1960, approximately half of all marriages were on the verge of dissolution. The increasing popularity of sex for pleasure rather than reproduction has diminished monogamous marriage. The accessibility of a simple and effective method of pill contraception has also broken the monopoly on sex. Numerous women saw marriage as a symbol of male power. Various economic factors, such as wage inequality that favored men over women, a lack of job opportunities for women, and other institutionalized benefits, supported such a viewpoint. Nonetheless, both men and women wanted to reshape marriage, explore new sexual territories, and even create new institutions that allowed for new ways

of interacting with one another; open relationships, partner swapping, and communal sex enabled men and women to establish new types of sex lives (Schaefer (Ed), 2014).

According to this research, Bukowski may interpret this novel as depicting how women lived and what they desired during that period. Although male and female characters freely engage in sex, whether with their spouses or with non-marital sex, Bukowski assumed that these kinds of actions are done in the name of "sexual freedom." Unfortunately, this is not the case. For years, men (or, at the very least, the male chauvinist minority) have tried to create a false narrative of commitment without marriage (Godbeer, 2004). In this mindset, the male is the hunter, and the female is the hunted. In his endeavor to conquer, he frequently makes false promises in order to catch his unwary prey. It could be flattery, his frequent presence, or the magic phrase "I love you." True intimacy is unattainable in the casual sex subculture. Once we run out of topics to talk about, we resort to sex. Conversations run out quickly when the partners have not matured to the point where they are interested in one another. The sexual revolution cannot survive since it contradicts history and neglects the essential properties of male and female human nature. It seeks exploitation and neurotic compensation while avoiding genuine love and depth of understanding.

CONCLUSION

Henry Chinaski, the narrator, tells about his life journey and why he chose to work in a post office. Rape culture, the male gaze, and other forms of sexual harassment influence women's portrayals. The Post Office is more than just a product of Bukowski's imagination; it reflects society when the novel was written. The Post Office represents male characters, objectifying female characters. Furthermore, some female characters normalize the way they are sexualized, from self-objectification to condescendingly stigmatizing other women. When analyzing Bukowski's portrayal of women in his work, it is essential to mention that Bukowski's childhood, adolescence, and parts of his adult life all took place during a time when women were generally viewed negatively. In the work of women's liberation, these were counter-revolutionary years with significant opposition to female rights. Women are treated as passive objects rather than active ones before they have any form of power. The Post Office only depicts the female body's exterior, emphasizing specific characteristics, especially the sexual parts. Furthermore, as demonstrated by how the main male characters treat female characters, exploiting them for their pleasure and abandoning them when they become bored with the women, the male gaze is sometimes enclosing to female possession.

Female characters in the story face sexual objectification, rape, and sexual abuse in the name of sexual freedom. These aspects of women's negative behavior contribute to their objectification. The novel's narration attempts to demonstrate how women were treated in that era by relating events in America to the novel's contextual background. By combining elements of the Beat generation and the sexual revolution, Bukowski assumed that women were willing to be mistreated, particularly as sexual objects, in the name of sexual freedom. The sexual revolution is doomed because it contradicts history and ignores essential human characteristics.

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