

DIRTY AMERICA: READING CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S SELECTED FICTION

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ABSTRACT

It won't be an understatement to claim that American Literature reached its fruition in the post-war era. After the two wars, the range of themes in American literature, particularly fiction, showed a significant increase. The writers not only criticized the political and economic atmosphere of the country, but were painfully aware of the disturbing issues like racism and gender inequality. While the fiction of postwar America is usually replete with the names of literary giants like like Don Delilah, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, William Burroughs, John Barth, Vladimir Nabokov, Toni Morrison, Joseph Heller, the one writer whose work is equally commendable but rather ignored or shooed away by the 'mainstream literary groups' is Charles Bukowski. While Bukowski is usually remembered as a poet, his fictional meanderings within the American landscapes provide the readers with a view of America hasn't predominantly found in any writer of his time. Bukowski fiction, through the image of his alter-ego character, shows the real underbelly of American life. With the incorporation of drug addicts, whores, thieves, menial jobs and an unhinged desperation to live the day, Bukowski not only enlarges the space of the novel, but also extends the scope for readers to look closely at the American life once the orgy of war is over. My paper tries to look at this and other themes like anxiety, paranoia, and loneliness among other through the novels of Charles Bukowski. It also tries to interrogate whether the term 'Dirty Realism', often associated with Bukowski, is an adequate term to refer to the flux of themes that bus. kowski presents through his fiction.

KEYWORDS: American Literature, Charles Bukowski, Fiction, Post Office, Factotum, Ham on Rye, Dirty Realism