

ANALYSIS OF THEME IN THREE OF CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S POEMS THROUGH DICTION

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ABSTRACT

Dalam skripsi ini, penulis membahas tiga puisi Charles Bukowski yang berjudul “The Genius of The Crowd”, “For The Foxes” dan “Be Kind” melalui diksi yang digunakan. Charles Bukowski adalah seorang penulis berkebangsaan Jerman-Amerika yang sudah memulai karirnya sebagai seorang penulis sejak tahun 1944. Ia menjadi salah satu tokoh sastra kontemporer yang cukup dikenal di Amerika Serikat karena sering menyindir kebobrokan sosial melalui karya-karyanya.

Penulis membahas tema dari tiga puisi tersebut melalui diksi yang digunakan oleh pengarangnya. Puisi pertama, “The Genius of The Crowd” menceritakan sebuah peringatan untuk berhati-hati dengan orang yang manipulatif yang menggunakan kebencian demi keuntungan diri mereka sendiri. Sementara itu, “For The Foxes” dan “Be Kind” juga menceritakan sebuah peringatan untuk berhati-hati dengan orang yang manipulatif yang menggunakan tipu daya dan perbedaan usia sebagai alasan demi keuntungan diri mereka sendiri. Dari diksi yang digunakan dalam setiap puisi, penulis menemukan tema besar dari ketiga puisi ini, yaitu seseorang harus berhati-hati terhadap orang manipulatif yang mengandalkan banyak cara demi kepentingan mereka sendiri dan harus mampu menyadari tujuan sebenarnya dari apa yang mereka lakukan.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Henry Charles Bukowski is a popular American contemporary literary figure. He is well known for his satire depicting desperate lives and depravity of ordinary lives of poor Americans in the 1960s up to the 1990s. In his early career, he wrote two short stories *Aftermath of a Lengthy Rejection Slip* (1944) and *20 Tanks from Kasseldown* (1946) but both of his works at that time got bad reviews because the stories were not interesting and made a low selling. Because of this failure, he became desperate and he retreated from the writing world for about one decade. In 1960, however, he turned his devastation into series of poems and made a successful comeback with his most famous poetry books entitled *His Wife, the Painter* (1959) and *Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail* (1960). Besides that, he also produced some other popular works in the form of novels such as *Post Office* (1971) and *Pulp* (1994). During his life, he has made over a thousand poems, six novels, hundreds of short prose and some films. Adam Kirsch, an American poet and literary critic, stated in his article in *The New Yorker* that Bukowski's works, especially his poems, have a free verse form and declarative meaning. Even though the language of his poem is sentimental and dull, Bukowski poems are easy to

understand by the readers. He often uses broken sentences like blank sentences in his poems then turns them into very short rhymes; thus, the poems become simpler to be understood by the readers and they can figure out the meaning of the poems.

Charles Bukowski's alcoholic behavior and lifestyle affected his writing style. It made his writings more unique because he used direct and harsh language, satire and sarcasm. Most of Bukowski's poems were written to deliver a good message for his readers to fight the injustice in society even though most of his poems have a dark vibe. I chose three of Bukowski's poems to be analyzed in my thesis, they are "The Genius of The Crowd", "For the Foxes", and "Be Kind." These three poems are great examples of Bukowski's point of view about how the depravity of urban life makes people from a certain class become hypocritical and manipulative towards others to gain some advantages. I believe, the issues I found in the three poems are serious and important to be discussed these days. Furthermore, these three poems also deliver a good message for the readers. They teach the readers to act and make decisions wisely towards our surroundings. Even though the issues in the three poems are complicated, by analyzing the diction in each poem, I could understand the general message that the author would like to convey.

In this thesis, I will analyze the theme of Charles Bukowski's three poems through diction. Diction is one important element to assist me in revealing the theme of each poem. Edith L. Tiempo, in her book *Introduction to Poetry*, defines theme as "the core-idea of the poem which radiates into the component parts (images, situation, details, characters)" (41). *Literary Devices* defines diction in general as "style of speaking or writing, determined by the choice of words by a speaker or a

writer” (“Diction”). According to Owen Barfield, in his book *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, “when words are selected and arranged in such a way that their meaning either arouses, or is obviously intended to arouse, aesthetic imagination, the result may be described as poetic diction” (41).

I chose Formalism as the approach in analyzing these three poems because I could find the information I need to reveal the true meaning of the poems by focusing on the poems themselves. In his book *An Introduction to Poetry*, X.J. Kennedy defines formalism as an approach that “regards literature as a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms” (630). It focuses on “a literary work that can be understood only by reference to its intrinsic literary features, that is, those elements found in the text itself” (630). Thus, formalism is the best approach to use in my thesis.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that are going to be discussed in this thesis are:

1. What are the themes of the three selected poems of Charles Bukowski’s?
2. How does the diction in each poem help to reveal the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are stated below:

1. To show the themes of the three poems of Charles Bukowski’s
2. To show how the diction used helps to reveal the theme of each poem.

Method of Research

I conduct a library research for my thesis. I start by reading Bukowski's poems. Then I analyze the poems by using the formalism approach. I search for and analyze the diction that helps to reveal the theme of each poem. I take some references and sources from the Internet to support my analysis. In the end, I draw some conclusions.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is written in three chapters. Chapter One deals with the introduction of the thesis including Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the analysis of the theme of Charles Bukowski's three poems. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of Charles Bukowski's poems and biography of Charles Bukowski.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS OF THEME THROUGH DICTION OF CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S POEMS

“The Genius of the Crowd”

A poem definitely carries a message to be delivered to the readers. Since a poem can serve as a tool to channel one's idea to others, Bukowski also makes use of his poems to deliver his perception about the depravity and hypocrisy in society. Depravity is defined as “the quality or state of being corrupt, evil, or perverted: the quality or state of being depraved” (“Depravity”) and hypocrisy which means “behaviour that does not meet the moral standards or match the opinions that somebody claims to have (“Hypocrisy”). “The Genius of the Crowd” tells a warning about the problems that might be triggered by the hypocrites and manipulative people in the society. Those kinds of people are willing to destroy those who differ from them by using their intelligence, dominance, and fake intentions only to get what they want. I believe depravity could turn people into hypocrites and manipulative ones if they are triggered by their own greed, fear, and hatred.

First, I would like to begin my analysis with the first stanza:

there is enough treachery, hatred violence absurdity in the average (1)

human being to supply any given army on any given day (2)

The persona begins the first stanza by stating some facts that show depravity in the first line. The depravity can be seen from the words “treachery”, “hatred”, “violence” and “absurdity”. “Treachery” means “betrayal of trust” (“Treachery”); “hatred” means “an extremely strong feeling of dislike” (“Hatred”); “violence” means “actions or words that are intended to hurt people” (“Violence”); and “absurdity” means “the quality or state of being ridiculous or wildly unreasonable” (“Absurdity”). From this stanza, I believe it tells that there are evil traits inside humans and this can lead anyone to do violence or any other chaotic deeds when they are triggered. I opine Bukowski uses the word “army” which means “a large group of people who are involved in a particular activity” (“Army”) to explain that these depravities can affect anyone on a large scale. Thus, the point that I get here is the persona states there are people who can trigger those evil traits from the depraved people and later can control and manipulate them to build negativity.

Next, the second stanza goes:

and the best at murder are those who preach against it (3)

and the best at hate are those who preach love

and the best at war finally are those who preach peace (5)

The second stanza shows hypocrisy, manipulation, and irony through contradictory actions that these murderers, haters, and people who do best at war. I believe all of these people here refer to certain people in the previous stanza because their actions show an act of hypocrisy and manipulation. So, the persona gives a message to his readers to be aware of this kind of people. This stanza tells that these hypocrites are saying things that are not in line with their actions. It can be seen in

lines 3 until 5: “and the best at murder” is contrasted with “are those who preach against it“. “and the best at hate” is contrasted with “are those who preach peace”, and “and the best at war” is contrasted with “are those who preach love”. Through these ironic sentences, the persona uses the word “best” three times which has a meaning “of the most excellent type or quality” (“Best”) to give a strong emphasis for the irony from the above contradicted things. I assume that the persona does so because he wants to give the readers a message that in society, the hypocrites and manipulative people exist.

Next, the third stanza goes:

those who preach god, need god (6)

those who preach peace do not have peace

those who preach peace do not have love (8)

The third stanza is showing a fact that the ones who are preaching god, peace, and love, are actually the ones who lack those spiritual needs and need them more. I believe this stanza is more prominent in showing the irony as the persona opens this stanza by giving some ironic facts through short lines. I believe the word “those” which is repeated three times refers to the hypocrites and manipulative people like in the previous stanza. The idea from this stanza is about the opposite meaning of every action that the hypocrites and manipulative people do. The ironic facts can be seen vividly from each line “those who preach god, need god/those who preach peace do not have peace/those who preach peace do not have love”. The words “preach” and “peace” are often repeated. “Preach” means “to try to persuade other people to believe in a particular belief or follow a particular way of life” (“Preach”) and “peace” means “freedom from war and violence, especially

when people live and work together happily without disagreements” (“Peace”). In my opinion, the persona uses these words to show the readers how fragile those kinds of people are spiritually as seen from their actions which are not in line with what they say. That is why people of these kinds easily preach something since they are actually the ones who are lack of those spiritual needs. I also assume that these words are used to show how hypocritical they are to the readers so that the readers can be aware with these hypocrites that live among them.

The fourth stanza also talks about a warning from the persona to the readers to beware of those hypocrites and manipulative people which are proven and visible in lines 9 until 22. In this whole stanza, the word “beware” which means “used to warn someone to be very careful about something or someone” (“Beware”) is repeated. Through this repetition, the persona tries to warn his readers not to believe in what those hypocrites and manipulative people do because actually they are pretending to be good and no one knows the real motives behind their good acts.

In lines 9 until 13

“beware the preachers (9)

beware the knowers

beware those who are always reading books (11)

beware those who either detest poverty

or are proud of it” (13)

the persona tries to warn his readers to beware of two-faced preachers, knowers, people who are always reading books as well as people who hate poverty or proud of it. In my opinion, the word “detest” in line 12 which means “to hate; dislike extremely” (“Detest”) and “proud” which means “having respect for yourself and

not wanting to lose the respect of others” (“Proud”) are contradictory. By using contradiction, I believe the persona wants to warn his readers to be more careful with intelligent people who seem to hate poverty and people who pretend to defend the poor. I believe those hypocrites and manipulative people are like that because they want to be looking good by hating poverty as well as to gain big respect from the poor by pretending to defend them. This is their way to manipulate others since they are actually glad over someone’s poverty or misery.

Moreover, in lines 14 until 15:

“beware those quick to praise (14)

for they need praise in return” (15)

the persona is again giving a warning to his readers to be careful with people who are quick to praise as seen from the word “beware”. I believe people of this kind are not sincere with things that they praise because they need to be immediately praised in return.

After that, lines 16 to 17 are:

“beware those who are quick to censor (16)

they are afraid of what they do not know” (17)

These lines tell about a warning to beware of people who easily ban many things because they are afraid of what they do not know. In this stanza, the word “censor” which means “to remove parts of something, such as a book, movie, or letter, that you do not want someone to see or hear” (“Censor”) is used by the persona to warn the readers of this kind of people since they are afraid of things that they do not understand or know. Thus, they decide to quickly censor anything without knowing the fact first and their action can bring injustice within society, which I consider to

be an act of manipulation.

In lines 18 to 19:

“beware those who seek constant crowds for (18)

they are nothing alone” (19)

once again, the persona tries to give a warning to his readers. The idea of these lines is that there are people who always look for friends since they are nothing when they are alone. The persona uses the word “constant” which means “happening a lot or all the time” (“Constant”) to emphasize a warning to his readers to be careful with people who always look for friends. That is because people who always look for friends usually they are not independent so that they tend to depend more on their friends rather than themselves since they do not want to be lonely and be rejected.

Next, lines 20 until 22 are:

beware the average man the average woman (20)

beware their love, their love is average

seeks average (22)

I assume these lines also have the same message as the previous ones. In this stanza, the word “average” which means “a standard or level that is considered to be typical or usual” (“Average”) can help the readers to draw a conclusion. This word explains this stanza as a whole that there are people who only want to accept and love others who have the same level or standard as them and they do not want to accept others who are different from them. I believe they do so because they already feel comfortable with their current state so that they do not want to look for something best out of their comfort zone. In my opinion, the persona states this to

give the readers a warning to beware of people of this kind.

To sum up, this stanza tries to deliver a warning through the repeated word “beware” which is followed by other words. I believe through those words, the persona wants to spread a warning to his readers to be careful with such kind of people. No matter how great people seem to look, how great their knowledge seems to be, or how peaceful their mind and vision seem to be, the readers should be aware of their motives behind every action and situation.

The fifth stanza is connected with the previous stanza and shows up with a new fact, that is hatred. This stanza deals with how those hypocrites destroy and manipulate others who do not understand what they want as seen from line 28 and 29 from words “they will attempt to destroy anything/that differs from their own” and from line 32 and 33 from words “they will consider their failure as creators/only as the failure of the world”. It is clearly seen from this stanza that those hypocrites are willing to destroy and manipulate others who have different points of view from them by using their intellect and opinions. Thus, they can gain a benefit from others through their wickedness. These are the lines that show how they try to manipulate others.

In lines 23 until 25:

but there is genius in their hatred (23)

there is enough genius in their hatred to kill you

to kill anybody (25)

the persona talks about how those intelligent hypocrites use their intellect to destroy anybody. As seen in line 23, the word “genius” here is the power that they can use along with their hatred to destroy others. Dictionary.com defines the word “genius”

as “natural ability or capacity; strong inclination” (“Genius”), which I believe, represents the ability of the manipulative people to kill or destroy because of their hatred.

Lines 26 until 29:

not wanting solitude (26)

not understanding solitude

they will attempt to destroy anything (28)

that differs from their own

talk about the hypocrites and manipulative people’s feelings about the value of privacy and their effort to destroy those who differ from them. The word “solitude” which means “the situation of being alone without other people” (“Solitude”) represents solitary. I assume that the manipulative people here hate others because the manipulative people do not understand the concept of solitary itself. The result is that those hypocrites attempt to destroy anything; people who have a different opinion from them.

Lines 30 until 33 are:

not being able to create art (30)

they will not understand art

they will consider their failure as creators (32)

only as a failure of the world

I find the word “art” which means “an activity through which people express particular ideas” (“Art” def. 4). I assume those hypocrites here are actually in difficulty conveying their own ideas since they fail to do it. They know they fail but still, they do not want to admit their failures and keep blaming the world or others

for them. From this action, I assume Bukowski wants to show how manipulation looks like through someone's selfish attitude. Thus, the readers can be more careful with people of this kind who are never sincere over their mistakes and keep blaming others even though they are wrong.

Lines 34 until 37 are:

not being able to love fully (34)

they will believe your love incomplete

and then they will hate you (36)

and their hatred will be perfect

These lines talk about the opinion of those hypocrites and manipulative people about love and hatred. I opine the word "your" and "you" refer to people in general. I find the word "incomplete" which means "not having some part, or not finished" ("Incomplete"), which I believe those hypocrites are just envious of people who can love in the way they cannot do, so they hate them for that. In these lines, I also find the word "hatred" which means "an extremely strong feeling of dislike" ("Hatred") is a result of those hypocrites' manipulation which is caused by their being envious. In the end, those hypocrites will hate and blame the others, and I believe by doing so the hatred and envy inside them will be "perfect" or complete.

Finally, the final stanza goes:

like a shining diamond (38)

like a knife

like a mountain (40)

like a tiger

like hemlock (42)

their finest art

This stanza, I believe, is connected with the previous one to explain those hypocrites' perfect hatred through illustrations of various things. The persona uses similes to give a better illustration to the readers about how their hatred looks like. That is because similes can help the readers in illustrating their hatred through a comparison to real objects like in real life. As seen from the first line until the last line, I find words "like a shining diamond" followed by "like a knife/like a mountain/ like a tiger/ like hemlock" and closed with words "their finest art". In my opinion, the persona uses words "like a shining diamond" to describe that their hatred is precious because those hypocrites believe that their hatred is valuable like a diamond. After that, their hatred is lethal like a sharp knife that is able to cut and hurt. Like a mountain, their hatred is enormous towards others. Like a tiger, their hatred is ferocious. And like a hemlock plant, their hatred is very toxic towards others. In the end, the persona closes this stanza with the words "their finest art" and the word "art" here means "a skill or special ability" ("Art" def. 5). I believe, the persona does so to show the readers how great their hatred is, which also represents their final ability in hating others.

Through my analysis above, the theme of this poem is "One should be aware of manipulative people who use intelligence to spread hatred to others for their own ends". I opine that Charles Bukowski writes "The Genius of the Crowd" to give the readers a strong warning to beware of two-faced intelligent people because they can use their intelligence to manipulate others. As seen from the diction used in this poem, it is obvious that Bukowski uses a lot of direct warnings and ironical facts to describe how hypocritical, toxic, and manipulative these intelligent people are. I

believe through this poem, the persona wants to convince his readers that people should be aware of the motives behind someone's actions. Thus, people should not trust anyone else easily since no one knows the real motives behind someone's actions.

“For The Foxes”

The second poem I would like to analyze is “For the Foxes”. This poem tells about the persona's warning about certain people in the society that manipulate others in order to get what they want by using their hypocritical words and actions. From the title, I find this poem is an ode for “Foxes”.). I assume, the word ode is crucial because it relate with the word foxes. Ode is “a poem expressing the writer's thoughts and feelings about a particular person or subject” (“Ode”) and I believe Bukowski wrote this poem in the form of ode to specifically talk about particular people. The word “Foxes” has two different meanings, according to Oxford Dictionary, the first meaning is “a wild animal of the dog family, with reddish-brown fur, a pointed face and a thick heavy tail” (“Fox” def. 1) while the second meaning is “a person who is clever and able to get what they want by influencing or tricking other people” (“Fox” def. 3) I believe this poem refers to the second meaning since it conveys the same issue as the previous poem which talks about the warning about manipulative people's words and actions

First, I would like to begin my analysis with the first stanza:

Don't feel sorry for me. (1)

I am a competent,

satisfied human being. (3)

In this stanza, the persona tells the readers not to feel pity for him as seen from the first line from the words “Don't feel sorry for me”. Then, in line 2, the persona states that he is a competent man who is able to support himself which is proven from the word “competent” which means “able to do something well” (“Competent”). Since he is already capable to support himself, he feels satisfied with that as a human being. In line 3, the word “satisfied” means “pleased because you have got what you wanted” (“Satisfied”). I believe through this first stanza, the persona states that he is already satisfied with all things that he has and does not need pity from others.

Next, the second stanza goes:

Be sorry for the others (4)
who fidget complain,
who constantly rearrange their lives (6)
like furniture.

This stanza has a connection with the previous stanza. The connection is that the persona wants to emphasize his statement about what kind of people actually deserves a pity. The persona clearly states that the ones that need pity are those who often tend to “complain” and “fidget” and those who often rearrange their lives like furniture. In line 5, the word “fidget” which means “to make continuous small movements because you are uncomfortable or bored” (“Fidget”) shows about the people who easily get bored and often complain about something. In line 6, I find the words “constantly” and “rearrange”. “Constantly” means “all the time or often” (“Constantly”) and “rearrange” means “to change the position or order of things” (“Rearrange”). I assume this line is connected with the words from

the next line, “like furniture”. Thus, the point from lines 6 and 7 is there are people who often change their lives like changing the position of furniture because they are dissatisfied with their lives. In my opinion, the persona uses the words “like furniture” here to describe dissatisfaction since humans usually get bored so easily so that they always change their position until they get what they want.

These two connected stanzas deal with important statements by the persona in order to convince the readers not to feel sorry for the persona who is able to support himself and satisfied with all that he has. I also believe that the idea of warning that is shown through suggestions in stanza two especially from words “be sorry for others” helps the readers to be aware of people who are often dissatisfied with their lives. Through the suggestion, I believe Bukowski wants to show to his readers that the one we should feel sorry for and be aware of is the kind of people who are dissatisfied with their lives.

The third stanza,
Juggling mates and attitudes (8)
their confusion is constant
and it will touch (10)
whoever they deal with.

I believe, has a connection with the second stanza since this stanza talks about the persona’s warning to beware of people who take advantage of their own friends through actions. In line 8, I find the word “juggling” which means “to engage in manipulation especially in order to achieve a desired end” (“Juggle”). This line shows that there are people that use manipulation to get what they want. In line 9, “Their confusion is constant”, I find the words “confusion” which means “a

situation, often with a lot of activity and noise, in which people do not know what to do” (“Confusion”) and “constant” which means “happening a lot or all the time” (“Constant”). I believe the word “confusion” here is related with the words “juggling mates and attitudes” because the actions of this kind of people are unpredictable and often make confusion for anybody who deals with them and the person who deals with these fake actions will feel difficult to distinguish their actions.

In my opinion, in this stanza, the persona wants to show his readers that there are manipulative people who try to gain something through their unpredictable and manipulative attitudes. The persona here shows that people are even willing to trick their friends just to gain a benefit for themselves. Thus, I believe the persona wants the readers to be aware of people who try to take advantage of their own friends through their unpredictable and fickle attitudes.

The fourth stanza,

Beware of them: (12)

One of their key words is "love." (13)

shows a warning as seen in the first line of this stanza from the word “beware”. The persona suggests that the readers should beware of people who rely on the word “love”. I opine that people of this kind want to look convincing in front of others by relying on that word so that they can attract other people’s interest in them and can later manipulate them. I believe the word “them” in line 12 refers to the manipulative people mentioned in the previous stanzas.

Next, the fifth stanza goes:

And beware those (14)

who only take instructions
from their God, (16)
for they have failed completely
to live their own lives. (18)

In this stanza, the persona again gives a warning to his readers. Here the persona tries to state a fact that even though those people obey the instructions from their God, it does not mean they have lived properly. I can state this kind of argument because there is the word “only” in line 15, which means that those people only live based on the instructions of their God and ignore other values around them. That is why they completely fail to live their own lives because sometimes there are things and values outside the religion that cannot be found inside the religion itself. In my opinion, the purpose of this stanza is that the persona wants to show that as a human, one cannot avoid or ignore the value of being human. In order to have a balanced life, religious values and human values have to walk side by side.

Moreover, the sixth stanza,
Don't feel sorry for me (19)
because I am alone
for even at the most terrible moments (21)

humor is my companion.

tells that there may be people who still feel pity for the persona but the persona once again emphasizes his point of view, asking people to put away that sympathy from him since he can comfort himself with humor that he sees as his companion. It can be seen from lines 19 and 20; the words “Don’t feel sorry for me” and “because I

am alone” describe the persona’s state and statement to his readers not to take pity on him for his being alone. While in lines 21 and 22, the words “for even terrible moments” and “humor is my companion”, describe the persona’s reason that even in his darkest time he still can find some joy through humor.

In the seventh stanza,

I am a dog walking backwards, (23)

I am a broken banjo,

I am a telephone wire (25)

strung up in Toledo, Ohio,

I am a man eating a meal (27)

this night in the month of September

Put your sympathy aside. (29)

the persona uses metaphors. In my opinion, by doing so the persona wants to show his condition and situation at that time. In this stanza, he compares himself with things such as “a dog”, “a broken banjo” and “a telephone wire” which represent different meanings. In line 23, when he says that “I am a dog walking backwards”, he depicts himself as a dog which is walking backwards, which I believe that he is currently in fear and confusion. In line 24, he describes himself as a broken banjo which, I assume, means he is a useless person. After that, in line 25, the persona describes himself as a telephone wire strung up in Toledo, Ohio, which means he is old and forgotten. In line 28, “I am a man eating a meal/ this night in the month of September”, the persona is trying to describe his current state of being alone. And in line 29, the persona closes this stanza by stating that he does not need any sympathy despite his condition.

Finally, the last stanza goes:

They say water held up Christ: (30)

To come through

you better be nearly as lucky. (32)

This stanza inserts biblical allusion, “water held up Christ.” I believe it is taken from Matthew 14: 22-33 when Jesus walked on water to save His disciples from a storm. In this stanza, I find the word “hold up” which means “to support somebody/something and stop them from falling” (“Hold up”). Then I also find the word “come through” which means “to succeed in a difficult situation” (“Come through”). This stanza illustrates that if someone is lucky enough like Jesus Christ, they could be able to successfully overcome their problem because there are people who support them in a difficult situation. Unfortunately, to be able to get that kind of support or help from others, one had “better be nearly as lucky”. I believe that Bukowski actually suggests a warning that his readers should not trust, expect from, and rely on others because not everyone is nice since everyone probably has their own bad intention on others. Through my analysis, I opine that Charles Bukowski’s “For the Foxes” has quite the same conclusion as with the previous poem. Thus, the theme of this poem that I find is “One should be aware of manipulative people that deceive others for their own ends”.

“Be Kind”

The third poem that I analyze is “Be Kind”. I believe this poem also has the same issue as the previous two poems. In this poem, the persona warns the readers to beware of certain people who use age as an excuse for their failures. In this poem,

the ideas of the warning are visible through the suggestion from each diction in each stanza.

First, I would like to begin my analysis with the first stanza:

we are always asked (1)

to understand the other person's

viewpoint (3)

no matter how

out-dated (5)

foolish or

obnoxious. (7)

In this stanza, the persona argues that people in general, represented by the word "we", are often asked to understand others' viewpoints no matter how irrelevant and unpleasant their viewpoints are. The idea can be seen from the word "out-dated" in line 5 which means "no longer useful because of being old-fashioned" ("Outdated"); in line 6, the word "foolish" which means "unwise, stupid, or not showing good judgment" ("Foolish"), which defines that the viewpoint here is also stupid and unwise; and in line 7, the word "obnoxious" which means "extremely unpleasant, especially in a way that offends people" ("Obnoxious"), which I believe that the viewpoint here offends people. In my opinion, by showing some negative adjectives in this stanza, Bukowski wants to share his point of view to the readers that in general there are people who always impose their ideas on others even though their ideas are not good. Thus, I believe that Bukowski actually suggests an idea to his readers to beware of people of this kind since they often impose their stupid ideas on others.

The second stanza goes:

one is asked (8)

to view

their total error (10)

their life-waste

with (12)

kindliness,

especially if they are (14)

aged.

Moreover, stanza two is talking about someone who is asked to kindly accept others' total error and wasted life especially if they are old and aged. It is seen from line 10, where I find the word "error" which means "a mistake" ("Error"), so I believe it is talking about their mistakes. In line 11, I find the word "waste" which means "unnecessary or wrong use of money, substances, time, energy, abilities, etc." ("Waste") which I believe that their life is already wasted due to the wrong use of their own money, time, energy, etc. In line 13, I find the word "kindliness" which means "the quality of being kind and caring" ("Kindliness"). In this stanza, I opine that the persona wants to emphasize that there is a social expectation that asks for the persona's acceptance of everything wrong that happens in other people's life especially if they are old and aged.

The first two lines of the third stanza

but age is the total of (16)

our doing. (17)

talk about “age” which is defined as a total of our doing and actions. In line 16, I find the word “total” which has a meaning of “being the amount or number after every one or everything is counted or added together” (“Total”). I believe by separating these first two lines of third stanza with the rest, Bukowski wants to emphasize once again that “age” is just a stack of what we did in our life.

they have aged (18)

badly

because they have (20)

lived

out of focus, (22)

they refuse to

see. (24)

Bukowski continues by talking about the reason why this old and aged people can aged badly. In lines 18 and 19, he states the ideas first from the words “they have aged” followed by the word “badly” which means “in a severe and harmful way” (“Badly”). By seeing these ideas, I believe people of this kind turn old in a really bad way. The first reason can be seen from lines 20 until 22. They have aged badly due to living out of focus. The word “focus” itself has a meaning of “the main or central point of something, especially of attention or interest” (“Focus”). I believe people of this kind have lived all this time without clear goals, therefore they achieve nothing and fail, which makes them age badly. The second reason can be seen from lines 23 until 24 where I find the word “see” which means “to understand, know, or realize” (“See”). I believe the thing that these aged people refuse to see is the reality that they have already failed in their life. As a result, they

become aged badly because they do not want to realize and accept the reality itself. So, from those reasons above, I believe Bukowski wants to show consequences if people refuse to accept reality and have no clear goals in their life. And through that depiction of consequences, I also believe that Bukowski actually tries to suggest a warning to the readers to beware of people who hardly accept the reality that they have already failed in their life as shown from words “because they have lived out of focus/they refuse to see”.

In the fourth stanza,
not their fault? (25)
whose fault?
mine? (27)
I am asked to hide
my viewpoint (29)
from them
for fear of their (31)
fear

the persona is questioning himself about who to blame for the result from the previous stanza. As seen from lines 25 until 27, I believe these three questions “not their fault?”, “whose fault?” and “mine?” refer to the result of why people of this kind become aged badly in the previous stanza. I also assume these questions appear because people of this kind try to defend themselves since they do not want to be blamed for what they have done and what has happened to themselves. In lines 27 to 32, I find the words “hide” which means “to prevent something from being seen” (“Hide”) and “fear” which means “an unpleasant emotion or thought that you have

when you are frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen” (“Fear”). Thus, it means that the persona here is being prevented by them to utter his viewpoint to them since they are afraid to realize and accept their fault. I believe by asking the persona to hide his opinions, their action can be considered as an act of manipulation. By showing this, once again Bukowski tries to make his readers to be aware of people who hardly accept their mistakes and failures by preventing others to say their opinions.

In the last stanza,
age is no crime (33)
but the shame
of a deliberately
wasted
life
among so many
deliberately
wasted
lives
is. (42)

Bukowski talks about the idea that age should not be considered as something bad like crime. In line 33, I find the word “crime” which means “an action or activity that is against the law, or illegal activity generally” (“Crime”), followed by the word “shame” in line 34 which means “the feelings of sadness, embarrassment and guilt that you have when you know that something you have done is wrong or stupid” (“Shame”). I assume that Bukowski tries to say in this stanza is that age is not a

crime. The only thing that can be considered as bad as crime is when someone deliberately wastes their lives among so many deliberately wasted lives.

Through my analysis above, I opine that Charles Bukowski in his poem “Be Kind” wants to show a warning through the persona’s suggestion that sometimes people use their age as an excuse in order not to be blamed for their mistakes and failures. In conclusion, the theme of this poem is “One should be aware of people who use age to manipulate others for their own ends”.

After analyzing the three poems I find some similarities among the poems. The similarities are that these poems always show up with an idea to beware of people who have so many ways to manipulate others. Then, these three poems use a lot of direct and indirect words so that the readers can understand the meaning of these poems better. However, the three poems are different in showing how those manipulative people gain their advantages. In addition, the third poem does not use any simile or metaphor like in the first and second poems. Finally, the general theme of the three poems is that “One should be aware of manipulative people who use many ways to gain advantages from others to realize the true intentions”.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of Charles Bukowski's three poems, it can be seen that the poet uses specific dictions to convey his ideas and help the readers understand the meaning of each poem. The dictions from each poem are also guiding the readers to find out the theme of each poem and as a whole. The dictions used in each poem mainly talk about a warning to beware of manipulative people who use their hatred, deceit and age as an excuse for their own good.

The first poem, "The Genius of The crowd" is talking about a warning to beware of manipulative people who use their hatred to destroy others for their own benefit. The theme is "One should be aware of manipulative people who use intelligence to spread hatred to others for their own ends". The significant dictions that are used to form the theme are "Depravity", "Hypocrisy", "Beware", "Treachery", "Hatred", "Violence", "Absurdity", "Detest", "Genius", "Proud" and "Art". From these dictions, this poem mainly talks about a warning to beware of manipulative people who are willing to destroy others who differ from them by using their intellect, dominance and fake intentions. They show their hatred by using manipulative ways through their intelligence in order to get what they want.

The second poem “For The Foxes” also talks about a warning to beware of manipulative people who want to get what they want by using their deceitfulness to others. The theme is “One should be aware of manipulative people that deceive to others for their own ends”. The dictions such as “Beware”, “Fox”, “Fidget”, “Complaint”, “Constantly”, “Rearrange”, “Juggle”, “Confusion”, “Failed”, “Completely”, “Love”, “Only”, “God”, “Hold Up” and “Come Through” help in forming this theme. The dictions show the persona’s point of view to the readers about a warning to beware of manipulative people who use their deceitfulness when they want to get what they want. The dictions mainly show the true self of manipulative people and how they use their so-called “Love” and “God” to deceive people to get what they want through their hypocritical words and actions.

The third poem “Be Kind” also discusses the same issue as the previous two poems which talk about a warning to beware of manipulative people. In this poem, the poet tries to focus on certain people who use age as an excuse to manipulate other. The theme is “One should be aware of people who use age to manipulate others for their own ends”. The significant dictions from this poem which help in forming the theme are “Out-dated”, “Obnoxious”, “Error”, “Kindliness”, “Age”, “Total”, “Badly”, “Focus”, “See”, “Hide”, “Fear”, “Crime” and “Shame. From these dictions, this poem mainly talks about a warning through suggestions to beware of people of this kind since they are considered to be manipulative because they use age as an excuse to refuse to see and accept their failures and mistakes as well as imposing their points of view to others.

After analyzing the three poems, I find the similarities and differences among the three poems. The similarities are that each poem always comes up with

an idea of warning to beware of manipulative people and each poem uses a lot of direct and indirect words to help the readers in understanding the poem better. Meanwhile, the first difference lies in the way the author describes his idea; in the first and second poems, he uses simile and metaphor whereas in the third poem he uses only some suggestions to depict the warning. The second difference is that each poem shows a different way of how those manipulative people gain their advantages. So, I opine that the connecting line of the three poems is about a warning to beware of manipulative people who have so many ways to manipulate others.

In my opinion, these three poems reflect Bukowski's main purpose in writing these poems. Bukowski tries to open the readers' eyes by showing the reality that manipulative people exist in our daily life. They have so many ways of manipulating others in order to get what they want. I am of the opinion that these three poems are really helpful in teaching the readers how to understand and analyze every person's real intention behind their actions in order to prevent the readers from being manipulated. Thus, the general theme of these three poems is that "One should be aware of manipulative people who use many ways to gain advantages from others and able to realize the true intentions behind their actions".

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