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**NIHILISM AND MISANTHROPY TO CREATIVE POWER: A STUDY OF
CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S ALTER-EGO HENRY CHINASKI**

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Submitted

*In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Philosophy
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DECLARATION

Mizoram University

March, 2018

I, Ambrose Lalmuanpuia, hereby declares that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the content of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

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This dissertation examines the creative power of both Nihilism and Misanthropy through the study of the character of Henry Chinaski. It provides reasonable explanations and examples to show the workings of 'creative power' from a darker and unconventional perspective of life. This study provides explanations as to why Charles Bukowski is a writer worth studying in academia, due to the thematic contents that he presented in his works. Despite being a prolific writer, Bukowski's works are often ignored when listing important works that influenced the growth of American literature and this dissertation will attempt to draw out his influence among the readers. It will also give significant points as to why Nihilism can be important both in academic studies and in understanding our world.

Charles Bukowski was born on August 16, 1920 in Andernach, Germany and died on March 9, 1994. He was a prolific poet and an author; a voice for the poor citizens of America. The *Times* magazine once called him "the laureate of American lowlife" (Penn) as he is a person not just shouting his voice, but is actually a part of that community. He has a gravestone that simply read 'Don't Try', and was an unconventional writer and a human being as a whole. The language that he used in all his works are stripped bare to the core, where the only thing left are scraps that conventional people detest as any form of conversing or writing. His originality, coupled with the child like frankness, as well as his detached view and analysing of anything that his eyes gazed upon adds up the strangeness of him. His works does not sing nor sway the readers into a lullaby; neither does it provide a haven or escape that one might find with other works. Bukowski rather punches, scratches, and kicks the readers, where one gleefully smile at the dark humour, or close their eyes and picture the vivid description of every little details found within the book; or forcefully close the book and hide it among stacks of books either to be sold again, or perhaps burn it with any books that spits into their eyes.

A complete and thorough study of Henry Chinaski requires a close study of the creator Charles Bukowski as Chinaski is the alter-ego, a fictional character heavily based on the author himself. The name “Hank” that people often calls Chinaski in the story is the same name that the author Bukowski himself is called in real life as his birth name is Henry Charles Bukowski. The term alter-ego is a Latin origin which stems from the Greek word “áλλος ἐγώ”, a term believed to have been coined by the author Cicero, described as “a second self, a trusted friend.”¹ The selected four novels are all semi-autobiographical where only the names and some outcome of the protagonist are changed. When asked if his novel is an autobiography in an interview, Charles Bukowski replied, “Almost all. Ninety-nine out of a hundred, if I have written a hundred. The other one was dreamed up.” (Kaye) This poses a problem of looking at both the author and his creation as two different people. Apart from that, there is a problematic situation where the ideals and needs neither of Henry Chinaski nor of Charles Bukowski can never really be pointed out. Although it adds to the realism of the character, it creates a problem in studying the character as it is never in a constant state. There are instances where it seems as if Chinaski is suicidal but there are also instances where he shows strong interest in living life to the fullest. Even he is in a constant battle with his own thoughts creating some problem while attempting a psychoanalytic study. The creation of an alter-ego shows the creativity as well as the introspective ability of the author to understand who he is as they differ in certain ways. Chinaski is the focus because he is the version of Bukowski that exist only sporadically in real life. But the author himself often behaves appropriately and conducts himself in the right manners when needed while his alter-ego hardly ever cares about anyone or how he behaves around people. They share the same drinking problem, of being lecherous towards women, of being a misanthrope, a rebel against societal norms and being a nihilist. While the author himself changes his acts when being around his daughter, and mellowed down in his behaviour as he gets older, his alter-ego

maintains the same attitude and behaviour throughout his life, never changing in any circumstances. Chinaski is the character Bukowski intends to be, but never manages because as he gets older, he appreciates company more and more, realizing the importance of loved ones, and starts believing in religion in the form of Buddhism. Chinaski on the other hand remains a nihilist, misanthrope, alcoholic and womanizer throughout his life, going against every notion of societal structure. Chinaski is thus Charles Bukowski's creation, a character he could embrace and hide behind while criticizing the way the world works.

This paper focuses on the selected four novels-

1) *Ham on Rye* (1982) can be studied as the first story of Henry Chinaski as it details his childhood although it was published many years after the other three selected books. The story of a young Henry Chinaski is thoroughly put forward in this novel. Set in Los Angeles, the novel describes the life of young Chinaski who has an abusive, alcoholic father with a habit of beating him up with a razor strap at his every annoyance with the child. Due to this, he develops a certain kind of self-doubt coupled with the feeling of being very different from the other people. His father's treatment of other people has huge impact on how he perceives things. Even as a young boy, he hates being around people and hardly enjoys company. This can be linked together with how his father treats both his wife and son; his other families as well as every people who he feels are below him. Strong feelings of frustration and anger have built themselves up inside him due to his father's behaviour and attitudes towards him, as well as him not having the power to fight him back. He therefore resorts to violence towards people his age, and sports for him are a way to vent out his anger and frustration besides fighting. The schools that he attended allow him to interact with girls, and experience drugs and different kinds of pleasures. But after he finished Junior High, he is sent to a private High School for the rich people as his father sees his family as being rich. Being unable to fit in with the rich people in school due to their class difference, it affects his

lifestyle. To make things worse, he starts to develop severe acne to almost every part of his body. And the treatment that he received to cure the acne only makes things worse, as he became a puppet being treated without any improvement and only furthering his physical deformity. He eventually graduated and went to a college and the story end with him searching for a job, as he could not keep his job due to his fight with a customer. Ham on Rye is important as it shows how the nihilistic and cynical behaviour and attitude of Henry Chinaski starts and, show how it slowly develops as he grows older.

2) *Factotum* (1975) follows the life of Henry Chinaski as he moves to New Orleans in search of new life and hoping that the new city will help his state of mind. But the new scenery does not change anything apart from him spending his time looking for jobs and abruptly quitting them because he hates them. Apart from that, he is constantly drinking and he does most of his work while being drunk. He then leaves New Orleans and move back his parent's house in Los Angeles, but due to his drinking problem and his love of women, his father throws him out of the house. He moves to a boarding house but is raped by a prostitute. After that, he decides to move to New York City but he quickly hates the jobs there and therefore concludes that he hates the city, and moves on to Philadelphia. He works briefly in a bar there, making some friends, but leaves once again, this time for St. Louis. He manages to sell his first short story to a noteworthy magazine while being there. He then moves back to his hometown, and finds himself being employed by an eccentric millionaire who keep women in his house to sleep with. The millionaire provides him a place to sleep and liquor. When the rich man dies, he finds work in a bike warehouse, securing a raise when he makes it clear he can cover for the larceny that occurs there. He dates two women, Laura and Jan Meadows one after another and settles in with Jan. They spend their days drinking and having sex when he is not making deals at horse races. He eventually gets tired of Los Angeles and moves to Miami, but his distaste for works prevents him from holding down work for any

amount of time and therefore returns to Jan in Los Angeles. He catches crabs from her and badly burns himself trying to get rid of them. He has to start a janitorial job that night, so Jan bandages him up and he's on his way. As a janitor, he does little more than replace toilet paper rolls but is soon fired for sleeping on the job. He tries to get a job driving a cab, but was rejected due to his police records and his following job end when he has sex in the warehouse with a Japanese woman while on the clock. He then goes through a handful of other jobs and finally breaks it off with Jan. The story ends with him watching an old stripper dance for him which he does not appreciate.

3) *Post Office (1971)* follows the life of a middle age alcoholic Henry Chinaski. This novel recalls the story of his life when he accidentally works in the post office, his relationship with Betty, Mary Lou and his wife for a short period, Joyce. This novel also details the small fortune he had for a short period from his gambling at horse races. It also shows the attitude of many bosses in different industries, which treats their employees harshly through the character of Mr. Johnston, also known as 'The Stone' while he was working at the post office. Like the previous books, Chinaski finds the job the he is working as nothing more than a way to fulfil his financial needs to buy more alcohol and prostitute. He married Joyce, the rich millionaire while he was still working at the post office but they soon divorced after a bad fight. He went back to Betty, his partner before he got married but she died tragically on Christmas after excessively drinking alcohol. After the death of Betty, he found a small success gambling at horse racing. But his luck soon runs out and he eventually return back to work at the post office. He met Mary Lou while he was having a small success gambling and she became her partner for a short while until he was mugged by her. While working there again, he had a daughter named Marina with Fey, a writer whom he lived with. But she too left him with the baby and his health starts to decline. As he was missing his working days without giving reason, he was eventually suspended and

subsequently warned about being dismissed from his work after receiving four separate letters from the office. Henry then talks about the hard working conditions and the burden of his job which he resigned eventually. He goes on a drinking spree and the novel ends with him waking up being hung over, and him deciding to write this novel.

4) *Women (1978)* detail a much older Henry Chinaski who gains fame as a poet. He is a fifty year old alcoholic, who regularly perform his works and meet up with many women along the way. The story details how repetitive and monotonous life eventually becomes, especially with concern to love relationship even when one tries their best to make it exciting. In his attempt to find some semblance of normality in a relationship, Chinaski moves on from one woman to another, unable to find anything that excites him long enough. The novel covers a period of about six years during the early 1970s. The novel is a continuation of *Post Office* as it tells the life of Chinaski after he spend several years working at a post office as a clerk which he quits to pursue a full-time writing career as a minor poet. He manages to live a rather comfortable life by selling poems and editing little magazines. He then meets Lydia Vance, a woman about half his age, and begins a prolonged love affair with her, which endured many fights, several extra-relationship affairs by both partners, and months of hard drinking. But as Henry's fame continues to slowly grow from his publications, he finds more women to sleep with. This constant flirtations and affairs start to slowly drive Lydia mad as she becomes more jealous and violent. She is driven completely mad by Chinaski's behaviour and therefore results in a violent rampage which led to her arrest. He decline to press charges but their relationship is effectively terminated. He then begins a prolonged series of sexual adventures with a variety of young attractive women who many times throw themselves at him due to his fame as a writer. He is never fully committed to anyone because he finds it stifling, and he cannot see himself rejecting any offer from women all across the country. At one point, he is even sick of his behaviour and his continuous flirtations, and in some way try

to rectify his behaviours by quitting drinks and being faithful to one girl. The story ends with him trying his best to make his life a little less of a train wreck and settling down with a woman.

These selected poems are also used to further explain and analyse the character of Henry Chinaski.

1) *Cause and Effect* is a poem about suicide. It is about people who commit suicide and those that do not. He says that one who commit suicide are doing everything in their power to escape a world which they cannot allow themselves to be a part of, including the people and culture. These people are the most creative, intelligent, caring, and kind; therefore, they cannot cope with those who do not understand. And there are people who are left behind who do not understand why anyone would want to leave the world. These people are arrogant, obnoxious, and self-absorbed, according to the poet as they only think about themselves.

2) *Cut While Shaving*- In this poem, the poet talks about how pointless and meaningless everything is but in that, he finds meaning to it. In the poem, he talks of how meaningless our life is, and the fact that it is simply just history repeating itself continuously, and we are simply a tiny part of that. Everything is slowly just repeating itself, the days and night, the seasons, the years. It is all passing continuously without any real point. Nothing ever changes and nothing is ever locked in the same place. Likewise, his mind is also racing continuously, thinking about all of these things and he tries to find some form of meaning with that thought.

3) *Dinosauria, We*. In this poem, the poet talks about everything wrong with the world- corruption, wars, murder, society and life itself. He goes on at length of how he does not want to be born into this sort of place but since he is born into it, he is trapped and he has

to endure it every day. The title could also be a reference to how we are to suffer the same fate that dinosaurs that runs the land suffered millions of years ago, and that is extinction. The poem discusses different types of corruption- from hospitals and government to churches who corrupt the mind of the people. The poem has dystopian elements to it, as it talks of the end of the world where everything about this world will be wiped away, and a new chapter will be turned from it.

4) *Alone With Everybody*. In this poem, the poet feels like nothing other than flesh covering bone and that everyone else are the same where some entity they put a mind into the bones and flesh and even give a soul to it sometimes. The poet reveals the outcome of this feeling of meaninglessness and hopelessness in mankind. Women, he portrays as expressing their feeling in bursts of anger. Men, he portrays as numbing those feeling by drinking away their sobriety. The poet expresses the earnest desire to find that one person with whom to experience life and give themselves to one another spiritual, emotional, and physical connection. But, as the poet concludes, “nobody finds the one”. Instead, they continue to go from one person to the next and feel lonely. His expression of loneliness turns into a feeling of meaninglessness. The speaker concludes that as he is only flesh and bone, there seems no chance at meaningful human connection. He loses hope that the void can be filled since he has never seen the void filled in someone’s life, and he has certainly never felt it. The poet lists the things that he has seen filled: dumps, junkyards, madhouses, hospitals, and graveyards, but not the human heart. Though surrounded by other people, he feels alone. He feels he is nothing but bone covered by flesh, with a mind.

5) *Confession of a Misanthrope*. In this poem, the poet starts by describing how he is almost always alone in his house, and though he might go crazy, it is still better than outside. He goes on to say that the woman whom he lives with is talking a headless person, saying words that do not have any meaning, and thinks to himself how she ends up living with him.

Even the friends that she brings are the same as her, without a head. And when he does not converse with them, the woman becomes angry at him for hating her friends and not wanting to talk to anyone. The poet simply goes on to say that every one of them are hypocrites, covering up lies after one another, and they cannot be trusted. They are nothing but people who conforms to society, and are merely puppets that are controlled without any rational thought of their own.

6) *A Smile to Remember*. In this poem, the poet talks about his traumatized childhood. He says that they used to have a goldfish and that he used to watch it. He used the goldfish in a fishbowl as a metaphor to denote him and his mother being trapped in their house like the fish is trapped in the bowl. His father would constantly beat both him and his mother, and his mother would still try to smile even through all that. He describes how much his mother wanted him to be happy, to smile, even teaching him how to smile. But he can see that his mother's smiles are filled with sadness. And when that goldfish die, the father proceeds to throw it to the cat, and he mentions that his mother would smile as they watch it because she has no choice but to look happy as much as possible for her child.

7) *My father*. In this poem, the poet talks about how much of a hypocrite his father was. He pretended to be rich, talks and act like he is rich, and votes for people who are rich. When in reality, they are far from being rich. The poet goes on to say that it was because of his father that he wanted to be a 'bum' and be poor, the complete opposite of what his father wanted. But upon doing that, he realizes that even those poor people are exactly like his father, only concerned with having money and being rich. And since he does not want to be like his father, and the people who he tries to become are all the same like his father, he can no longer understand even himself. He is stands out as the odd one out and he goes on to say that his potential and everything that is good about him will be wasted because he has a problem forming his own self.

8) *Three Oranges*. In this poem, the poet is listening to a music composed by a famous Russian composer, Sergei Prokofiev. His father is listening with him and he proceeds to berate the music as nothing more than vile and simple thing, with no actual value. While listening to the music, the poet could feel what the music is speaking to him, and he feels nostalgic thinking about childhood, and oranges, and how beautiful they are. But once his father decides to make fun of the music, he cannot feel what he felt anymore, so he proceeds to describe how much he hates being his son, being born from his seed. He goes on to say that he hates parenthood because of him, and that if people like his father are having children, they should never be allowed to have any more children.

Apart from the above mentioned works, it also covers selected poetry of Charles Bukowski. This thesis will also make extensive use of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1965), and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travel* (1726). In the third chapter-

1) *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) *The Catcher in the Rye* is set around the 1950s and is narrated by a young man named Holden Caulfield. Holden is not specific about his location while he's telling the story, but he makes it clear that he is undergoing treatment in a mental hospital or sanatorium. The events he narrates take place in the few days between the end of the fall school term and Christmas, when Holden is sixteen years old. Holden's story begins on the Saturday following the end of classes at the Pencey prep school in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. Pencey is Holden's fourth school and he has failed four out of five of his classes and has received notice that he is being expelled Holden decides to leave Pencey early. He takes a train to New York and rents a room at the Edmont Hotel. He soon feels lonely and depressed and starts acting strangely. He wears a red hunting cap everywhere he goes, wanders around from the Hotel lounge to another bar trying to pick up women whom he claims to hate. After his encounter with a prostitute and Maurice, Holden makes a date

with a girl he knows, Sally Hayes. He then wanders around town, and hears a boy singing a song while coming out of church: "If a body catch a body coming through the rye." (Salinger, 1941) Hoping to find his younger sister, Phoebe, Holden walks all the way to the Museum of Natural History, which he loves for its unchanging exhibits. But he decides not to enter the museum, and takes a cab to meet Sally Hayes instead. The date does not go well. The play they see annoys Holden, as does the fact that Sally talks to a boy Holden thinks is phony. After going ice-skating, Holden begins to talk about everything he hates, and asks Sally to run away with him to a cabin in New England. She refuses and asks him to stop shouting. He insults her, makes her cry, and leaves. Later that night, Holden walks to Central Park to look at the ducks in the lagoon. There are no ducks, it's freezing, and he imagines he might die, which he knows would make Phoebe miserable. Holden sneaks into his family's apartment, wakes Phoebe, and tells her he's leaving to go live on a ranch in Colorado. Phoebe realizes Holden has been expelled, and asks him what he wants to be in his life. Holden says he'd like to be a catcher in the rye, who rescues children by catching them before they fall off a steep cliff at the edge of a giant rye field. He decides to say goodbye to Phoebe before heading west and meets her at the Museum of Art but she begs him to take her with him. He refuses, and then promises that he won't go either. He takes her to the zoo, where he watches her ride the carousel. Phoebe gives Holden back his red hunting hat, which protects him from the rain that has just started to fall.

2) Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1965) tells the story of Antoine Roquentin, a historian living in Bouville, France, who begins to write a diary to help him explain the strange and sickening sensations that have been bothering him for the previous few days. He is not sure what exactly is wrong with him, often doubting if there is any need to keep a diary at all. Nevertheless, a few days later, he is so overcome with what he calls the Nausea, that he begins to furiously list every insignificant fact, detail, feeling, and impression occurring both

inside himself and the outside world. He holds a stone, looks at a glass of beer, and tries to touch a soggy piece of paper in the street--each time sensing a worrisome and overwhelming presence.

For the past ten years, Roquentin has been researching the Marquis de Rollebon, a French aristocrat who lived during the French Revolution. Rollebon was originally from Bouville so Roquentin moved there to complete his research and write a book about him. But his feelings of Nausea soon extend to his research. Whenever he looks in a mirror, he is not sure if he sees his own face or Rollebon's. He soon loses interest in his work, realizing that he can never understand Rollebon as if he were still alive. Roquentin feels constrained by the past, choosing instead to live in the present. He slowly begins to understand that his feelings of Nausea have something to do with the question of existence. He realizes that he had been using Rollebon and the past in general to justify his own existence. Roquentin defiantly asserts his own existence, claiming that everyone else he sees is afraid to acknowledge that they exist. Focusing on the existence of objects and people, Roquentin discovers that "existence precedes essence." Looking at the root of a chestnut tree, he realizes that his perception of the root's essence, or its physical characteristics, in fact hides the truth of the object's existence. The comforting facade of tastes, colors, smells, weight, and appearance are thus the creation of the observer. Looking through the essence of objects, Roquentin is confronted with the bare existence of things, and thus the source of his Nausea.

Roquentin visits his ex-lover Anny in Paris. He had hoped that they would get back together, but is disappointed to find that they do not communicate very well. He vainly attempts to explain his feelings of Nausea to Anny, but she does not understand. They part, knowing that they will never see each other again. Back in Bouville, Roquentin resolves to free himself from the past by embracing his existence in the present. He tries to explain his views to the Self-Taught Man, a lonely cafe acquaintance, but he cannot persuade him that

human love is just an essence, and that there is no purpose to existence, only "nothingness." Despite his despair and abandoning his research, Roquentin chooses to move to Paris and write a novel.

3) Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travel* (1726) is a story of a man named Lemuel Gulliver. He is a surgeon who decides to voyage after his business starts to slow down. He goes on four voyages, all of which are preceded by a storm. These voyages bring new perspectives to Gulliver's life and new opportunities for satirizing the ways of England. The first voyage is to Lilliput, where Gulliver is huge and the Lilliputians are small. At first the Lilliputians seem amiable, but the reader soon sees them for the ridiculous and petty creatures they are. Gulliver is convicted of treason for "making water" in the capital (even though he was putting out a fire and saving countless lives)--among other "crimes." The second voyage is to Brobdingnag, a land of Giants where Gulliver seems as small as the Lilliputians were to him. Gulliver is afraid, but his keepers are surprisingly gentle. He is humiliated by the King when he is made to see the difference between how England is and how it ought to be. Gulliver realizes how revolting he must have seemed to the Lilliputians. Gulliver's third voyage is to Laputa (and neighboring Luggnagg and Glubdugdribb). In a visit to the island of Glubdugdribb, Gulliver is able to call up the dead and discovers the deceptions of history. In Laputa, the people are over-thinkers and are ridiculous in other ways. Also, he meets the Stuldrugs, a race endowed with immortality. Gulliver discovers that they are miserable. His fourth voyage is to the land of the Houyhnhnms, who are horses endowed with reason. Their rational, clean, and simple society is contrasted with the filthiness and brutality of the Yahoos, beasts in human shape. Gulliver reluctantly comes to recognize their human vices. Gulliver stays with the Houyhnhnms for several years, becoming completely enamored with them to the point that he never wants to leave. When he is told that the time has come for him

to leave the island, Gulliver faints from grief. Upon returning to England, Gulliver feels disgusted about other humans, including his own family.

This dissertation is an attempt at new ways of peering at the works of Charles Bukowski who has been continually overlooked in academic studies. Although his words are often vulgar and there are number to things that ought to be censored, his works are important relics of the poorer side of the American Society. His works speaks volumes about how much of mistreatment the poor people have been enduring when even applying for a job. The whole picture of how the government gives no regards to the lower class people as well as how they are oppressed can be seen all throughout the selected novels alone. Apart from those, the works of Bukowski are important in understanding American culture as he brings out every little things happening beyond the reaches of media and the government. The works of Bukowski are important due to the simple fact that he echoes the feelings of many people. His works are striking and articulate, and the different feelings that his alter-ego Henry Chinaski's have, his confusion and actions towards it, are all of the things which people can relate, have experienced and learn from. From his existential dilemma to his love of women, they are regular things happening to regular people on a regular basis.

But one of the main problems that the works of Charles Bukowski has been facing is the tendency to disregard them as vulgar, radical and not contributing much to the study of both literature either by the readers or critics. His works are not seen as worthy enough to be studied in academic level despite him being an important writer during the post-war era in the American literature. And although Bukowksi as a poet is a renowned writer, as a novelist, he is never considered or regarded as being among the elites. The contents of his novels have largely been met with scorn due to his stark and non-restrictive use of everyday language coupled with vulgar words, and his often anticlimactic progress. Apart from that, his view of the world leaning towards absolute meaninglessness makes it both an appalling read and

study in many instances. And lastly, due to his stark portrayal of the life of a drunkard, filled with alcohol, sex and a disorientated family and love life, the thematic concern embedded into his works like the corruption, the lack of care given by the government to the poor, the unethical and slave like abuse of workers by employers and many more are often disregarded.

The reliability of the selected works of Bukowski as being worthy of studying in academia due to its creative source being based upon a philosophy that is rarely taught will be attempted. It will also try to show how understanding one-self as being a nihilist can help a person develop and grow into a being that can tap the creative source of our mind. The use of his language and his thematic contents are critically analysed.

The dissertation will critically analyse the concept on nihilism and its importance in both the writing and studying of literature. It will also analyse and study the popular fictions of Charles Bukowski and find its importance in the study of American Literature in the late twentieth century. Apart from that, it will study the way important and thought provoking creative endeavour can be pursued even with a nihilistic view that sees no meaning in living.

Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* (1901) which deals with the concept of Nihilism is incorporated in this study. Nietzsche's descriptions of Nihilism during his time are analysed and while also trying to point out its importance in the study of this paper.

It also integrates *Nihilism: A Philosophy Based In Nothingness and Eternity* (2016) by Brett Stevens and *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (1966) by Stanley Rosen as both of them deals with the different mode of interpretations and understanding, as well as the role they occupy in the modern society. The history of Nihilism is traced from Arthur Schopenhauer to Friedrich Nietzsche, and they also explore the different modes of interpretations and explanations. The interconnection of Nihilism with Realism and Transcendentalism, and what they mean are pointed out as well as its relevance in the study of both philosophy and

literature. It is a new take on what Nihilism is, and they pointed out how it differs from its former years to the present day as well as its contribution and necessity to life. Stanley Rosen in particular traces the philosophies of Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and many more and links them with Nihilism, how they contribute in forming the central ideas of Nihilism.

Will Slocombe's "Postmodern Nihilism: Theory and Literature" (2003) which deals with the role of Nihilism in literature is also included. It is the exploration of Nihilism with postmodern theory and literature. He discussed the importance of studying, as well as incorporating Nihilism into postmodern theory and literature as they are connected to each other. He also analyses the necessity to interlink both Nihilism and postmodernism as they are part of philosophy and culture. He also studied the way Nihilism is presented in the postmodern literature and the different type of genres that it occupies in it. The importance of Nihilism in the study of both the theories and literatures of the postmodern are heavily emphasized by him.

Jacques Lacan's *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience* (1936) which studies the psychological workings of human beings from early childhood to adulthood is explored in this dissertation to understand the working of the mind. Lacan claims the mirror stage takes place between the ages of six to eighteen months when an infant recognizes itself in connection with the image of the specular self. The result is a fantasized, fictional self that is unified and made whole via the image in the mirror. Mirror stage is also called the imaginary. Lacan asserts that the development of an identity of a subject is a social construct not biological. Due to the self and the specular self not being identical, there is a discontinuity between the two that is psychically alienating. This gap or lack of a unified sense of self, Lacan argues, is where desire stems from—a

desire to become whole again. Lacan claims that the sense of unification and the sense of alienation do not remain only in the mirror stage. This sort of double sense remains throughout our life. The mirror stage in this sense paradoxically contributes to the “decentering” and unification of the subject through a continuous process of repetition.

The first chapter will introduce the writer Charles Bukowski as well as his alter ego Henry Chinaski. It also gives an overview of all the selected works chosen for this study. The second chapter analyse Nihilism from the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Stanley Rosen, Brett Stevens and Will Slocombe’s thesis paper. The importance of their work lies in the understanding and tracing of Nihilism, and also its importance in the study of literature. The character study of Henry Chinaski, how much of a nihilist is he as well as that nihilistic influences on his writing are studied in this chapter.

The third chapter analyse the misanthropic attitude of Henry Chinaski and how it contributes to his creative impulse. The works of J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Jean Paul Sartre’s *Nausea* (1965), and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travel* (1726) are used in this chapter to fully analyse the misanthropic attitude of Henry Chinaski, and how he compares and differs, as well as how he proceeds with life. The different books selected as comparative study deals with different topics, but they all have the same misanthropic protagonist. Apart from that, the way Chinaski deals with the loneliness and hatred of people, and how he turned that into his source of creative outlet is studied in this chapter.

Chapter four deals with how Henry Chinaski’s mind works, as well as how he formed his identity allowing his creative mind to flourish through a psychoanalytical approach using Jacques Lacan’s *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience* (1936). It studies not only the growth of Chinaski but also of his father’s behaviour, his relationship with him and how it contributes to his identity formation.

This chapter ties the previous chapters and explore the psychological workings of both Chinaski and his father, linking them in understanding how he adopts his persona and identity. The last chapter sums up the various aspects and views explored in the previous chapters and also deal with the findings of the research.

The history of nihilism cannot be traced in a chronological way as there are certain thought processes similar to the classical Greek works. Nihilism has been for many years linked with scepticism, cynicism, fatalism, and with destructive and negative attitudes. It has been changing for many years so nihilism has taken different forms based on different periods.

Since Nihilism is not rooted in one ideology but is changing and flexible depending on different periods and its ideologies, it can never be defined in few sentences. For many people, nihilism is used as a scapegoat to label people who do not follow their own particular set of beliefs. For many years, it has been used to define heretics and atheists in many ways due to its stance on rejecting and criticizing man's long held belief systems and ideologies. So therefore, a problem of coherent as well as universally accepted definition of nihilism arises as Will Slocombe denotes,

Defining the term is difficult. Similar to all signifiers, 'nihilism' has a number of associations that cannot be inferred directly from its etymology. This is because an ideological stance often calls that which is opposed to it 'nihilistic' since it seeks to make that ideology 'nothing'. Thus, the term 'nihilism' refers historically to a perception of something that exists in opposition to particular ideologies, rather than being an ideology of the *nihil* [nothingness] as such. Although the word 'nihilism' is concerned with negation, because anything ideologically negative is negation, it is a qualified negation based upon the assumption that the opposing ideology is true. This creates a number of historically different 'nihilisms' that each attacks a specific ideology. Over the course of time, nihilism comes to stand for any negation that attacks dominant ideological practices, becoming a generic category that is an unqualified negation. (Slocombe, 6)

Apart from that, since nihilism denies any form of religion or system of administration, the problem of accepting what is universally accepted as truth or what we are taught to believe otherwise arises. Nihilism attacks every notion of what people define themselves with, what gives meaning to their lives, and the whole purpose of meaning. The different ideologies especially of the postmodern world have used a nihilist world view to define or enhance their own ideologies creating more problems of misunderstanding what nihilism is. Will Slocombe further explains this saying:

Ethical nihilism argues that there is no truth in any system of ethics, and epistemological nihilism argues that there is no truth in any system of knowledge. This use of truth creates problems for nihilism because nihilism dismisses the truth of any system but its own... nihilism addresses other philosophies at the level of truth, forcing itself into a contradiction: how can it be true if there is no truth? Nihilism can only exist to negate another ideology, and can only be true 'generically', not 'generally'. This reliance upon another ideology means that the meaning of nihilism shifts historically, as once-dominant ideologies become replaced by others, which nihilism then attacks instead, its own meaning shifting as a result. (Slocombe, 16)

The first popular nihilist character in a book appeared in Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862) through a character named Bazarov. It is controversial due to the fact that it directly opposes many principles that man had uphold in a society. The book itself explores what nihilism is when one of the characters in the book named Arkady told his uncle Pavel Petrovich, that his friend Bazarov, is a nihilist. His father Nikolai Petrovich chimes in with confusion saying, "A nihilist... That's from the Latin *nihil*, *nothing*, so far as I can judge. Therefore, the word denotes a man who... doesn't recognize anything?" (Turgenev, 26) Arkady answered saying that a nihilist is one "who regards everything from the critical point of view," and that, "A nihilist is a person who does not bow down to any authority, who does

not accept any principle on faith, however much that principle may be revered." (Turgenev, 26,27) The character of Bazarov as well as the ideas that Turgenev put forward in this book prompted the readers to think of themselves as well as their societal way of living. It revolutionized the way people think in terms of ethics, religion, morals as well as law and order, allowing them to be critical on how they perceive things.

“What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devalue themselves.* The aim is lacking; “why?” finds no answer.”(Nietzsche, 9) Nietzsche wrote the above statement in *The Will to Power*. Although Friedrich Nietzsche brought the concept of nihilism to the forefront and its eventual popularity, he himself was never a nihilist. But he understands the situation of the European countries and the people, as well what they will eventually become. He realised that the needs of the people cannot always be sustained through their religious belief, and that the authenticity of the reality that people were made to believe will eventually be questioned. In *The World as Will and Representation*, Arthur Schopenhauer had already discussed about the way we perceived the world. The first is that “the universe, like individuals, is not purely rational but is more like a personality, in that it is like individual animals motivated by an attachment to life or ‘will to live’” and the representation being that we “never know the world as it is, but only know a representation of it, formed of their interpretation of sense-data and memory.” (Stevens, 140) Nietzsche took his idea of nihilism partly from Schopenhauer’s ideas since nihilism is a negation of this representation of the world. Nietzsche also believed that “Socrates or Plato is responsible for the emergence of nihilism in the western world” (Rosen, 144) as their teachings were rooted in trying to understand the significance and importance of man when searching for truth.

Nihilism is deeply rooted in the Christian morals which have occupied and controlled the thinking process as well as the way that people are perceiving things for many years. Nietzsche knew that this mode of living and thinking will eventually be challenged and

thrown away by many people. Christianity has been the main religion and truth of the European people, and their lives and action, as well as their administrations were guided through a Christian-centric way. Their truths, reasons and meaning in life both start and end with Christianity and its mode of conducting and rules, with its concept of heaven and hell. All values and purpose are linked with their religion. But Nietzsche saw that this long held belief system of the people as well as administration were starting to fail people in giving them freedom to explore themselves as well as the world itself. It limits their ability as a human being and he therefore knew that once people understand their situations, it will lead them to question their whole existence. Religion gives a false notion of their whole purpose of existence and within it there is an embedded promise of a better life in the afterlife. This notion negates the importance and significance of their own existence on earth. Their actions on earth are not done through their free will and freedom in any form, but with a strong emphasis of trying to have a great life and reward in the afterlife.

In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche highlights the causes of Nihilism-

1) The higher species is lacking, i.e., those whose inexhaustible fertility and power keep up the faith in man.

2) The lower species (“herd,” “mass,” “society”) unlearns modesty and blows up its needs into cosmic and metaphysical values. In this way the whole existence is vulgarized; in so far as the mass is dominant it bullies the exceptions, so they lose their faith in themselves and become nihilists.” (Nietzsche, 19) He knew that the authority, authenticity and administration of God, Christianity and its teaching will be questioned because they stifled the growth of an individual by giving it a sense of false hope, which, not only stunted the growth of a man, but renders one unable to fulfil his potential as a human being. It limits the ability to think and act while living in the world as one is in constant fear of what his

punishments and suffering will be both in life and in the afterlife. Will Slocombe describes Nietzsche's stance on Christianity by saying that, "He also argued that Christianity was nihilistic because, in its struggle for the ineffable transcendent, it rejected the natural world. He wrote of 'the damage all human institutions sustain if a divine and transcendent higher sphere is postulated': 'natural' comes to mean 'contemptible' until 'with relentless logic' one arrives 'at the absolute demand to deny nature'". (Slocombe, 26) With the notion that there is a better world outside of this realm, one can easily disregard and not care about anything present in the natural world, denying whatever beauty or mysterious things which may present in it.

Nihilism can be seen as a transcending of the 'ego'. Ego mania occurs through cognitive dissonance when the reality that one is observing and living in is not up to their likings; they create and invent a new version of reality. To this, one can invent a new reality and present them as symbolically important in defining one's life, or invent a new reality which will be deemed as a higher reality than the real world; or invent a reality which replaces existence. Ego mania or 'egoistical solipsism' is "the assertion that our internal worlds are more real than the external world." (Stevens, 111) A nihilistic person understands this clearly as he knows that there is only one reality that one can occupy, and that all the alternative reality or world presented by religions or any other thing are merely a safe space that one invents to feel safe. There is no reality but the reality of the world, and to see it lay bare without any layer of clothing by religion or any other thing is daunting. One mostly likes to hold on to something to give them a semblance of meaning and reason to their existence. An existence without reason cannot be accepted by many people, so they invent fantasy, religion and so on. A nihilist sees through this façade as it stifles one to fully understand their religion. Nietzsche states that, "The nihilistic consequences (the belief in valuelessness) as a consequence of moral valuation: everything egoistic has come to disgust us (even though we

realize the impossibility of the un-egoistic); what is necessary has come to disgust us (even though we realize the impossibility of any liberum arbitrium (free will) or ‘intelligible freedom’)” (Nietzsche, 11)

Although nihilism has gained ground and influences the life of many people, it is still disregarded as an unhealthy way of perceiving the world and of life itself. The credentials of nihilism as a philosophical movement have been challenged many times from Heidegger to many contemporary thinkers. Due to its view of the world as nothing more than an unfortunate reality that one is born in, nihilism can be seen as a pessimistic observation of reality and nothing more than that. But, in spite of the many condemning and falsification of its true nature, it still plays an important role especially in the postmodern world due to the fact that it is a thought process that liberates one of its various confinements in life. In *Nihilism: A Philosophy based in Nothingness and Eternity*, Brett Stevens states that ‘nihilism is a gateway and an underpinning to philosophy, not a philosophy in itself.’ (Stevens, 76) Nihilism can be understood as a rejection of the false world and the false promises of memories and symbols through religion and many more. A nihilist may view all values as baseless, but that does not mean to disregard everything as baseless. It is simply the realization that the world and the reality are simply what it is, not something what others may want them to believe. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that one can choose not to believe the truths and values presented as there are no inherent truth and values. “Nothing is inherent and we cannot prove that some value or truth is inherent. We can only elect to believe them.” (Stevens, 69) It is simply a creation of man’s truth and values due to his fear of accepting the meaningless of his existence.

Nihilism being presented as a pessimistic way of perceiving the world can easily be seen as opposed to creativity impulses. People who try to understand a nihilistic person will point to the fact that since his whole existence does not have any reason, purpose or meaning,

and that one simply exists in a world, it does not create a mental environment for one to have a creative mindset about anything if he cannot find purpose and reason in his existence. Creativity requires imagination, so a person will point to the fact that a nihilistic person will have a hard time with being imaginative if he finds his reality meaningless. Nihilism on the other hand does not stifle the creative impulses of a person, but rather allows one to see things not in a way that will make him bow down to any preconceived notions of meaning, values and truth created by people beforehand. Brett Stevens states that-

Nihilism is the soft earth at the start of a wooded path toward seeing life in a more developed way. Before this path, life seems to be suffering and boredom punctuated by horror, without meaning or direction, even when one creates an absolute God and corresponding Heaven where things are otherwise (Stevens, 139)

Nihilism does not regress a person's mind to a bleak and unimaginative state, but rather allow it to transcend beyond reasons, values and truths which one is presented to become a creative person. Nihilism provides a new way of looking, one devoid of any false notions of belief system which makes one look forward to the afterlife or fears it. A creativity drawn from nihilism is different from other beliefs as "It replaces externalized meaning with two important viewpoints. The first is pragmatism; what matters are the consequences in the physical reality, and if there is a spiritual realm, it must operate in parallel with the physical reality. The second is preferentialism; instead of trying to "prove" meaning, we pick what appeals to us- and acknowledge that who we are biologically determines what we seek" (Stevens, 47) A creativity drawn from a nihilistic person does not seek to operate under the strict confines of religion with all its promises and values, truths and meaning. It places importance in understanding that one have to accept the reality that they live in: whether good or bad, and try to move away from different realities presented to them in different forms which have been created to negate the hardship and suffering of living in the world.

Nihilism is “only a better tool for perceiving and analysing whatever situations arise” (Stevens, 103) and forming thoughts from that.

A nihilist creative source may come in the form of presenting the world as it is, without trying to find some kind of meaning and explanation beyond our reality. Brett Stevens states that “Nihilism represents an option to the decay of civilizations, not by finding “higher” values but by rejecting all values and instead looking at plain cause-to-effect logic.” (Stevens, 19) Nihilism does not necessarily point to an end of how we perceive things, but it rather attempts to show the present conditions of our reality as it simply is.

Nihilism can be used as a useful method of depicting and highlighting the facets of society which one might refrain from saying, or have no clue about it. “Nihilism is a means of exploring the truths you cannot say in a social situations, which conflicts with the tendency of most people to engage in illusion and have others validate it for them. With that truthful approach in mind, we then see the actual question before us which is to rise through realism or sink through social illusion.” (Stevens, 104) Religion or, the different belief system that one might have can distort his view and understanding of things. Nihilism acts as a social critique due to its impartiality when it analyse the working of the society. It disregards the importance of one’s belief, values, truths or any other thing which will move the person’s ideals into certain ways making other fall into his illusionary belief systems. “Nihilism denies value and purpose, and in turn denies any specific role to humanity. Like emotions, value and purpose are human judgements which do not exist in the outside world.” (Stevens, 21) A nihilist creative work will not be heavily influenced by his emotions, value and purpose, but only by what is happening around him. His reality does not rely on spiritual realms or illusionary ideals. It is also not influenced by his emotions, but rather by what he sees with his eyes.

Creative forces coming from nihilism is more reliable than that of one coming through any religion or any other “truth” presented as “Nihilism is a mental discipline which clarifies outlook by disciplining the mind to understand the structure of reality, and exclude anything which regardless of its appearance is not true to that understanding.” (Stevens, 113) Nihilism is a mental state of mind that blocks all fictitious things presented in the world. “Nihilism allows us to see reality as the one and only expression of both life and thought, and therefore, to see the true stakes in our dilemma...” (Stevens, 139) Nihilism attempts to arise beyond the preconceived notions of reality that had been created by men, which is being forced to everyone to accept that created illusionary reality. Man’s fear of wasting their life on earth, fear of being alone and, the fear of their lives being a meaningless existence forces them to cling to any form of coherent ideals they find. Religion provides them with an illusionary reality whereby their life on earth is reduced to unfruitful existence as they are more concerned about the illusionary reality or the afterlife, rather than the one they are presented with. It makes them unproductive while living. Faith for them is important as it drives them forward, but this faith that they cling to is not of their reality. As Brett Stevens states-

In Nihilism... the ultimate goal is to make “everything just what it is”, or to decipher enough of our consciousness that we do not confuse the instrument (our mind) with its objects (our world). To a nihilist, the greatest human problem is solipsism, or a confusion of the mind with the world; our solution is to point out that the human values we consider “objectives” and “inherent” are only pretense. (Stevens, 49)

Nihilism attempts to seek reality from reality itself, it does not try to decipher reality through different lenses. It tries to absorb things as it is as a nihilist knows that things that are bound to happen will happen even if one tries to hide it with different beliefs system. It tries to accept that life goes on no matter what might happen, and that people just form a small

portion of reality. If a tree falls at a forest, one can hear the sound of it falling down, or may never hear the sound. But even if one does not hear the sound of the tree falling, it does not mean that it is not falling, it still happened anyway. A nihilist in that way acknowledged that our reality is what matters as different realities that people may create will not stop it from happening what is bound to happen.

A nihilist understands that,

Contemporary man desperately needs a rational interpretation of reason. Instead, he has been furnished with epistemologies, or technical discussions of how reason works. Even these technical discussions, for all their genius, have been theoretically compromised by the inability to ask why reason is working. We are faced with the absurd spectacle of spokesmen for reason who do not understand, or refuse to acknowledge... (Rosen, 56-57)

Men have been desperately trying to create an interpretation of his reality which will give them some reasoning and meaning as to the purpose of our existence. But the problem with it is that-

All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which the proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world- all these values are psychologically considered, the results of certain perspective of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination- and they have falsely projected into the essence of things. What we find here is still the hyperbole naiveté of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things. (Nietzsche, 13-14)

The above statement shows that it does not enable men to grow as a being, nor does it allow one to grasp the reality of the world. It simply provides an excuse as well as an escape from the reality.

A question could be asked of how a nihilist could still be creative while his view point detested all conventional notions of belief systems. And apart from that, a nihilist sees the point of existence as meaningless and without a purpose. His life is in despair and he is reduced to simply being a fragment of the many living things on earth. But as Stanley Rosen puts it, “The nihilist perseveres in the face of despair not because he has a reason for so doing, but because his ostensible comprehension of the worthlessness of all reasons is understood by him as freedom. The nihilist is freed by the instability of the world to find stability in his own despair.” (Rosen, 142) A nihilist person accepts the insignificance of his existence, and therefore does not try to rise above that through false preoccupations of alternate/spiritual reality. To understand and accept one’s place in reality allows a nihilist to see the world not from a higher ground, but from where he stand, as he live with it. “The nihilist despair because he is fully enlightened or free from all illusions. His despair is a sign of his enlightenment or freedom, the seal of his integrity.” (Rosen, 142) A nihilist person through his acceptance of despair of being alive in this world understands that “Value and significance, if they are the ground of facticity, restricts man’s freedom by the chains of objectivity.” And from that “The nihilist dissolves these chains by the acid of despair and resolves himself in the hope of hopelessness. This is the existential manifestation of his essential coherence.” (Rosen, 142)

To accept that our reality is not the real one, but simply a stepping stone for a new and better reality in the afterlife does not allow a person to fully understand his surroundings. He is not concerned by what is happening around him, and simply look forward to that other versions of reality. This renders him incapable of fully analysing his surroundings, his reality

as they are. It is always covered with false notions of what he believed in. He analysed and scrutinised the world through a different eye and thought process. He had created in his mind an ideal reality beyond this reality, so for him, this reality cannot be seen as nothing but a footpath towards his ideal world. This block the creativity that one could conjure up and derive from this world. As Stanley Rosen pointed out, “For Nietzsche... the projection of an ideal, supersensible world as the locus of value serves to drain the physical or physiological world of its creativity. Recognition of the worthlessness of the world in an ontological sense is the necessary condition for the creation of vital human values.” (Rosen, 144)

At a glance, the character of Henry Chinaski in not just the selected novels of this study, but in the other works of Charles Bukowski can be seen as misogynistic and sadistic, without a care for no one but himself. As can be seen in most of his works, he sees women as something he can get sexual pleasure from and nothing else. He treats all his ladies as harlots and as something he can easily replace. He rarely treats them with respect nor does he often care for them. He uses his small success as a writer to sleep with as many women as he can. Even some forms of love he may have developed towards a handful of women were love that mainly rest on having sexual intercourses and nothing else. And apart from that, he constantly cheats on them. His description of women in almost all his books ranges from objectifying them as sex symbols to whores who have no value other than sexual pleasures. Apart from that, he is an alcoholic who cannot stand people unless they are beneficial for him. So from a glance, it is clear that he horrible person and this paper might pose a problem of why such a character would be put at centre stage. If we remove his treatment of women, his alcoholic nature and his distaste of humanity, we see a man who is writing his experience in a manner that is frank as can be, as well as depicting the workings of human during his time without any restriction from any force like religion, societal rules as well as morals that may be created by man.

The four selected novels of Charles Bukowski- *Ham on Rye* (1982), *Post Office* (1971), *Factotum* (1975), and *Women* (1978), recalls the life of Henry Chinaski, the alter-ego of Charles Bukowski from a young boy till the age of sixty. Each of the four novels details specific periods of his life: *Ham on Rye* covers his childhood till his teenage years; *Factotum* covers his life during his early twenties till his late thirties where he is constantly looking for work to make ends meet. He also starts to truly write poems during this period. *Post Office* detailed his life working as in the post office during his late thirties till his early fifties; *Women* depicts the later part of his life from late fifties to early sixties, his life as a small time successful writer. Each of the novels shows not only his progression in terms of age and jobs, but also how he starts to form his nihilistic, misogynistic, misanthropic, and sadistic character.

An argument can be made that Chinaski is not a nihilist but an existentialist who found his reason of existence through his writings. In many instances, this can be seen as a logical argument given that he often finds solace and peace when he is writing on his typewriter. It allows him to be himself, to write down his pain and anguish, as well as all his grievances. In many ways, he defines his existence through his writing which in turn gives him a reason to be alive, to seek something from it. But at the end of the day, what he writes might allow him to lay down everything that he might not want to say out loud, or does not bother to preach out loud, he did it all to make ends meet. In the novel, when ask about why he became a writer, his answer ranges from the need to pay electricity, food, alcohol and women. He does not define his existence from it, but rather writes down because he needs the pay at the end of the day to support himself. When Liza Weston asked him, “You mean you live in order to write?” to which he answered “No, I just exist. Then later I try to remember and write some of it down” (*Women*, 200) He always writes them with brutal honesty, and without being restricted or being hold back by anything. Whether it is about the women he

knew, or about what is happening around him, he describes them as he feel and sees it himself. And as Valerie puts it “Oh, Hank’s poems are so full of passion, but as a person he’s not that way at all!” (Women, 181)

Henry Chinaski could possibly have adopted his nihilistic attitudes due to his harsh and tough experience while growing up. Naturally a shy person, he never fit in well with his peers in schools. Apart from that, since his father resorts to beating him, he soon lost faith in his parents as people he could rely on. Apart from that, he also knew what was happening to his uncles who were alcoholic and mostly aggressive. He also saw his father’s disillusionment as he thought himself a rich person. He knew that he thought of himself that way because of his fear of being used by anyone who he sees as a lower class. He knew early on that he cannot trust anyone or rely on any of his family. He said that “The Chinaski bloodline had been thinned by a series of peasant-servants who had surrendered their real lives for fractional and illusionary gains” (Ham on Rye, 193)

Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that the root of nihilism stems from the Christian morals, and for Chinaski, this is no different. He knew the idiocy of being trapped in the ideals of a church which forbids one from the many pleasures of life. It stifles and entraps them, making them a tool which does not benefit them in any form. While being a teenager, he once went to a church to confess his sins, only to realise the hypocrisy of doing it. He said that, “I had decided against religion a couple of years back. If it were true, it made fools out of people, or it drew fools. And if it weren’t true, the fools were all the more the foolish” (Ham, on Rye. 139) He knew that people can be easily manipulated into thinking that there is a higher purpose, a truer purpose to our whole existence than simply living at the fullest. Religion can convince and manipulate people into thinking that by following their ideals, they will be rewarded in the afterlife, as well as being rewarded in some materialistic form during their lifetime. Henry Chinaski sees through it proclaiming that “lies. Beautiful lies. That’s what

they needed.” (Ham on Rye, 84) Although while saying this, he never preached a new form of believing that one must cling to, but, he rather points out the problem with people who sees religion as the answer to all things, and that one must cling to it. Charles Bukowski, the writer once said in an interview of *Life Magazine* (1988) "For those who believe in God, most of the big questions are answered. But for those of us who can't readily accept the God formula, the big answers don't remain stone-written. We adjust to new conditions and discoveries. We are pliable. Love need not be a command or faith a dictum. I am my own God. We are here to unlearn the teachings of the church, state, and our educational system. We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that Death will tremble to take us."

Henry Chinaski is able to comprehend the workings of the world through a mirror that is not distorted. He understands how job works and how easily one can be trapped into slavery without them ever realising it. He says that, "I was horrified by life, at what a man had to do simply in order to eat, sleep and keep himself clothed." (Factotum, 46) In the poem *Dinosauria, We*, he talks extensively about the way the world is working. He begins by exclaiming that he never chooses to be born in this world. But since that is a thing he has no power to change, he instead chooses to highlight the problems plaguing mankind in this world.

We are

Born like this

Into this

Into these carefully mad wars

Into the sight of broken factory windows of emptiness

... Into hospitals which are so expensive that it's cheaper to die

Into lawyers who charge so much it's cheaper to plead guilty

Into a country where the jails are full and the madhouses closed

Into a place where the masses elevate fools into rich heroes

He manages to see through the inner workings of the world that is filled with hypocrisy, corruption, being restricted of freedom in any form since the day one is born. Not only is he speaking about the working of the world that is essentially reducing man to slavery through works needed to not survive in a society, but to fit in the society; he also questioned the very purpose of our lives as well as how much we stray away from creating a better world for the reality that one is living.

In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus", Louis Althusser describes how one can be manipulated and controlled by the state without them ever realising it. Whether it is through the 'Repressive State Apparatus' where people are controlled forcefully through laws, or by 'Ideological State Apparatus' where one is manipulated the moment they are born through different forms of ideologies. Chinaski understands the way that one is tied to be controlled to follow a certain way of living and presenting himself. Because of the way people conducted themselves by following certain things, he says that, "Nothing was interesting, nothing. The people were restrictive and careful, all alike." (Ham on Rye. 244) He himself cannot hold onto any job because they requires certain way of conducting oneself to the point that the workers are reduced to nothing more than dispensable tools that certain person has full control of. But the necessity of living and all the things man required to survive compels him to work. And from that, he manages to point out the harsh working

conditions that the lower class people were put up with. Again, it follows the thought brought up by Chinaski in his poem that fooled many people by this idea of false living.

The American economy during post war might be growing exponentially, but Chinaski shows the harsh reality of people in the lower class who are not affected by the growth, but are still stuck in the same old slavery-like lives. He manages to understand the different ways jobs are conducted as he moves from one place to another as he cannot hold down a job for a long time for many years. Moving from one state to another, working at different places and jobs with different bosses, he understands that holding jobs requires one to be submissive and barely visible to the bosses. The needs of one to live compel them to accept it and follow certain rules, which in turn does not allow them to fulfil any of their potential as a human being nor does it allow them to understand how to understand themselves. His job at the post office starts with him saying “It began as a mistake.” (Post Office, 13) He manages to bend the rules many times by either being removing himself in the boss’s presence or by spacing out during work time allowing him to work there for a long time. But his charade cannot last throughout his life and he was promptly terminated from his work after repeated absence.

Henry Chinaski sees through the façade that people put on during their lives to try and find meaning in their existence. He on the other hand does not try to hide the lack of meaning in one’s existence. He drinks alcohol and poisons himself with different drugs to not be affected by certain way of living that people do to give their existence a meaning without fully understanding it. The dilemma and problem in trying to understand why one is alive let alone find meaning is something that he has been facing for many years. In his poem *Cut While Shaving*, he explores it saying

It's never quite right, he said, the way people look,

the way the music sounds, the way the words are
written.

It's never quite right, he said, all the things we are
taught, all the loves we chase, all the deaths we
die, all the lives we live,
they are never quite right,
they are hardly close to right,
these lives we live
one after the other,
piled there as history,
the waste of the species,
the crushing of the light and the way,
it's not quite right,
it's hardly right at all.

He is not a man simply rebellious to the idea of trying to find meaning. He himself has been trying to understand everything- from life itself and how the world works ever since he started reading and collecting books. He can never fully understand anything at all because he knows that things had been wrong from the start. He is bothered by it and therefore writes them down extensively. Even the idea of living happily is a fad because one can never really understand what happiness is, nor will they ever know fully what it is. What they get are

simply momentary fulfilment and pleasure which are only to be weighed down by what is being taught in the world.

He hates being among a group of people as the conversation that they bring forth lacked any sort of real meaning towards fully understanding themselves or their surroundings. He said that, "I was drawn to all the wrong things: I liked to drink, I was lazy, I didn't have a god, politics, ideas, ideals. I was settled into nothingness; a kind of non-being, and I accepted it. It didn't make for an interesting person. I didn't want to be interesting, it was too hard. What I really wanted was only a soft, hazy space to live in, and to be left alone." (Women, 104). Even the idea of being in love with one person does not give him meaningful reason to define existence. He simply said, "It felt good not to be part of that sort of thing. I was glad I wasn't in love, that I wasn't happy with the world. I like being at odds with everything. People in love often become edgy, dangerous. They lose their sense of humor. They become nervous, psychotic bores. They even become killers" (Women, 57). Being in love with three women before, he knew what that leads to. His experience had a lot to do with how he felt, as his first love died after drinking too much; he left his second after constant fight as well as her becoming mentally unstable. His third left him for another man. He knew after all this experience that pain only follows when one is in love. He writes, "Pain is strange... Pain arrives, BANG, and there it is, it sits on you. It's real. And to anybody watching, you look foolish. Like you've suddenly become an idiot. There is no cure for it unless you know somebody who understands how you feel, and knows how to help" (Women, 50). He brings out to the readers that although love may be the culmination of one's existence in many ways, it can also be a brutal reminder that pain lurks beneath all that happiness which happens for a short time. "In the end it hardly mattered; no matter what they did, we ended up lonely and insane." (Women, 251)

Chinaski is also a person that does not try to conform to society at all. He knows that society traps people by using methods that would fit their needs. It gives them a sense of false purpose, false reason to define their existence. He says that “People just blindly grabbed at whatever there was: communism, health foods, zen, surfing, ballet, hypnotism, group encounters, orgies, biking, herbs, Catholicism, weight-lifting, travel, withdrawal, vegetarianism, India, painting, writing, sculpting, composing, conducting, backpacking, yoga, copulating, gambling, drinking, hanging around, frozen yogurt, Beethoven, Bach, Buddha, Christ, TM, H, carrot juice, suicide, handmade suits, jet travel, New York City, and then it all evaporated and fell apart. People had to find things to do while waiting to die. I guess it was nice to have a choice.” (Women, 182) He sees the way that people are trying to find reason for their existence in many things. And the fact that one is led to believe that we have a choice and believes that we are choosing for ourselves gives us a sense of power and meaning to one’s life. But by following that certain path, one does not realise that they are never fulfilling their potential as a person, nor does they fully justify their existence. Amidst all that hardship of following certain path, there are always lingering doubts in people’s mind because of the fact that one never fully understand what he choose as it was presented as a choice for them to control their lives. Again in *Dinosauria, We*, he points out what we are left with after all the false promises and religions, aspiring to be rich and trying to find meaning to gratify existence by following certain teachings of the world. He states,

Born into this

Walking and living through this

Dying because of this

Muted because of this

Castrated

Debauched

Disinherited

Because of this

Fooled by this

Used by this

Pissed on by this

Made crazy and sick by this

Made violent

Made inhuman

By this.

He fully understands that one is reduced to nothing more than a shallow being, which is easily exploited and made to look a fool, only to be discarded when one is no longer needed. One can never gratify and find meaning and purpose through following these societal created teachings and promises as it can only really benefit people that hold power over these things. He learn about this while working at the post office and having to keep up with his boss Mr. Johnston, also known as 'The Stone' who treats all his employees harshly because he have power over them at work. The people in power exploit their power, controlling and manipulating their workers, treating them as slaves.

Apart from that, one is left with a lingering though as they waited for death to finally catch up with them without them ever fully convinced of their lives or themselves as a

person. Chinaski on the other hand, moves away from all that and try to find peace within himself which for people who believe in something is repulsive. “Cecelia sat and watched us drink. I could see that I repulsed her. I ate meat. I had no god. I liked to fucked. Nature didn’t interest me. I never voted. I liked wars. Outer space bored me. Baseball bored me. History bored me. Zoos bored me.” (Women, 186)

Chinaski believe in himself and do things which will allow him escape the confines of being trapped. He lived his life recklessly and since knew that “Goodness could be found sometimes in the middle of hell.” (Women, 67) There is no denying that being alive for him is work “time was motionless while existence was a throbbing unbearable thing.” (Women, 38) He has depression at a young age and considered suicide a couple of times. But he managed to live with his demons, and he knows that death is not something to be feared or something to romanticize. It is simply something that one will inevitably face. He said that, “Death on the shore. Just phase out, breathe in, wear sandals and pretend it’s a fine world.” (Women, 234) And being depressed at an early age, he understands the certain charm of being dead all together. He is not a man oblivious or delusional to what he is doing. He knows good and bad but he mostly just does not care trying to simply be good, or to simply be bad. He accepts that he had not been good. He writes, “I tinkered with lives and souls as if they were my playthings. How could I call myself a man? How could I write poems? What did I consist of? I was a bush-league de Sade, without his intellect. A murderer was more straightforward and honest than I was. Or a rapist. I didn’t want my soul played with, mocked, pissed on; I knew that much at any rate... the worst part of it was that i passed myself off for exactly what I wasn’t- a good man. I was able to enter people’s life because of their trust in me. I was doing my dirty work the easy way. I was writing *The Love Tale of the Hyena.*” (Women, 245) He understands the bad things that he had done and wrote it down in his books as honest as he can. He does not try to hide some bad part of his life or highlight

the good part. He writes as he experiences it. He knew that trying to force something is not believable for the readers. Brutal Honesty as well as saying or writing things as they really are without sugar-coating it will allow people to understand more about the workings of the world and everything in it. "Someday... when they demonstrate that the world has four dimensions instead of just three, a man will be able to go for a walk and just disappear. No burial, no illusions, no heaven or hell." (Women, 72)

Henry Chinaski's creativity lies in his ability to deduct things to its root, to be able to see and experience things without any preconceived ideas about it. His nihilistic identity allow him to grasp things and put them into words; whether it is writing about women, work or live in general, he does not try to present them as something carrying great meaning and reason. He presented them as simply how they are to the naked eyes. Being alive may have no higher purpose or meaning, no higher end goal, but that does not mean that one should cling desperately to something to make meaning out of it, nor reject it completely and cease to exist. Life is beautiful as it is, pain, anger, horror, love, and all the things that we could feel as a person should be concentrated instead of clinging onto some ideals that promised better life. Being alive is being able to see the sadness and pain in this world, to accept that it does not really have any meaning other than the fact that it just is, and that there is pain everywhere and happiness is everywhere which all ultimately leads to death. To accept that death means the end of all things with nothing beyond the spectrum will allow one to value what we have. And knowing that death waits at the end of the line, it will allow one to dissuade them from following societal rules leading to mundane lives. It would rather allow one to concentrate on themselves leading to a better live. Chinaski understands that and follows it. This allows him to write down what he sees and experience from living making it a creative source that is pure in its delivery.

In *Cause and Effect*, he writes,

the best often die by their own hand

just to get away,

and those left behind

can never quite understand

why anybody

would ever want to

get away

from

them

Being a nihilist, he understands why people would be fed up with living and just commits suicide. He himself has had that thought of committing suicide many times since he was just a teenager. He wrote it to show that people who live and tries to understand the reason why some people commits through their own preconceived notions of suicide from what they had been taught by society will never understand the true reason. They already have an idea formed in their head as to why they would do that: blaming them for not seeing the opportunities and choice that they would have being alive. Chinaski on the other ridiculed these people saying they will never understand or see the real reason because they are nothing more than a puppet being controlled to think that way. And by trying to understand the whole thing, they simply reinforce their beliefs which further trap them and make them a pawn. They will be nothing more than a plaything for religion and for the government while these people who commit suicide escaped this confinement. As a nihilist, he understands the thoughts of both the people who committed suicide as well as the people still living and

concludes that since death is inevitable, either one cut it short themselves or by living through it, what we are left with is simply accepting the inevitability of death and living with the idea of trying to understand oneself giving him new value of what being alive meant.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines misanthropy “as a person who hates or distrusts humankind.” Misanthropy is a form of mental illness as the people who are considered as a misanthrope disregard the simplicity and beauty of humankind, and focus mostly on the darker side of humanity and its workings. Misanthropes are mostly people who have had enough experience within humankind and the society that humans created which is filled with corruptions, lies, selfishness, greed, and with no sympathy for others. With people blindly following whatever lies that they are taught to believe, it makes them do whatever they think is necessary to survive and surpass, and eventually have control over fellow beings. A misanthrope seeing through all of these and realize the inherent lack of authenticity, kindness and selflessness among human beings. They reject the corrupt nature of human kind and prefer to exclude themselves from both their fellow humans and the working of the society. Since most people have eroded any positive attributes of human kind in favour of their own needs, any goodness still remaining are easily lost among the pile of corruptions and greed. Misanthropes are greatly repulsed by the negative traits of human nature and therefore prefer the silent comfort of solitude. They are often seen as an outsider due to their lack of presence among fellow beings, and their stubbornness to follow the rules laid down for the society by human beings.

There have been some famous and well known misanthropes in society for many years as they either simply dislike being around people or dislike the workings of human nature. Oscar Ybarra claimed that “The concept of misanthropy is also reflected in many classics in political and social philosophy—for example, Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)—and in literature.” (Ybarra, 262) It shows that many writers and philosophers have been dealing with the subject of misanthropy for many years, and is still a subject of huge interest for many people. There have been many famous people who are identified as misanthrope like- Arthur Schopenhauer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Oscar Wilde,

Patricia Highsmith, Franz Kafka, Jean Paul Satre, J.D. Salinger, Martin Heidegger and many more. They all have a huge distaste of humankind due to human's lack of authenticity, their corruption, greed and many other things and these writers often point out their reasons in their works.

Although misanthropy is mostly defined by what can be seen in a dictionary, it is more than what it is shown to be. Misanthropy borders more on a generalized hatred of human beings. Brett Stevens points out that "misanthropy is like any other form of elitism a preference for the best of people and a rejection of the idea of including and "validating" all people...misanthropes rarely deal with the set of "no people", meaning absolute zero, but they are selective." (Stevens, 85) Misanthropes are usually narcissistic due to their idea that they are better than other people. And when they look through their narcissistic eyes, they can easily see and detect things which they do not like about the working of humans. Due to that reason, they are very selective of who they choose to be with, and in many cases often outright relieve themselves from fellow beings. They preferred the isolation rather than commuting with people whom they have no interest with.

This chapter will focus on the three selected texts – *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J.D. Salinger and *Nausea* (1938) by Jean Paul Satre. The protagonist on each of these texts will be used as reference in understanding Chinaski as they are all misanthropic characters.

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travel* is still among the most widely read work of fiction till date due to the contents inside as well as the satirical way that Swift presents his work to the readers. He commented on the workings of the society and the human nature during his time which was filled with corruptions in their different laws as well as their lives itself. Swift cleverly uses narrative form of writing involving travels and expeditions which were

popular during his time. It allows him to gain more audience by employing that technique as it moves the reader away from their own reality to a fantasy place, but at the same time allowing them to re-evaluate their own life through the things he presented in his work.

Lemuel Gulliver, the protagonist of the story is a simple man with an ambition that is no more different than the average man. But from his different voyages, he starts to slowly detest human kind. Although this novel is satirical, there is an undertone of darkness hidden within it. His different voyages become a metaphor to denote the vices and follies of mankind. His exploration to Lilliput and his conversation with the Lilliputians can be seen as his presentation of man's pettiness and cunning. They may look normal and charming in appearance, but they are cunning and will do anything, even killing to take revenge for their benefits. Even the long war between the Lilliputians and the Blefusians are based on petty and small things like which side of the egg to break which shows man's love of war and destruction.

His venture in Brobdingnag, a place of giants looking hideous shows the ugliness and hideousness of human beings which are often hidden away. When he converses with the king of Brobdingnag and talks about things mankind did, the king says that "I can not but conclude the bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." (Swift, 91) Because the Brobdingnags are not corrupted and are rather rational about things which is hardly present among Gulliver's native. His voyage at Lagado shows mankind descending to madness in their search for more knowledge through science to the point that they cannot even have proper conversation.

His final voyage in the land of the Houyhnhnms occupied by the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms shows Gulliver's hatred of mankind to the point that he wants nothing to do

with them. The Yahoos are described as “an ugly monster” and “very singular and deformed” (Swift, 170). His first encounter with the Yahoos is not pleasant and he is saved by the appearance of one of the Houyhnhnms. The Yahoos have a human figure and in many ways resemble it. Gulliver denotes “My horror and astonishment are not to be described, when I observed in this abominable animal, a perfect human figure.” (Swift, 170) He detests them so much to the point that he does not even try to defend the Yahoos who resembles men when the Houyhnhnms talks about exterminating them. When he have to leave them, he says “the certain prospect of an unnatural death was the least of my evils, for supposing I should escape with life by some strange adventure, how could I think with temper of passing my days among Yahoos”(Swift, 206). His hates the Yahoos/mankind so much that he proclaims he would rather die. And when he leaves, he finds some small-uninhabited island so that he can “reflect with delight on the virtues of those imitable Houyhnhnms, without any opportunity of degenerating into the vices and corruption of my own species.” (Swift, 207) Rather than going home. But he is rescued by Portuguese seamen and he returns home, but he never eats with his family or stay near them because he says “When I behold a lump of deformity and disease both in body and mind, smitten with pride, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience.” (Swift, 223)He would rather talk to the horses who resembles the Houyhnhnms rather than speaking to his family or any other human beings. He goes on to state that after a while “I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me.... Yet the smell of a Yahoo continuing very offensive, I always keep my nose stopped with rue, lavender, or tobacco leaves.” (Swift, 222)

His hatred of human kind arises out of the petty things that people occupied their lives with, the corrupted and malicious intentions of people coupled with their hunger for some form of destruction. People’s occupation with things like- science and inventions that have no value to life, as well as the hideous behaviour and nature that accompanies it. Gulliver’s

misanthropic attitude is not something which he had as a young boy; rather it is the result of being in contact with different people that resembles humans exactly as they are. He believes that being around human will eventually turn his mind corrupted and turn him into a vicious creature.

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger is one of the most controversial books ever published. It tells the story of a young teenage boy named Holden Caulfield who is fed up with the world filled with 'phonies'. He narrates the story and talks about what is happening to him and around him. He does not like to study so Pencey prep school is the fourth school that he is expelled from after only passing in one class. The story follows his adventures shortly after being expelled from the school. Even at a young age, he already detests the world as he blames the adults for corrupting his innocence as well as the innocence of children. One possible reason he came to this conclusion seems to be the fact that he himself only mourns the death of his young brother Allie. His parents and the people around him acts as if nothing happened and moved along with their lives while he is still stuck in the shock and pain of losing his brother to leukaemia. For that reason he starts to wonder what they really mean in the grand scheme of things for anyone, and how much that innocence he still preserve is robbed from him.

His relationship with his classmates at Pencey also has a tremendous effect on him as he can see through the self-absorbed and cunning way that they are conducting themselves. From Stradlater, Ackley and Maurice to the girls he meets at a bar, he can see through the pretence that they are living and how much of an advantage he is being taken. From writing their papers to inviting them in fear of them being feeling isolated, his childlike innocence and good deed is being repaid with rejection. For that, he calls them 'phonies' and continues to do to other people too. As a young boy he is still naïve and inexperienced and is being taken advantage of many time. He seems to be in search of love and affection, as well as

acceptance which he never received. Instead he is left alone and vilified as a rebel and failure. He wants things to remain the same and for him to be able to comprehend that. He likes the museum simply because “everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move. . . . Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different would be you.” (Salinger, 129) But his dreams are impossible, and all he is left with is the sinking realization that the world and the people that took him down are the same place and people that he will continue to live with, making it harder for him to comprehend which makes him resent the world more filling him with angst. The only semblance of happiness and love he can find is when he is with his young sister Phoebe who epitomised innocence for him. But being denied of what he seeks from the world, as well as having his innocence being stripped away, it makes him resent being around people, eventually turning him into a loner and a misanthrope.

John-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea* is one of the most widely read books till date as it is the first book that he wrote that deals extensively about existentialism, a philosophy that is closely associated with him. The story is told in the form of a diary written by Antoine Roquentin who is a historian. He is studying the life of a French aristocrat named Marquis de Rollebon. While he is doing his research, he is suddenly filled with a feeling of uneasiness, and nausea. His nauseating feeling arises out of his sudden realization of his insignificance in the world, and he starts questioning his existence. The more he thinks about it, the more alienated he becomes towards the people. He states that “I live alone, entirely alone. I never speak to anyone, never; I receive nothing, I give nothing” (Sartre, 189) as he starts to realize his insignificance as well as his lack of understanding of how he can justify his existence. He became more and more alienated from everyone, and mostly only converses with Self-Taught Man, who he finds annoying many times. He looked around people at the bar, the library, and all other places and starts to slowly distance himself from everyone because he felt that the people were creating and following a false notion of living, as well as giving meaning to their

existence which is heavily unsatisfactory. He feels the need to be in solitude and not surrounded by people in order to understand his existence. "All that is nothing new; I have never resisted these harmless emotions; far from it. You must be just a little bit lonely in order to feel them." (Satre, 165) His nauseating feeling seems to be staying with him so he tries to study the people as well as the objects that are in front of him. He points out that people were simply creating meaning to something and giving them a chronological way of understanding it so as to remember it. They meekly accept the truth and meaning presented to them so that their life will have some form of reason to make them continue living. But Roquentin on the other hand preferred being alone and observing things happening around him, whether it's people or objects. He claims that "I am alone in the midst of these happy, reasonable voices. All these creatures spend their time explaining, realizing happily that they agree with each other. In Heaven's name, why is it so important to think the same things all together." (Satre, 195) He highlights the way that people need to confirm their reason of existence even if it is the same with other people or, even if it is given to them by someone or something. He sees the blind conformity of people as well as their need to accept things as others would have felt it. They cling and measure themselves with something that had passed, or by identifying themselves with someone. Roquentin cannot accept this conformity that people are desperately seeking and because of that, he becomes an alienated person, a misanthrope. He exclaims that "People who live in society have learnt how to see themselves, in mirrors, as they appear to their friends. I have no friends: is that why my flesh is so naked?" (Satre, 122) underlining his questioning of the belief of people as shallow and baseless, as well as realizing his detachment from all of them.

Henry Chinaski is a loner ever since he was a young boy. He often mentions being unable to understand what his fellow classmates were doing as he was completely uninterested in them. His school days were simply attended due to necessity prompted by his

parents. Even while he was attending primary school, he said that “I didn’t have any friends at school, didn’t want any. I felt better being alone.” (Ham on Rye, 29) His disinterest in having any friends and being unable to feel comfortable around people can be attributed heavily as the influence and result of his father’s treatment of him, as well as his own experience of meeting several people who prefer solitude. He is an outsider and a loner from such a young age that he needed the help of alcohol to not only help him in meeting and having conversation with people, and to also cope with his depression. During his teenage years, he preferred the comfort of being in a library or reading books in his room. From his extensive reading, he manages to find writers who share the same thoughts and interest as him, and starts to devote more of his time on reading and eventually writing. Among his many influences from his readings, he mentioned how much his thoughts are similar with them, and he starts to emulate them in his writing. And among them, he find authors that share the same view about humanity particularly Sinclair Lewis which he writes, “And the book was called Main Street. He peeled back the layers of hypocrisy that covered people. Only he seemed to lack passion.” (Ham on Rye, 151) As a young boy, he knew the hypocrisy that is filled with people. For instance, his father’s belief that his family is rich and acts like one which he clearly detested.

Writing start to become a way for him to show his identity among people that never had any to begin with. Writing slowly became his escape, as well as a way for him to express himself, to vent out his frustration and anger. Even after his success as a writer and the need to regularly attend a reading of his poem, he did it not because he wants people to adore him or replicate him. He did it out of necessity as he needs to pay bills and put food in his mouth. For him, writing became his escape because “Writing’s different. You do it alone, it has nothing to do with a live audience.” (Women, 285) He relishes the solitude because solitude is the only time he can be himself and think about anything that defines him as an individual

among a group. So therefore solitude became his heaven as “I was a man who thrived on solitude; without it I was like another man without food or water. Each day without solitude weakened me. I took no pride in my solitude; but I was dependent on it. The darkness of the room was like sunlight to me.” (Factotum, 24) His solitude allows his writing to be impartial. It allows him to think clearly as the presence of other human beings will distract either through their noises or through their way of thinking which is filled with greed, corruption and narcissism. For him, “The whole earth was nothing but mouths and assholes swallowing and shitting, and fucking.” (Ham on Rye, 167) There is never room or time for anyone to think about ways of improving oneself as inputs of different kinds will eventually led them to succumb to the ways of the ancestors that are concerned with nothing but for their own wealth and materialistic comfort. People can never connect that inner potential they have as an individual as they are stifled through the different teaching and preaching, practices and rituals.

Having conversation with people for him is hard work as he knew that there are certain limitations as to how much people really care, or how much people are trying to impress themselves among others. He proclaims that “People don't do me much good.” (Ham on Rye, 194) He can never find true comfort being around people as the workings of human relationship seems to conduct itself on trying to look the best, or put out an impressive appearance just for the sake of trying to gain attention even for a few minutes. There is no honesty or real purpose in trying to communicate between one another. He says that, “People were interesting at first. Then later, slowly but surely, all the flaws and madness would manifest themselves. I would become less and less to them; they would mean less and less to me.” (Women, 73) He calculated that the appearance they put up cannot last for a long time so they end up hurting their pride when they start to lose the interest that they used to hold. The crowd that they are so intent on impressing also quickly lose interest in them as soon as

they feel they are of no benefit to them. The human connection seems to rest so much on impressing one another that people end up being a hypocrite. The world is filled with countless clones of the hypocrites that came before, and there is another wave of endless clones still to be born. The people that he came to know through Jan Meadows are a prime example of what he thinks the society is becoming. As much as he wants to support her in her needs, he can never really live the life that Jan had as she likes to gather with people and party. He described one event saying, “Then came the Christmas party. That was December 24th. There were to be drinks, food, music, dancing. I didn't like parties. I didn't know how to dance and people frightened me, especially people at parties. They attempted to be sexy and gay and witty and although they hoped they were good at it, they weren't. They were bad at it. Their trying so hard only made it worse.” (Factotum, 97) Being a loner allows him to grasp the working of people, especially when they are among groups of other people as the need to impress impels them to create a fake persona which only makes it worse.

Chinaski never settled with one lady for a long period of time after he turns sixty and therefore have to meet with the different friends of his girlfriends. In the novel, he mentions some of them as phony. A poem titled *Confessions of a Misanthrope* seems to depict one particular evening he spent with them. He described them as headless people, talking about things which are of no concern to him. He does not pay attention to them so his girlfriend asks him he does not like her friends. An argument arises out of that to which she talks of her friend's knowledge and pedigree-

look at Stanley!” she pointed to one of her
 friends. “he writes music and is a historian, a
 scholar! what's wrong with
 Stanley?”

“look at John,” she said... to which John says

“I’m alive inside,”... “everybody else is
dead inside. I should go into solitude but I feel
that it is my duty to mix with society, then too,
a man can be brave with words. also, war is hell,
people are good, love is beautiful

But in spite of their attempts to look and sound respectable and with knowledge, they are nothing more than headless, brainless people for him. They lacked any notion of meaning and purpose in their words and they are nothing more than talking dead bodies to him. They are simply trying to force themselves into believing that humanity is a thing that everyone should praise as it is the most sacred thing that people have. But what is really happening is that it is the people that create all these chaos, war, and innumerable bad things. It is mankind that makes the world a harsh place to reside in, but that is being twisted to create a reality that seems like all the bad things happening on earth are things mankind have no control over. It is nothing but a twisted lie to make it look like mankind is the only one that suffers as well as the one that is consistently trying to alleviate the circumstances that it has no control over. The poem shows the misanthropic and narcissistic attitudes of Chinaski as well as his creativity in highlighting them as the central focus of his work. He intends to show that most people just have that degree to look respectable when in reality they speak of things already spoken countless times and are simply blindly following the rules of the society. They are the sort of people that Chinaski hates because of that, they are represented as headless people talking with words that lack any meaning. They are no more different than a dead body to him and he does not want to be around them as he sees himself above them.

Henry Chinaski cannot have a meaningful loving relationship with another person for very long because he understands that the value with which people measure their relationship are often based on things which only serves to make one feel good for a very short period of

time. Apart from that, people cannot keep up with their appearance and pleasuring for a long period of time. The mask and pretence that they cover themselves with will eventually come off and their true nature will be revealed. Chinaski knows about this when he says “Human relationship didn’t work anyhow. Only the first two weeks had any zing, then the participants lost their interest. Masks dropped away and real people began to appear: cranks, imbeciles, the demented, the vengeful, sadists, killers.” (Women, 287) As can be seen in *Nausea*, Roquentin and Anny’s relationship cannot start again because Anny measures her worth and the changes happening to her by using Roquentin as her measuring stick. She creates her own essence from him making him resentful. All her deficiencies and follies are measured through Roquentin, and as he can see through that, he decides to not pursue her anymore. In that same vein, Bukowski realizes that people’s mask will drop once you lower your guard and all the bad things will start to come out. Therefore, it is better for one to avoid relationship as it will easily highlight the follies of human relationship filled with lies, vengefulness, deceit and being stifled altogether. In *Factotum*, Gertrude asks Chinaski if he had ever been in love to which he replied “Love is for real people”. And when she added “You sound real” he simply says “I dislike real people... I hate them” (Factotum, 41) Being in a relationship in many ways stop one from achieving that goal that they might have set for themselves because of the constant need to pleasure and satisfy the other person. Chinaski prefers being alone than going through real relationship because he knows that “The greatest men are the most alone” (Women, 22) as they have the freedom to pursue anything without constraints.

In the poem *Alone With Everybody*, Chinaski goes on one step further to prove his point that human relationship can never be fruitful. We will always be in search of that one elusive person or we will never find what we look. Different interpretations can be formed from it but Chinaski is very clear in his stance about people even in the poem. He says that

the flesh covers the bone

and they put a mind

in there and

sometimes a soul.

While he may prefer the idea of being alone, people need company to fulfil sexual desires. But the problem with that is that most people have no soul at all, and what you are left with is a soulless being that only destroys. And the soulless one are the ones that people are most likely to encounter when they search for some form of romantic connection with another being. Chinaski with brutal honesty says that

there's no chance

at all:

we are all trapped

by a singular fate.

At his cynical best, he lays down that one should simply just stop trying to find it as he did because it will never happen. Everyone is stuck in a dreadful place filled with these soulless people and at the end, everyone suffer the same fate- Loneliness and Death. He says that this useless pursue of that elusive one will only fill the city dumps and junkyards with drunkards and scums, madhouses and hospitals will be filled with madmen and the broken hearted. And all that is left is for the death to fill junkyard. He says that people will always disappoint us one way or another and drove us into our downfall. People cannot be relied and trusted upon because at the end the heartbroken, the drunkard and the madmen are nothing more than people where the owner of some institution can collect money from. Their worthlessness and downfall serves simply to increase the wealth of some other people. When

we are left to the dark end of the room, there is nothing else to fill that void. So in the end everyone ends up alone one way or another.

Henry Chinaski also frequently talks about what is happening in the society despite him being “naturally a loner... I didn’t want conversation, or to go anywhere except the racetrack or the boxing matches. I didn’t understand t.v. I felt foolish paying money to go into a movie theatre and sit with other people to share their emotions.” (Women, 71) He could care less about what people might be saying about him because they are nothing more than a headless body to them. He does not define his existence from the people around him nor does he from any other thing. The only thing that he is concerned with is having enough money to drink alcohol and sleep with women. That does not mean that he is not a great observer of things. His nihilistic thoughts allow him to be more observant than any other people because he does not have an agenda that promotes something for him or which may be beneficial for him. Human kind for him is simply one that he had given up. “It didn’t pay to trust another human being. Humans didn’t have it, whatever it took.” (Ham on Rye, 144) He does not think about what may be beneficial for others that can improve things drastically because his faith in people is greatly diminished. He once said as a young man- “And nothing was interesting, nothing. The people were restrictive and careful, all alike. And I’ve got to live with these fuckers for the rest of my life, i thought.” (Ham on Rye, 244)

But being a great observer coupled with the need for him to write poetry to sustain his needs, it prompts him to write things which he has observed many times. His poem, *Dinosauria, We* is one of the most glaring representation of the corrupt working of the world. He starts by saying that he did not ask to be born in this world so from the moment he is born, it is a tragedy for him. Like Holden Caulfield, his freedom and innocence is taken away from him at a young age so naturally his contempt at the world starts at a young age. For Holden, it is his parent’s failure to acknowledge the emotional comforts that he needs once his brother

died, and the exploitation of his innocence by everyone around him that creates in him a huge distaste for mankind. Chinaski on the other hand starts with his father's abuse and his inability to blend in among his classmates that starts to prompt it. Apart from that, seeing what is happening around the world during that time due to wars and poverty, they develop a huge distrust in mankind at an early age.

So having an understanding of the workings of the world at an early age, Chinaski can easily detect and identify what is plaguing the earth. Just as what is happening with the Lilliputians and Blefluscians waging war over petty things, people have started wars for small reasons and simply to gain dominion over one another. Many lives are destroyed, families torn apart and people having no regards for one another. Places where one can communicate with each other have turned to a place where fights regularly happen. Even killing another being is now seen as being a pack and parcel of life.

Into these carefully mad wars

Into the sight of broken factory windows of emptiness

Into bars where people no longer speak to each other

Into fist fights that end as shootings and knifings (Dinosauria, We)

Chinaski also slams the hospitals and lawyers who are charging people in excess as if to try to throw them straight to poverty. And although he might be trying to escape from all of these things, he never can because he is born without a choice during this time where one is exploited in many forms. They turn people into madmen, into violent beasts and everyone is affected by it. He also talks about what is waiting for us- the nuclear wars and famine. The earth that we live, the one that we have a choice to make it better will turn into something similar to hell. Everything trees will die, seas poisoned and the sun will no longer be visible

after the heavy smoke covering the clouds. All the violence and suffering will eventually end humanity as we know it and the world will come to peace. Chinaski distaste of humanity is because of these reasons that is happening right around him and that is still continuing. Mankind have a conceited notion that it is the most important being that ever comes into existence. But all of these things mentioned will be the death of humankind which will show that we are simply just a page in the huge chapters of earth, barely a footnote that was once an inhabitant of earth.

Henry Chinaski's misanthropic attitude can be compared with the previously mentioned characters as they all have similarities in them. Misanthropes as previously mentioned before are mostly narcissistic and may consider themselves an 'elitist.' But in the face of modern world that is hell bent on trying to mould people through external rules so that they can form a part of the social machine: nihilism and misanthropy- philosophies seen as cynical and selective are needed to straighten out the thought of the people. These philosophies are needed so that one can gaze at itself and think internally to show the value of oneself among groups of society. As Roquentin questions his existence and decide against living in a group to find the whole meaning, Chinaski through his nihilistic and misanthropic outlook tries to present semblance of truth that attacks everything wrong with the world through his works. Just like Roquentin, he often feel nausea creeping up on him when he thinks about his existence, but he uses alcohol to drown that question that may arise and try to live as much as he can while he is healthy. They both share the idea that people are a bore to live with, and that it is much better to be alone when they only want things from them to make them feel good about themselves.

And like Holden Caulfield, Chinaski at a young age experienced pain and suffering which are never cured. Caulfield loses his brother, and one of his friend commits suicide while wearing the clothes that Caulfield let him borrow. His trauma and suffering at a young

age never get cured, and he is forced to live with that feeling. His need for love and affection are unfulfilled and he is thrown out to fend for himself. Chinaski at a young age suffered horrible abuse, never received love and affection from his parents, and forced to be among peers that look down on him. All of these things filled them with angst and led them to a hatred of the world that they never chose to be born in. They can see clearly about people who are constantly trying to abuse the innocence of young children and they suffered their fair share of it. All of these led them to feel unloved, discontented and disconnected, leading them to isolation from which the hatred of humanity arises. Chinaski, so discontent with humanity expresses that, "I simply disliked people, crowds, anywhere, except at my readings. People diminished me, they sucked me dry. "Humanity, you never had it from the beginning." That was my motto" (Women, 231)

Although Chinaski is a misanthrope, he still cares about the world that he resides in. The world is still his world so he often became a social critique, criticising things at its core, without any restrictions. He stood for the oppressed that he mostly commutes with, and cares deeply about the physical reality that is of earth. Lemuel Gulliver, so fed up with the corruption, the lies and ugliness of mankind, the vengeful and dirty ways that humans conduct themselves in, made up his mind that he never wants to live among humans again. He ridicules the petty problems that society and the government troubles itself with, the unnecessary occupation people have with things that can never be done leading them to be mad, and the vengeful and barbaric way of life. He at the end prefers to talk to horses that resemble the Houyhnhnms rather than his own wife and family because he knows that human kind will never be as rational and forward thinking than the Houyhnhnms. Chinaski on the other hand is a voice of the poor. He may not like humans, but he loves the world because it is his world while he is alive. He took it upon himself to point out the different ways that governments are corrupting and destroying the world with petty things. Apart from that,

being the voice of the voiceless, he became a voice for the public to show the way that the government and many institutions within it are corrupting and deceiving people, taking their money and creating a system of rules that keeps them locked from standing up against it. He slams the doctors and hospitals, lawyers and government for intentionally creating more problems for them through fees, insurance and so on. He speaks out for the people who have no outlet and try to create a better living condition while being alive because he wants the world to be safe. He uses his creative ability to show that although people are hard to live with because of all the unnecessary things they occupy themselves with, the world itself can be saved and there are still little hope in humanity that they can help create that change required for a better and safer world by bringing out the flaws in the way the world operates.

Although Henry “Hank” Chinaski is a fictional character created by Charles Bukowski, he is a character that is constantly having a fight between fulfilling both his physical and mental needs and desires which are often in clash because they differ too much. The reason that Chinaski is endowed with such an emotional and rational thinking mind is simply due to the fact that the author incorporates many of his problems and dilemmas as Chinaski’s own. The protagonist is never concerned with fantastical worlds, but rather presents himself as a person stuck in a cruel world where he does not ask to be born, and in that same place, he is expected to fight for everything: from his reputations, to food and shelter. He is trying to distance himself from all the make-believe things: religious or magical things, and tries to live his life from what he can see with his own eyes.

Since the character of Henry Chinaski is a complex and thought provoking one, it needs an examination from a standpoint that looks beyond what is visible to the eyes and ears. Psychoanalytic study will be attempted as psychoanalysis, despite its reputation as being unreliable in many instances still can be an important as it studies the thought processes and the growth of the mind. Although being not considered as a medically nor clinically proven way of studying the human psyche, but more of a therapy process, it is still important in understanding how a person develops their own identity. In this chapter, the development of Chinaski from his early childhood to his later years will be analysed, and it focuses on the things that could define him as a nihilistic, misanthropic, and aggressive person often displaying a misogynistic behaviour.

Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques aimed at understanding the unconscious mind of human beings started by Sigmund Freud. It has been used extensively in studying both the human psyche and in the study of character interpretations in literature. Psychoanalysis is practiced by ‘investigating the interactions of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind’ (Barry, 92) It is used by interacting with a person where

their repressed or unconscious fears and conflicts are brought up in the open for the person to be openly faced. It is a therapy process where their mind is examined thoroughly with the aim in trying to find out what lies in the unconscious mind of the person. The reason the unconscious is focused so much is simply due to the fact that it could still control and influence the person beyond his recognition, and in many cases, that unconscious thoughts could have darker intentions which can be dangerous for either the person himself, or people around him. For example, the character of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, who succumb to his unconscious thoughts, his 'Id', shows his primitive and animalistic instincts while living in a jungle that is free from all the social demands and desires. Although psychoanalysis is famous for its concern with sexuality and its growth, it is also an important process of studying a person's identity as it takes into account how much the environment of a person can influence them, especially of the social demands.

For this paper, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic work will be used to study and analyse the central character. Lacan was a famous psychoanalyst whose works have influenced many people. Although he was a trained psychiatrist, the 'mirror stage' is the one piece of serious clinical work that Lacan ever did. According to Paul H. Fry, Lacan is an admirer of Sigmund Freud, so most of his works have a connection with Freud's work. Paul H. Fry goes on to explain that,

Lacan's psychoanalytic philosophy is largely speculative, as he very much preferred it to be. He worked in depth with philosophical and literary materials and was never glued to the analyst's chair. He was impatient with his analysis and took a heretical interest in analytic procedures that were either shortcuts, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, "interminable"—as described in Freud's late essay, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable." But the mirror stage is a clinical concept, one that actually does

generate much of the system of ideas that Lacan expands in speculative directions. (Fry, 136)

The essay of Jacques Lacan that will be the focus on this study is the one mentioned above, that is of his 'mirror stage' or what is titled *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. (1936) What Lacan describe as the 'mirror stage' is a stage where the baby no longer feels at one with the mother's breast and starts to develop a kind of self-discovery, becoming more aware of the surrounding as well as the difference between itself and others when it views itself in the mirror. This is around the age of six to eighteen months. The child starts to form an image of itself through looking at the mirror, through noticing his movements. This is an important stage as Lacan believe that this formation of one self through looking at the mirror is crucial in trying to understand or make sense of the world as the reflection in the image gives one a picture of them. It is an image of self-identification, one that is not a construct of others. What one sees in that image is what he called the "Ideal-I" (Lacan, 1286). But this image formed in a mirror is a fantasy, an unreal image that only seems real and because of that, one strives for "paranoiac knowledge", which will never be fulfilled as the ideal image is a fantasy, formed in a mirror (Lacan, 1286)

Since the reflection of the self in the mirror is awkward and untrained due to it being hoisted by the parents, there is an "unfragmented wholeness" (Fry, 136) about the image. Lacan believes this to be a result of "specific prematurity of birth" (Fry, 1288). Compared with other animals who can manage to walk and fend for itself shortly after being born, a child needs constant protection and care, as the child birth is premature. But since the child is forming an idea about itself as early as that, the self "I" created is imperfect and fragmented. And from that it starts to recognize the things it sees in the mirror are not of its own but of another. From that, there is recognition that it has no name nor identity. It has taken the name

of the father but that is starts to recognise the lack of, or difference in phallus, from which competition for desire arises. From there, the desire is no longer for the self but of other people.

From that point, one tries to fulfil the roles or demands of the social that is against one's desire. There is a fight in one's attempt to grow and improve versus the desires toward self-gratification. This can create an existential dilemma, where one is torn with gratifying oneself or another, and the problem of identity arising out of being identified by other and not self. And since the "I" that one formed is fragmented and illusionary, one can never fully understand the real self.

As can be seen in the earlier chapters, Henry Chinaski is a person that does not follow many social norms. He prefers to be alone and drink instead of being with a party. He hardly develops a serious connection with any individual, and in most cases, the connection that he has mostly boils down to the need of sexual gratification. He lacks the capacity to hold down any serious work, and the long duration of time that he works in the post office is simply due to the fact that he manages to exploit the flaws in the administration. He does not overtly care about what anyone thinks of him, and in turn thinks very little of anyone. He sees people as something he can easily replace and therefore have no real attachment to anyone.

As a young boy, Chinaski grew up in a family that is strict and firm. His father is only concerned with being rich and therefore many times sees himself as a rich person. His uncles are both alcoholic, who love women, and have no concern for anyone but themselves. His grandfather is an alcoholic too and therefore has been neglected by all his sons and his wife. Although his father is not an alcoholic, he has an indifferent way of treating both his wife and child. He can be seen as a misogynist from the way he treats his wife, and he rarely show affection towards his child. "My father didn't like people. He didn't like me. 'Children

should be seen and not heard,' he told me" (Ham on Rye, 16). He acknowledges his presence but that is all he gets from his father. He never received any form of love or appreciation from his father. As a young boy, he was exposed to the life of a drunken people- his uncles and his neighbours, people who do not care about having jobs as well as those that were concerned with only being seen as rich despite being the opposite of it.

In *Ham on Rye*, Chinaski also mentions "I was not allowed to play with other kids. "They are bad children," said my father, "their parents are poor". "Yes" agreed my mother. My parents wanted to be rich so they imagined themselves to be rich." (Ham on Rye, 27). But this pressure of knowing exactly who the rich people are and pretending to be one causes so much trouble to the young boy that he distances himself from other kinds, both because he does not like being around people and also of his inability to see himself like how his parents see themselves. This is what Jacques Lacan mentioned of how much social demands play a role in creating an identity. In the case of Chinaski in this instance, it is his parents that play the role of creating those social demands in order for him to identify and fit himself with the society. Knowing he can never fully play out the demands of acting as a rich kid, or seeing himself as superior to another person, a dilemma occurs that make him resent everyone. He rarely talks to anyone and has little inclinations on fitting himself to any roles in the school.

In his poem titled *My Father*, he discusses about what it means to live with his father, as well as how much impact it has on him psychologically. In the poem, he describes at length how much his father pretended to be rich, and how delusional he became because of it-

my father

was a truly amazing man.

he pretended to be

rich

even though we lived on beans and mush and weenies

when we sat down to eat, he said,

"not everybody can eat like this."...

I think it was my father who made me decide to

become a bum.

I decided that if a man like that wants to be rich

then I want to be poor.

and I became a bum.

I lived on nickles and dimes and in cheap rooms and

on park benches.

I thought maybe the bums knew something.

but I found out that most of the bums wanted to be

rich too.

they had just failed at that.

so caught between my father and the bums

I had no place to go

and I went there fast and slow.

In this thought provoking poem, Chinaski is at his brilliant best in the way he articulates how much of an effect his father's method of raising him impacted his life. This poem on the surface is a story of a man talking about his father, who like many immigrant Americans believes in that American Dream of being successful with hard work. The American Dream is an idea that have influenced the life of countless people, whether in a good or bad way for such a long time that it is seen as a part of the American ethos. It can be traced from as early as the sixteenth century when Thomas Jefferson introduced the 'Declaration of Independence', signalling the wonderful promise of life and happiness with freedom, and the pursuit of it. The concept of the American Dream especially grew during the seventeenth century with the California gold rush. People from different parts of Europe went to California in search of gold which they believe will lead to being wealthy, having a sense of freedom and being able to compete with the higher class in the society. It a dream based on the notion that hard work and persistence will eventually lead to something great, a wonderful promise of the dreams of being rich. But as can be seen in many other literatures, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic *The Great Gatsby* (1925), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1962) by John Steinbeck, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), the American Dream is nothing more than a light which can be seen, but not be grasped. Chinaski's father in this poem is also a man who is aiming for something beyond his reach while continuously living in a dream world. He is like many immigrants who want success while living in America and therefore, he lives his life like he is on the brink of that success. But while in that mental frame, he is effectively destroying the mindset of his young boy. Acting and believing himself to be rich, he is forcing his young boy to behave, act and think like they are rich. But the harsh reality of it being completely different forced a young Chinaski into acting the complete opposite of his father's desire. As can be seen in the characters of Willy Loman, the American Dream is a concept that has been dead for a long time now, and that the ones that desperately cling to

that hope are bound to suffer whiplash that will bring them down to the harsh reality that all their hopes and dreams are based on a lie, a fad that never existed for everyone. Willy Loman, the once successful salesman who once had everything: a loving wife, two vibrant boys just brimming with promises, and a successful business venture. But all of that completely falls apart and yet he desperately stills clings on the hope that if he works hard and keep on believing it, he will find success and become rich. The aftermath of all that affected him and his family so much that, he decides to commit suicide. The character of Willy Loman, the unfortunate pawn of everything that is wrong with the American Dream has many similarities with the father of Henry Chinaski. He, like Willy, believes that he will eventually become rich, and that his son will soon follow his path to that success. And at every moment his dream looks dim, he takes out his frustration and anger at his family, especially on his son by beating them up, or verbally abusing him. His father plays a prominent role in everything that he does because he has such a strained relationship with him. His father is aggressive towards all of his family members because he genuinely believes in his ideals of hardworking leading to success, and he thinks that both his brothers, as well as his son are throwing it all away for something so unworthy. He takes up the responsibility of swerving their life towards that is more in tune with what he believes in. But both his brother comes short of his ideals miserably in his eyes, with all their drinking, gambling, drugs, women and fighting, he starts to believe that he is failing it, and his only option towards them is to be aggressive towards both of them to show his discontent and unhappiness. He takes up the role of father both to his brothers and sons, so he is invariably forced to believe that he is failing that role, and therefore takes out his anger and sadness on them through his words and physical abuse because it is the only way he can cope with it. The character of Henry Chinaski's father is quite intriguing because at one glance, he comes off as a hateful father, which is also the way his son views him because that is the only side

of himself he shows. But on deeper inspections, it is clear that he is a frustrated man, unable to take care of everyone he loves like he would have wanted because even he himself cannot find that success he seeks. His American Dream, his search for wealth and comfort through hard work fails miserably, while also seeing how his brothers throw their lives away right in front of his eyes. Henry Chinaski became the unfortunate victim of his father's outburst, which makes it tragic.

And while his father is very much the reason of his disgust with how society works, Chinaski experiences it first-hand of how much it is actually the same with even the 'bum'. As can be seen in the poem, Chinaski decides to live against his father's will, becoming a bum with the hope that he could escape that life of trying to live beyond what they are. But he finds out that people will always want to be rich, and try to act like they are rich even while failing it. The American Dream that promises so much for many people becomes the undoing of the Chinaski bloodline because Henry Chinaski sees that his father has those same ideals, and he is pushing him so badly to believe in those ideals too. But he also sees that his father's ideals are nothing more than something people dream in their sleep. The reality of the world disagrees to that notion, and he sees through all of it. Hard work will amount to nothing because one works hard to find happiness, yet that hard work violently makes one unhappy, and he thinks that his father is unable to escape or see that pattern. The concept of American Dream plays quite an important part in the understanding of the relationship with his father because his father being a staunch admirer of that notion pushes him to the point that he hates work and he forgets the idea of being wealthy. The American Dream is what people have been pursuing and yet there are only a few instances where they actually manage to achieve that dream, and all of that is due to sheer luck and hard work. People have fallen into this dream-trap, unable to escape from it, living a continuous lie throughout their life, ultimately ending in madness or death. Like the characters of Willy Loman and Jay Gatsby, who both

die with their notion of achieving that dream still intact, but who never quite achieve that dream, and rather resulted in their downfall, Henry Chinaski's father falls in that same categories and it ultimately resulted in one of the main reason he fall out with his son.

But Chinaski on the other hand too, while living against his father's desire discovers that everyone who is the opposite of what his father want him to be- his uncles, 'the bums' and everyone who does not work hard in his father's eyes are all in some way still the same. They still dream of the same dream and think of the same thought as his father. Upon realising this, Chinaski is trap in a confusing situation of how to fit himself with anyone. His identity starts to get confusing as he cannot find people to identify himself with. This creates a problem in his identity formation as he no longer has things to identify with. As mentioned in the poem, he is caught up between identifying himself with his father and the bums, which makes him unable to become a steady person as he is in constant fights with his own mind. He can never identify himself as his father, as the rich people nor as the bums. Trapped in difficult situations for a long time, he only manages to create his self identity only after accepting that things simply happen, and that he does not necessarily have to identify with anyone as people are mere creatures that are simply born and die, becoming a puppet of religion, of society, of government throughout their lives.

The role of his father in forming who Chinaski became later in his life is due to his resentment of his father's concern with meeting the social demands. Being too engrossed with the rich life of many people, his father creates problem in his early years where he can no longer look at his father as someone to inspire him. The self image that he would have projected as a young child is completely shattered when he sees the demands and concern one have with meeting the social demands. He therefore tries to satisfy his own desires and drop off the rest of the social demands. But what can be seen clearly from both the poem and in the later years of Chinaski's life is that he never has that self-gratification he sought. He

constantly needs to be drunk or type down things on his typewriter just to have peace in his mind because they are always racing, trying to cling to everything that happened to him throughout his life and haunt him. He is only caught up between trying to fulfil his own desires and fulfilling the demands of society, unable to fully commit on either one for a very long time.

In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus* (1970), Louis Althusser uses Lacan's theory to show how these social demands are created and met within the society through Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus- where ideologies and laws, rules and administrations are used. The social demand is so strong that one is controlled even without them ever knowing it, and from this, they form their own identity in a society, albeit one that is fully controlled by the society. And if one does not comply and follow the rules of the society, there is a repercussion in their life, as well as in the formation of their own identity. That is the reason why Chinaski does not find what he intended as can be seen in the poem, but just creates a huge confusion on himself of who he is and what he wants in his life. Lacan explains that since one's identity, 'Ideal-I' is one of illusion and is fragmented, our identity is formed only through conforming to the social desires. In the case of Chinaski, from his early childhood till his late fifties, his identity is one of a fragmented one as there is a part of him that constantly wants to gratify his own self desire, while at the same time there is a need to comply the social demands in order for him to live.

Chinaski also mentions the brutal punishment he used to constantly receive as a young boy. His father's first punishment, a beating with a razor strap, is done due to Chinaski's fight with one of his classmates, where he is falsely accused of being a bully. And from that point on, he would constantly be on the receiving end of his father's ire, whether he does something wrong or not. His father would beat him for something as small as him finding a single grass longer than the others when being trimmed. He would constantly

receive beating to the point that he no longer feels the need to please his father as he sees no point in it.

In the poem *A Smile to Remember*, he writes-

my mother, always smiling, wanting us all

to be happy, told me, 'be happy Henry!'

and she was right: it's better to be happy if you

can

but my father continued to beat her and me several times a week while

raging inside his 6-foot-two frame because he couldn't

understand what was attacking him from within.

my mother, poor fish,

wanting to be happy, beaten two or three times a

week, telling me to be happy: 'Henry, smile!

why don't you ever smile?'

and then she would smile, to show me how, and it was the

saddest smile I ever saw

In this poem, the theme of how much his father abused his power plays a prominent role. There is a reference to a goldfish in a bowl denoting the fish being trapped in a bowl,

swimming round and round and never finding an escape from the bowl. And just like the goldfish trapped in a fishbowl, he and his mother are held captive by his father in a cage where there is countless emotional and physical torture. His father, being an old fashioned man believed that in order to straighten out his wife and child, or show who the dominant person in the family is, display his physical prowess on them in an abusive way. He is once quoted as saying, 'Children should be seen and not heard.' (Ham on Rye, 16) His stance on how a child should be treated harks back to the old practices. His father not only beats him, but also his wife innumerable times to the point that his mother is telling him how to smile in spite of what might be happening in the house. His mother's failed attempt at escaping leads her to create a persona different from what she really feels. She can be seen continually telling her young boy to smile, teaching him how to smile, but the child sees through the act. The events have huge impact on Chinaski's life as he grows older as he often resorts to physical torture to show his dominance over his women. This shows his unconscious attempt to be like his father which became a huge problem from him as he does not want to be like his father.

The punishment that he received as seen in the poems and novels, have a huge impact on his life because it shows him that no matter how good he tried to be, or how much effort he put into something, his reward will always be the same, and that is nothing more than a beating. He can also see the pain in his mother's eyes that have no power to defend herself and her son from the beating. This makes him resent his father so much to the point that he does whatever he feels is the opposite of his father. The role of the father figure for him is nothing more than a hard realisation of the way things work in the society. He no longer tries to put effort into anything, whether its study, work or even simply living a healthy life. In order to gratify his own desire, he started drinking, smoking and living a reckless life- a life which he had been intrigued as a young boy seeing his uncle Ben. His resentment of his

father led him to a life that his father hated, a life that does not try to meet the social demands but is only concerned with the self desire. As he grew older, his incapacity to hold down any jobs for an extended period of time, his disregard for social norms, and his treatment of life itself is very much formed from his hatred of his father.

Chinaski's treatment of women has deep roots in how his father treats his wife. His mother assumes the role of a lesser being in the family. She does not have any voice in the house and she only tends to the needs of her husband. In spite of that, she is treated as something not too far from a slave, where she is being beaten, told to not raise her voice, and lastly forced to accept anything that Henry Sr. accepts. She is treated as a commodity by her husband. Apart from that, Henry's uncles- Ben and John treated women as nothing more than sexual objects to satisfy their needs. His uncle Ben likes to sleep around and never settles with one woman, preferring the company of prostitutes, while his uncle John neglects his wife and their two daughters, preferring to ride around on his motorcycle and gamble. He is later accused of raping a woman. Chinaski does not fail to see his father and uncles' treatment of women, as well as how the women reacted around them. They treated women as something to fulfil their own desires. The older Chinaski can be seen employing that same treatment that he had seen as a young boy. He is an aggressive person in nature and is more aggressive towards women. Apart from that, his misogynistic identity can be seen as a direct influence of these people. He sees women as nothing more than a sexual object that can be easily replaced. He goes from one woman to another, cheats and leaves them at whim because he knows that he will always find another due to his fame as a poet. Apart from that, he can be seen fighting women, displaying unnecessary show of dominance through physical force. He can also be seen forcing himself on other women many times because he knew they are interested in him, thus exploiting their affection for him as a poet. Although he does not show this aggressiveness and misogynistic behaviour on a regular basis, his description of

women, objectifying them as sexual playthings shows his disrespect of women. This behaviour as mentioned before is partly both due to his father and uncles, as well as his own urge to fulfil his sexual desires.

Jacques Lacan explains in his work how much of an influence others can have in creating an identity. Stijn Vanheule and Paul Verhaeghe in their article explore it by saying that, “By molding one’s own Ego, and by observing the way the other reacts to it, a subject tries to see which object it is in relation to the other’s desire, and tries to make sure that the other desires the content one tries to be identical with.” (Vanheule, 391) The ‘Ideal-I’ or the self created image is fragmented so therefore it is impossible to acquire that ideal self. Lacan goes on to argue that one can never achieve what they desire because what they desire are often unrealistic due to the fact that the desire are born out of the image of wholeness seen during infant stage, but that one might be able to get what they need if being pursued hard enough because what we need are often things which are accessible through conforming or through hard work. What can be deducted from it is how much of an influence the outside world can have in forming something that is close to what one may desire, and it being heavily based on fulfilling the social needs.

In the case of Henry Chinaski, although he hates his father and tries to distance himself as much as he can from him, he adopts some characteristics of his father like his treatment of women and his tendency to be aggressive. He cannot escape the clutch of his father because he is the one that he identified himself with while he was still a baby, and therefor has adopted his features unconsciously. There are striking differences in how he views women from time to time because of his incomplete formation of identity. As discussed earlier, he treats most of his women as a commodity and an object, something which he can easily replace and discard. This explains why he cheats so many times even while he is in a relationship because they do not have much value as a partner for him. But on

the other hand, there are many instances where he openly talks of his wonder of the beauty of the women, where he respects and praises them for their beauty and heart. He has a couple of relationships that last for more than years where he shows great devotion for them. And so, while he very much takes many traits of his father and uncles, there are many instances that show his own characteristics, that of a man who cares deeply about someone he loves. Apart from that, he talks many times of how much he does not want to be like his father like in *Ham on Rye* where he says that, “I didn’t want to be like my father, He only pretended to be bad. When you’re bad you didn’t pretend, it was just there. I like being bad, trying to be good make me sick.” (Ham on Rye, 93) His dislike of his father is deeply rooted on how he treats him and his mother. He wants to distance himself from what he sees when he thinks of his father which in turn makes him care for his lover while at the same time being afraid of having children. He is in a dilemma of how to treat women because he knows the need to treat his woman the right way as well as the urge in him to show his dominance over them. This makes him a conflicted person, unable to show what he really thinks of women, especially the few that he loves.

Chinaski always has trouble integrating himself in a society because he sees the society as something not pleasurable to live in. His incapacity to hold regular jobs boils down to his reluctance of following given rules of conformity. His existence is a burden in many ways and he does not see the point in trying to fit himself in a society. But the need for food and shelter is forcing him to take jobs and participate with other people. Although he sees the beauty of things around him many times, he is constantly thinking about not participating at all, and just lay in bed. He blames his father for his inability to adapt and integrate himself among society, to cater to the need of the social demands.

In a poem titled *Three Oranges*, he says that-

I always imagined three oranges

sitting there,

you know how orange they can

get,

so mightily orange.

maybe Prokofiev had meant

what my father

thought.

if so, I preferred it the

other way

the most horrible thing

I could think of

was part of me being

what ejaculated out of the

end of his

stupid penis.

I will never forgive him

for that,

his trick that I am stuck

with,

I find no nobility in

parenthood.

I say kill the Father

before he makes more

such as

I.

In this poem, a young Chinaski is listening to a song titled “Love for Three Oranges” by a Russian music composer, Sergei Prokofiev. But while he is listening, his father starts to question the beauty of the music, bringing it down nothing more than a sounds anyone can make. His father seems to deliberately throw comment with contempt about the piece of music that he considers as something wonderful. It shows the kind of relationship he has with his father, one which is filled with disdain towards another. The nihilistic mindset of Chinaski, as well as his relationship with his father can be traced through this poem in many ways. He knows and accepts that things can be beautiful and sweet, but his capacity to experience it and feel that sweet things are strongly being shut down by his father’s attitudes and behaviour towards him. In the poem, the music that he is listening brings joy to his heart because he can feel some form of connection with it. Listening to the music, while thinking about oranges, brings joy and content to his heart because he can visualise and feel what it is to see and eat oranges. In his mind, he thinks that like him, Prokofiev compose the song while dreaming of his younger days because the music brings nostalgic feelings, the kind of feeling that he once experienced. As a young child, all he can see is the beauty in things surrounding him like any other children. A child sees beauty in almost everything, even a simple thing

like oranges in a branch can be the most wonderful sight they have ever encounter. A child's capacity to see things beyond what they are, and see the magnificence in it allows them to draw a great deal of creativeness. Henry Chinaski is the same as he finds beauty in everything as a child and like Prokofiev who recalls that memory through his music; he too is recalling everything beautiful about his memory. But, in most circumstances, adults often destroy the creativity of a child. In this instance, his father destroy his sense of everything beautiful and wonderful because he decides to make a derogatory comment about the music, saying "boy," he said, "that's getting it cheap." he meant sex." His father in that one sentence destroys the beautiful things he imagine in his mind, the thought of what the composer would have felt composing it, and all the emotions he is feeling while listening to it. Everything he thought as beautiful are shattered with what his father says. This few lines from the poem shows the strained relationship he has with his father.

The mention of oranges have huge significance as can be seen in the novel *Ham on Rye*, where Chinaski talks of how his father plucks an orange from a tree, brimming with oranges. But since the oranges belong to someone, he is caught by the owner and forced to leave the field, failing which he will be shot. (*Ham on Rye*, 9) His father, being embarrassed and the respect he has being shot down a notch proceeds to yell at both his wife and son, and drive his car like a maniac on their way home. Henry Chinaski's respect and admiration of his father is not brought down by what happen in that field, but rather at how his father reacts to the situation. His experience and contact with adults destroys the beauty of things as they make it their property and defended things as if their life's depends on it. The beauty is gone once a property is claimed and is being forced to look at it from that perspective. Chinaski's reference to oranges are more than just a metaphor, but one which he experienced it first-hand of how beauty can turn to something dark in such a small space of time. Even his father, whom he may at some point see as the greatest person turns sour once the beating and

behaviours pile up. Just like those magnificently beautiful oranges turns to nothing more than a simple fruit, his father's influence and appearance changes with time due to many reasons- physical and emotional abuses. He proceeds to blame his father for bringing him into the world, and deciding to show him only the painful side of it. As a young boy, he can feel the beauty surrounding him and is comforted by the sweetness of how things can be. But that feeling he has, being completely destroyed by his father prompted him to scorn even parenthood itself which he fears throughout his life.

Although Chinaski is very much conflicted in his attempt to gain semblance of what he is, he is caught up with trying to fulfil his desire and that of social demands. He lives many years balancing the line of trying to fit himself, and see himself as what others want him to be, stopping short at his attempt many times. He is haunted and influenced so much by his father that which he ignored for a long time, trying to portray himself as a completely different person all the while failing it miserably because he has taken so much of his father's traits and characteristics without knowing it. Sigmund Freud in his psychosexual stages reveals that, during a child's 'Phallic Stage' which is three to six years old, "the child becomes aware of its anatomical sex differences, which sets in motion the conflict between erotic attraction, resentment, rivalry, jealousy and fear which he called the 'Oedipus Complex'. The boy then sets out to resolve this problem by imitating, copying and joining in masculine dad-type behaviours. This is called identification, and it is how the three-to-five year old boy resolves his Oedipus complex. Identification means internally adopting the values, attitudes and behaviours of another person. The consequence of this is that the boy takes on the male gender role, and adopts an ego ideal and values that become the superego." (McLeod) Chinaski also identified himself with his father who he sees everything, observing his behaviours. But that creates a problem for him later in his life, when he starts to resent his father because as much as he tries to live a life that is the opposite of what his father approve,

or the opposite of his father's behaviour, he still carry that traits and characteristics of his father that he used to identify himself with. His treatment of women alone shows that conflicting personalities he has later on because as much as he adore and love women, he cannot help himself with how he treats them and torture them physically because he grew up watching his father do it, his uncle do it, so he is unconsciously doing the exact thing he says he hate his father about. In his later years, when he started to really take poetry as his main source of livelihood, he starts to create an identity of himself, one which no longer tries to fulfil the social desires, but is concerned with only his own self-gratification. This allows him to see a larger picture of things making him more conscious of what he is becoming and of what he is intending to accomplish.

Since Henry Chinaski is the fictional representation of the author himself Charles Bukowski, it is worth mentioning that because he too is a very interesting man. This could be due to his indulgence on seemingly everything which society proclaims to be bad and unethical- sex, alcohol and drugs, vulgar words, obscene behaviours and gambling. On the outside looking in, he appears as a rough and tough man, with no care of the world. He is straightforward in his conversations with anyone, and he does not appear to show any respect towards any person he encounters. Seemingly addicted to anything that gives a minute of pleasure and living without a care in the world, he looks as if he is the archetypical man built exactly to survive in this world. And even his writing exudes an aura of indifference towards anything and anyone. And while his indifference towards people or things happening around him is true to a huge extent, he is a man that is quite sensitive and is trying to hide it by putting his mask of being a man who has no care in the world.

Born in a family where the father often displays his brute strength towards his family members, he is brought up from a tough place. He experiences physical and emotional trauma at a young age, mostly from his father. In many of his interviews, he can be seen talking

about how much his father's treatment and constant beating affected him both physically and mentally. In his early teenage years, he was already excessively drinking wine. His home turns into a place of punishment and torture, which prompts him to find an escape not only from the house, but from what he had previously believed. Constantly in fear, with a realisation that whatever he does, he would still be punished and shamed makes vulnerable, and at the same time fills him with rage and anger. He manages to take out that rage by playing contact sports and through fist fighting against people much older and bigger than him from his school, but those have limits so he quickly turns to alcohol once he finds out about it. His life is not much different from his alter-ego Henry Chinaski, but their differences lies in the simple fact that Chinaski turns into a man who absolutely has no morals and no religious belief, no code of proper conduct. He is a misogynistic with nihilistic mind-set. He has very little attachment to any person. Charles Bukowski on the other hand mellowed as he grows older, his drinking habit dwindles down significantly and he settles down with a wife and a child. He also convert himself to Buddhism in his later years showing significant difference with his alter-ego Henry Chinaski, who never changes and seems to be on the brink of creating total chaos with his wild habits. Chinaski is an exaggerated version of a reality that the author creates. Bukowski inflates his foolishness in particular and he does this for some comic reasons, to show the character's humanity, and because he wants to show that only a fool with no sense of morals and religious inclinations has the wisdom to see the world the way it really is.

Charles Bukowski is an interesting writer due to the simple fact that he could make a living out of everything that he hate by writing about it extensively. In most of his works, the character of Henry Chinaski and many of the people mentioned in the story are often portrayed in a negative manner, or either in severely lacking in any forms of good conduct or morals. This simply could be Bukowski's way of articulating how he feels about the world and the people in it. He does not have zest for any kind of material living or of any form that people would consider as good way of living life- working, religion or being a good member of society. He prefers solitude, drinking alcohol, typing on his type-writer and fornicating with women who will leave him alone after it. Being alone with alcohol and his type-writer brings out the best in him because he is alone with his thought, without the distraction of the outside world, and he can meaningfully understand and recollect his thought process as well as the behaviours and actions of the different people he had met. Although he has a keen interest in trying to understand the working of the world, he despises people and being around them. His dislike of people has deep connections with how he is brought up. Being a man who does not receive proper care and love from his parents, particularly from his father who prefers to beat him up to show his dominance; it is evident in his view that there is nothing good and whole in the world. It is simply variations of pain and suffering that one simply has to endure throughout their life and something that cannot be avoided. So his portrayal of almost all the characters in his novels borders on the extremity of badness with no moral code to straighten their life. Almost all of them seem to thrive on chaos, living their life recklessly without any care of what might happen to them. From their habits of excessive drinking and partying to sexual intercourse, their actions have no deeper implications besides doing it for the sake of some moments of pleasure. It seems as if they are enjoying their last moment of being alive. His characters are often ill-tempered and easily irritated, and are prone to showing it even at the slightest incident. The presentation of this kind of characters in his

works can be seen as the author's aversion towards human, because he does not like being around them, seeing them as hypocrites, living in constant lies and trying to force that life of hypocrisy to people around them. The world for him is never a good and calm place, it is a chaotic life, filled with anger and despair, one he never want to live in if it was his choice, and he brings out that through the characters and their behaviours in his novel.

His alter-ego, Henry Chinaski is not much different from him and he brings out the best and worst of his thought and ideas, as well as his way of living through him. Henry Chinaski is what Bukowski would have ended up like if old age and health does not catch up with him. Chinaski is the extreme version of Bukowski, both in ideals and way of living. Charles Bukowski nihilistic outlook of life can be seen in its entirety in the character of Henry Chinaski who has no regard for what his action might cause. As can be seen in the previous chapters, the nihilistic outlook of Chinaski is not something that happens in an instant, but one that he gradually starts to embrace with his every experience in life.

But being a nihilist does not necessarily make him prone to live life with no care, nor does it make him hate everything about it. It also does not make him better than everyone, and he certainly does not become narcissistic because of it. He rather slowly learn to understand things that have evaded him as he grows older; such as how to comprehend life itself as well as how to live with people without agitating them too much. He never understood what life is before he developed and embraced his nihilistic outlook of life. Life itself is a mystery for him, and he is in constant search of understanding life and the ways society goes about with the ways people adapt themselves to societal mode. But his understanding of life and all its intricacies are seriously tainted with all the horrifying things he experienced while growing up. His experiences led him to question the authenticity of everything from religion, family and how society operates as he matures. The lack of love he received as a child from his father left a huge hole in him that he can never fill and he copes

with that by having meaningless sexual relationship with different women with the hope that the pain in him subsides but to no avail. This in turn often makes him volatile as he desperately wants to obtain some form of love and care which he felt was stolen from him while growing up. Although he did not find the things he seeks, he learns to accept his fate slowly as being a nihilist, it allows him to understand that things often happen spontaneously, and often times they have huge implications or no implications at all, and that is simply what being alive encompasses. Neither seeking meaning to everything nor trying to acquire something that felt lost does not make it better for everyone. People often busy themselves with religion and faith, with work, family and being a part of other groups of people. But those are merely an attempt by people to fill the huge questions that surrounds everyone- why are we born?, what is our purpose on earth?, What happens after we die?, and the many questions that may arise. All of these things are questions one often find themselves asking with very limited answer, and thereby turning to religion and faith that offers false connections with everything that had happened and to what will happen which appears appealing.

Every person needs someone to console them, someone they can trust even though it is clear that there is nothing on earth that can give one what the heart desires. Religion and faith plays with the mind, occupying the spaces with scriptures and tales- stories which are written by people long ago to console themselves and people from understanding the spontaneity and meaninglessness of life. And those same stories and tales are twisted and assembled to gain the trust of the people. But in truth, they are all the same in what they preach as almost every religion has the same beginning and ending, a concept of heaven and earth, a saviour with power and abilities beyond the limits of any being and so forth. It is no less different than movies that are remade once every decade to fit with the cultures of the different people and the timelines. Jobs and families are necessities as well as among the

things that are meant to distract one's understanding of the meaningless purpose of existence, while society forces one to fit with other people. It traps their mind and people are transformed to an obedient slave that works throughout their life, to raise a family and to perish, simply to be forgotten in a few years. And they are easily replaced by other people as they have no viable option other than to simply follow it and be a participant of something that seems enormous than it actually is to make sense of what being alive promises. Nihilism allows one to see through all the pretence and façade, and to see the important things that matter. The world that one inhabits is the only world that he will ever have, and therefore when one is a nihilist; it allows him to think of the world, not one in the afterlife, and it sought to make changes to it. Apart from that, participating and believing in something that is done in groups often diminish the importance of one's own free will and of life itself, and it makes them nothing more than a bee in a beehive, participating and having some importance but easily replicable.

Through his nihilistic outlook, Henry Chinaski is able to peer into the American society that is filled with lies and deceit from the government. Chinaski, being a 'bum' for a long time in his life allows him to have a deep understanding of what the people in the lower class of the society felt like. As can be seen in the poem *Dinosauria, We*, he understands the way how the government and the rich people corrupt everything that can be beneficial for people of all class. He becomes a voice for poor people and the voiceless affected by corruptions. He mostly writes about his life among the lower class people in many of his works as he live among them for the most part of his life. Even when he starts earn tons of money from his poetry reading and published works; he still lives in the lower class neighbourhood. And being a nihilist allows him to write works that are devoid of any inclinations towards some beliefs or faith and people itself. He writes as he sees them. He himself does not like being around the rich people as he see them as pretentious and

corrupted, and he is also disgusted of the way the poor people think and behave. But he strongly believes that people of any class and wealth should have the same platform in their pursuit of anything in life. It is for this reason that he became a popular figure for the working class people as he understand what they go through, the different boundaries they have to break through, and his writing are often in clash with the way the governments and corporations operate. He gained even more popularity in Europe as there are more working class people that read his works and resonates more with him, and the fact that he is a German descent. His works speaks volume to them because it gives them new values to their life knowing that there are different people that goes through and understand what they are dealing with, what they are fighting for every day. He also raises their voices to the public and provides them plausible reasons to rebel on the government that treats them improperly, while at the same time allowing them to evaluate their life in some way.

But while being a voice for the people who have no voice, he hates being around people as he feels they diminished him and drain him of his strength physically and mentally. He prefers sitting in silence even when being among groups of people while watching them talk and do their things as he spectates their every actions while drinking. He knows that even the lower class people are all hypocrites in the same way as the rich people, but they are the less fortunate ones, so he decides to raise his voice for them by writing about the way they live their life, and how unfortunate they are compared to the rich ones as their path to success or some form of better living are always hindered by some corrupt person or groups who are wealthier than them. He is commenting on the life of the people with little communication, but living with these people, he knows exactly what they want, how they fell as well as how they go about with things. He is the ideal voice because as a misanthrope, he has no real love for them, and he is simply bringing out the flaws in humanity and the way different things are being operated and controlled. He is unbiased through his nihilistic outlook and he is writing

about people without any emotional inclination towards them. He brings out even the most horrible elements of living in a poor community without any restraints which are often hidden to rich people or the public ears.

And since Henry Chinaski is a re-presentation of Charles Bukowski, he exhibits a lot of human psyche which may not necessarily have been what Bukowski would have envisioned. Bukowski, the man himself is quite an intriguing character because he too is a complicated man. Chinaski's story is basically his story, and he added only few things for dramatic elements in the story. Bukowski does have a very bad upbringing which contributed hugely to his many problems of engaging with people, especially of women as he often sees them as objects, his lack of responsibility, his lack of morals and lack of faith in religion, as well as his dilemma of trying to live or to die altogether. His thoughts often contradict with each other, and he is constantly having problems of learning how to deal with it. From his treatment of women, whom he thinks are the most beautiful creations while at the same time are nothing more than sexual objects. That creates a problem grasping the concept of courting, how to treat women, who coupled with his experience of how his father treats his mother, he is never in a stable mind-set. He is afraid of being deprived of love and care throughout his life, while at the same time never fully committing himself and living in a way to achieve that. For many years, in his fear and confusion, he always tends to treat women as objects even when he feels something for them. That problematic mind-set can be seen in the way Henry Chinaski treats his women because there are times where he feels like he is complete when he is with Jan Meadows, but even when he was with her, he cannot treat her in the way that he loves her. Instead, he often treats her as a scum, but he is never able to live without her as she fills some void in his heart. Wanting to be loved while afraid of being in love, he often acts out erratically, leading him to being unsuitable to settle down with anyone as he could easily behave spontaneously. He is a complicated character with many thought

processes which often times are human like to the point that it is hard to understand what he may be really attempting to say, but also adds to the creative capabilities of the author, allowing readers to think more into what have been laid down in the works. The human psyche that Chinaski has is a result of Bukowski's deep connection with the character that he created.

Charles Bukowski's works are also influenced by the Beat Generation and how the writers during that period wrote and to the way that they lived their life. His works exudes the rebellious nature of the Beat writers against society and the government. His self-expression to his method of writing that differentiates itself significantly from the more popular works of his era contributes to his originality and creativity. He rarely writes to please people but writes it simply for his own enjoyment as well expressing himself to people he would not talk to in person. His works often borders on insanity and complete vulgarity but that adds to the originality of him that draws audience in spite of whatever may be on it. He promotes expressing oneself in a society that instructs people to follow certain paths and think in a certain way. His works also generate a sense of individualism that one often lacks when among groups of people. Although his outlook of life borders on the darker side of understanding the workings of the world, he is able to describe the need for one to have an individuality that will give them new sense of value to their life which they may not be able to see. Henry Chinaski on the surface may be alcoholic displaying different elements of mental problem; he manages to provide a different basis in learning to accept the reality that one is in. He is in his own way displaying the American Individualism in his works. His works highlights the importance of how one needs to be an individual and the need to think for oneself. As can be seen throughout the preceding chapters, he is against the concept of having a family, the hierarchical structure of social life, the cultivation of morality and self-restraint and the emphasis on hard work and achievement, all of which are an important part

of being in a society and in a collective group. He goes against that notion showing that one can still live without all the different social structures and conventions and still have a great value in understanding the meaning of being alive all the same time playing part in protecting and restoring the world. Being a nihilist and misanthrope does not result in him denouncing everything and trying to create chaos, and destroying himself. He denounces the social demand and needs because he cannot handle the pressure of being forced into living a strict particular way of life. He rather embraces the outsider persona and thought process because it gives him a greater sense of purpose and value to his life. He is both a good person and a bad person because he has both side of them and his personality towards people depends hugely on the other person perspective of life. Every person exhibits their good and bad side depending on the situations they are in. A good person will exhibit his bad side when faced in a difficult situations or when the need demands it, and in the same way a bad person will exhibit a good side depending on the circumstances. There are no inherent good and bad people and Henry Chinaski is no different. He displays his bad side because of the predicament he is in and in the same way displays his good side when the need arises. Apart from that, they cannot be separated and differentiated because he is doing exactly what everyone else is doing, trying to find meaning and value in life in a world that does not provide natural rules of conducting oneself. His conduct, be it good or bad is simply a process of him trying to understand his life. He is simply a man living life to the best of his ability.

Apart from that, everything about Henry Chinaski, his behaviours and conduct, his indulgences from drinking to sleeping with women, as well as his beliefs and actions are exaggerated to show the ridiculousness of life and how things are being regulated to fit some particular way of life. Chinaski relishes his way of life other than the way people normally live because by doing that, he is able to accomplish and fulfil what he wants most of the time. His emotional needs may never be satiated, but he enjoys life in his own way. He way of

living is in complete contrast of other people, and he appears as a foolish person many times. But Bukowski exaggerated the character of Chinaski to show that it is possible to have fruitful life living the way one wants, and also to show that a person living as foolishly and recklessly as Chinaski can fully understand and comment on the world. His nihilistic ethos only furthered the message that the author is trying to relay about what being alive encompasses showing the great creative capability of the author Charles Bukowski.

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APPENDICES

NAME OF CANDIDATE : **Ambrose Lalmuanpuia**

DEGREE : **M.Phil.**

DEPARTMENT : **English**

TITLE OF DISSERTATION : **Nihilism and Misanthropy to
Creative Power: A Study of Charles
Bukowski's Alter-Ego Henry Chinaski**

DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION : **28.7.2016**

(Commencement of First Semester)

COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND : **4.9.2017**

SEMESTER/DISSERTATION

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL-

- 1. BOS** : **26. 4. 2017**
- 2. SCHOOL BOARD** : **26. 5. 2017**
- 3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE** : **MZU/M.Phil/364 of 26.5.2017**
- 4. EXTENSION IF ANY** : **January 2018 – July 2018**

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Other Relevant Information:

- I. Currently working on M.Phil dissertation titled “Nihilism and Misanthropy to Creative Power: A Study of Charles Bukowski’s Alter-Ego Henry Chinaski” under the supervision of Dr. Kristina Z. Zama, Department of English, Mizoram University.
- II. Attended an international seminar entitled “Indigeneity: Expression and Experience” organised by the Department of English, Mizoram University under UGC-DRS-SAP I, on 25th and 26th February, 2016.
- III. Attended and participated on a national symposium “ Child Lore and Identity” organised by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi and the Department of English, Mizoram University on 4th November, 2016.
- IV. Attended and participated in an international seminar entitled, “Why Ecocriticism!” organised by FSLE-India and Sikkim Government College, Tadong on 21st – 23rd November, 2017.

The title of this dissertation is “Nihilism and Misanthropy to Creative Power: A Study of Charles Bukowski’s Alter-Ego Henry Chinaski.” This dissertation examines the creative power of both Nihilism and Misanthropy through the study of the character of Henry Chinaski. It provides explanations and examples to show the workings of ‘creative power’ from a darker and unconventional perspective of life through the selected texts. The psychoanalytic study of the character of Chinaski is done through Lacan’s “Mirror Stage” to understand the cause of Chinaski attitudes and behaviour towards everything he comes in contact with.

John Martin, the founder of Black Sparrow Press that published Bukowski’s works that made him famous, once said that Bukowski “is not a mainstream author and he will never have a mainstream public.” (Kirsch) And although that may make a lot of sense, given the limited amount of the work on him, he still manages to carve a name for himself as one of the most influential writers in America.

Charles Bukowski is famous for his huge collection of poetry which are mostly an exaggerated and dramatic recollections of his life from childhood till his old age. Due to the sheer number of poems that he used to send to the editors at his publishers, many collections of his works are being published posthumously. His style of writing is simple, direct and unpretentious, and the subject matter that he deals in his works seem repetitive- his childhood, relationship with women, alcohol abuse and his complete disregard and emotional detachment to other’s feeling. Adam Kirsch writes in *The New Yorker* that Bukowski’s style can be described as “which is at once misanthropic and comradely, aggressively vulgar and clandestinely sensitive.” His appearance and behaviour often hides his sensitivity to everything that is around him. He can absorb everything that happened to him and turn it into a brilliant narrative work of a man that lives life to the fullest, and one that experiences everything that life has to offer-good and bad. He enjoys writing and typing out his feelings

into words as he finds solace in the elusive silence and expression that he craves deeply. And because of that, he hardly cares about what critics write about him. Jory Sherman, a good friend of Bukowski for more than twenty years writes on his blog, “He [Bukowski] did not ever mind what people said about him in print, nor did he ever defend himself against false accusations or decry those who attacked his poetry. In fact, I think he exulted in all the negative criticism, because he knew who he was and he never claimed to be anything or anyone else.” Bukowski knows that his works when compared to the Beat Generation is different in terms of the way he writes or what he has to say. He writes purely for the sake of his own enjoyment and because writing is therapeutic for him. Bukowski further reveals to an interviewer in 1981 regarding what he feels about his writing and people reading it. He says, “I get many letters in the mail about my writing, and they say: ‘Bukowski, you are so fucked up and you still survive. I decided not to kill myself.’ . . . So in a way I save people. . . . Not that I want to save them: I have no desire to save anybody. . . . So these are my readers, you see? They buy my books—the defeated, the demented and the damned—and I am proud of it.” (Kirsch)

Despite the number of books he sold and the numerous times he sold out an auditorium for his scheduled poetry reading, the praise he received from the media is lukewarm. Charles Bukowski has faced accusations of being a misogynist to being a Nazi sympathizer. Al Martinez in the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “The allegation was made by a one-time Bukowski friend turned severe critic who wrote a book suggesting that both might be true. The observation became an issue when the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission proposed that the East Hollywood house in which Bukowski wrote much of his poetry be declared a historical landmark.” The accusations stems from the fact that Bukowski is a misanthrope, and he does not like being around people, but his fame attracts people towards him. In order to drive them away, he would scream profanities at them and

curse words, even acting out violently from time to time. Frances Smith, or “FrancEye” as she is known, is a poet who had a relationship with Bukowski for more than three years. They had a child together, the only child of Bukowski. In response to the accusations of Bukowski being a Jew-hating Nazi sympathizer, she explains “[he] was never a Nazi but often made outrageous statements while drinking in order to drive away those he no longer wanted around.” (Martinez)

Charles Bukowski’s alter-ego, Henry Chinaski, also known as ‘Hank’ is a recurring character in all of his novels, poetry, and short stories. The people in his stories often seem to converse with the character of ‘Hank’. Henry Chinaski is in every way the more dramatic and exaggerated version of Charles Bukowski. When asked if his novel is an autobiography in an interview, Bukowski replied, “Almost all. Ninety-nine out of a hundred, if I have written a hundred. The other one was dreamed up.” (Kaye) Literary term defines Alter-Ego as a Latin origin which stems from the Greek word “áλλος εἶδός”, a term believed to have been coined by the author Cicero, described as “a second self, a trusted friend.” Chinaski, the alter-ego is the focus because he is the version of Bukowski that exist only sporadically in real life. The author himself often behaves appropriately and conducts himself in the right manners when needed while his alter-ego hardly ever cares about anyone or how he behaves around people. They share the same drinking problem, of being lecherous towards women, of being a misanthrope, a rebel against societal norms and being a nihilist. While the author himself changes his acts when being around his daughter, and mellowed down in his behaviour as he gets older, his alter-ego maintains the same attitude and behaviour throughout his life, never changing in any circumstances. Chinaski is the character Bukowski intends to be, but never manages because as he gets older, he appreciates company more and more, realize the importance of loved one, and starts believing in religion in the form of Buddhism. Chinaski on the other hand remains a nihilist, misanthrope, alcoholic and womanizer throughout his

life, going against every notion of societal structure. He is the creative work of Charles Bukowski, a character he could embrace and hide behind while criticizing the way the world works. The creation of an alter-ego in the form of Henry Chinaski shows the creativity as well as the introspective ability of the author to understand who he is as they differ in certain ways.

Henry Chinaski is a cynical character that has no morals. He drinks daily, sleeps with many women, he hates people and hates working. He is an overall aggressive person with no sense of remorse for anything or towards anyone. He does not follow any religion nor does he want to be a model citizen, and he would rather live in an apartment that no one can find. His harsh childhood manifested in his denouncement of marriage and apprehensions toward having his own children. This emanates out of his revulsion of his father, and his fear of ending up exactly like him.

This dissertation therefore illustrates and examines the character of Henry Chinaski as well as the author and the creative power that the author puts forth with nihilistic and misanthropic outlook on life. The different ways of reciprocating to the world and the people in it, as well as a critique of the American society is being highlighted within it. It is for this purpose that these four novels of Charles Bukowski, namely- *Post Office* (1971), *Factotum* (1975), *Women* (1978), and *Ham on Rye* (1982) as well as his few selected poems are being put forward.

The first chapter “Introduction: An Overview” gives an overview of the dissertation. It highlights the succeeding chapters while giving brief insight into the life of Charles Bukowski and his alter-ego, Henry Chinaski. This chapter explain the ways the study will progress as well as giving insight into the theories to be used. The primary texts selected for this research as well as the theory of Nihilism are highlighted in brief.

The second chapter of the dissertation titled “A Detached View’: Nihilism and the Link to Creativity” gives insight to the theory of Nihilism from the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Stanley Rosen, Brett Stevens and Will Slocombe. It examines and analyses the theoretical study of Nihilism from these different writers while tracing how creative writers make use of being a Nihilist. It also studies it in relation to the character of Chinaski through the different works selected for the research, and how it fuels the creative power.

Brett Stevens in *Nihilism: A Philosophy Based In Nothingness and Eternity* (2016) states that “Nihilism represents an option to the decay of civilizations, not by finding “higher” values but by rejecting all values and instead looking at plain cause-to-effect logic.” (19) Nihilism does not necessarily point to an end of how we perceive things, but it rather attempts to show the present conditions of our reality as it simply is. The idea that being a Nihilist means being pessimistic and wanting to end life itself does not necessarily ring true, nor does the idea that everything is meaningless and therefore we are meaningless. Nihilism rather can be used as a powerful tool for depicting and highlighting the facets of society which one might refrain from commenting upon. Brett Stevens further explains “Nihilism is a means of exploring the truths you cannot say in a social situations, which conflicts with the tendency of most people to engage in illusion and have others validate it for them. With that truthful approach in mind, we then see the actual question before us which is to rise through realism or sink through social illusion.” (Stevens, 104)

Stanley Rosen in *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (1966) says

Contemporary man desperately needs a rational interpretation of reason. Instead, he has been furnished with epistemologies, or technical discussions of how reason works. Even these technical discussions, for all their genius, have been theoretically compromised by the inability to ask why reason is working. We are faced with the

absurd spectacle of spokesmen for reason who do not understand, or refuse to acknowledge... (Rosen, 56-57)

Men have been trying desperately to make sense of life which they cannot comprehend by attempting to find meaning in religious beliefs and creating attachment to their belief rather than accepting reality as fact. They try hard to find meaning in their existence, that they believe in everything that seems to provide some form of an explanation to them, and in most of these cases, they are superstitious beliefs. Religion through its teaching gives them a sense of security and helps them make sense of life, of which people are afraid of. Religious belief provides the promise of a new world, one beyond this world which is completely different and filled with all kinds of pleasures and happiness that one seeks in this world. Religion gives a false vision of the world and teaches to look beyond this world, alternate to Nihilism. Nihilism is a singular way of looking at the world for what it is and does not make one look beyond what is happening in front of them. It gives a clearer view of things and gives the writers a logical approach on how to stop, avoid or save, or make use of the situations. That does not mean that they are optimistic, but are rather a realist than a romantic. A realist is one who strives to make changes in the here and now, more productive rather than the false promise of the after world. And as Nietzsche explain in *The Will to Power*

All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which the proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world- all these values are psychologically considered, the results of certain perspective of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination- and they have falsely projected into the essence of things. What we find here is still the hyperbole naiveté of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things. (Nietzsche, 13-14)

Henry Chinaski develops his nihilistic outlook from his tough childhood and troubles growing up. Having an abusive father, developing terrible acne, witnessing the behaviours of his uncles, allow him to see the rotten state of the world. Due to his severe acne, he visits the hospital many times and from that understands the way people are treated and the way bills are taken. From his different jobs, he understands the way how the governments and every corporate industry operate in labouring their workers. Due to his experiences, he contemplates suicide many times, but ultimately decides against it because him being dead will amount to nothing, and because he knows that it will mean he is defeated. He therefore decides to live and write about his experience from a nihilist standpoint. Being a nihilist, he is neither afraid of being alive and being dead, and therefore absorbs everything that is happening around him as he sees it. He then brings them out again without any sense of preconceived notions gained from religion or from the government. His creative power lies in his ability to recollect and see things as they are, where no good or bad values matter but how just things happen, and how people are manipulated and corrupted in their minds. In his poem *Cut While Shaving*, he writes

It's never quite right, he said, the way people look,
the way the music sounds, the way the words are
written.

It's never quite right, he said, all the things we are
taught, all the loves we chase, all the deaths we
die, all the lives we live,
they are never quite right,

they are hardly close to right,

these lives we live

one after the other,

piled there as history,

the waste of the species,

the crushing of the light and the way,

it's not quite right,

it's hardly right at all

He too is trying to find meaning to his existence before, but learns to accept that he will never find it. He does not hide the fact that he is bothered by it and accepts that he will not find what he seeks, and that the idea of living happily is a fad because we can never really understand what happiness is, nor will we ever know fully what it is. What we get are simply momentary fulfilment and pleasure which are only to be weigh down by what is being taught in the world.

The third chapter of the dissertation titled “The Misanthropic Man”, examines the misanthropic nature of Henry Chinaski and compares them with other misanthropic characters like Lemuel Gulliver in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J.D. Salinger and Roquentin in *Nausea* (1938) by Jean Paul Satre. The chapter further explores the way these misanthropic characters face their experiences as well as how the authors themselves use it as a tool in their creative writing.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines misanthropy “as a person who hates or distrusts humankind.” Misanthropy is a form of mental illness as the people who are considered as misanthrope disregards the simplicity and beauty of humankind, and focuses mostly on the darker side of humanity and its workings. Misanthropes are greatly repulsed by the negative traits of human nature and therefore prefer the silent comfort of solitude

Henry Chinaski is a loner as far as he can remember. He is unable to understand what his fellow classmates were doing as he was completely uninterested in them even at a young age. His school days were simply attended because his parents forced him. Even while he was attending primary school, he said that “I didn’t have any friends at school, didn’t want any. I felt better being alone.” (Ham on Rye, 29) His rough experiences allow him to have a different perspective on life. These very experiences allow him to understand and read people and see through the hypocrisy in their everyday life. In solitude he starts writing which is able to reach people because he feels what he is writing, and he is not disturbed by anyone. He is impartial, being able to write about any subjects. Bukowski further describes in *Factotum*, through Chinaski that “I was a man who thrived on solitude; without it I was like another man without food or water. Each day without solitude weakened me. I took no pride in my solitude; but I was dependent on it. The darkness of the room was like sunlight to me.” (Factotum, 24)

Having conversation with people for Chinaski is a difficult task as he is unable to ascertain how much people genuinely care for him and his talent. He is apprehensive about people’s intention towards him and whether all they are trying to do is impress him. He proclaims that “People don’t do me much good.” (Ham on Rye, 194) He knows that since people can be full of hypocrisy, there is no honesty or real purpose in trying to communicate with them. He continues, “People were interesting at first. Then later, slowly but surely, all

the flaws and madness would manifest themselves. I would become less and less to them; they would mean less and less to me.” (Women, 73).

In the twentieth century, with different groups that are hell bent on conforming people to its general rules so that they can form part of the larger social machine, only nihilism and misanthropy helps in the outlook of life according to Charles Bukowski. These theories seem to have the ability to do away with the pretensions of the people. These theories are needed so that one can introspect itself and reveal the one true-self in society. As Roquentin In *Nausea* questions his existence and decide against living in a group to find the whole meaning of his existence, Chinaski through his nihilistic and misanthropic outlook tries to present a semblance of truth that attacks everything wrong with the world through his poems. In the poem *Dinosauria, We*, he says that

We are

Born like this

Into this

Into these carefully mad wars

Into the sight of broken factory windows of emptiness

... Into hospitals which are so expensive that it's cheaper to die

Into lawyers who charge so much it's cheaper to plead guilty

Into a country where the jails are full and the madhouses closed

Into a place where the masses elevate fools into rich heroes

He manages to see through the inner workings of the world that is brimming with hypocrisy and corruption. Not only is he speaking about the working of the world that is essentially reducing man to slavery through works needed to survive in a society. He also questions the very purpose of lives as well as how much we stray away from creating a better world for the reality that one is living.

Just like Roquentin, he often feel nausea creeping up on him when he thinks about his existence, but he uses alcohol to drown those very questions that may arise. He tries to live as much as he can while he is still healthy. They both share the idea that people are a bore to live with, and that it is much better to be alone. People are useful to them only when they want things from them to make them feel good about themselves. In *Confessions of a Misanthrope*, he says that about his love interest and her friends,

Her friends always made me sick
for several days after seeing
them and listening to them talk
with other mens'
words. and even though they had
bodies, even their bodies were
ugly and moved in jerky
strides—out of balance and
seemingly
dead.
and it was pausable
that their bodies were
dead. for how can a body live
without a
head?

He compares people to a headless being because for them they are all mindless, trying hard to fit into society and be like everyone else to the point that they have no identity of themselves, and therefore are simply useless beings.

And like Holden Caulfield, Chinaski at a young age experiences pain and suffering which are never addressed. Caulfield loses his brother Allie, and one of his friends commits suicide while wearing the clothes that Caulfield let him borrow. He never overcame the trauma and suffering he experienced at a young age, and he is forced to live on with that feeling. His need for love and affection are unfulfilled and he is expelled from his school to fend for himself in a world he cannot fathom. In Chinaski's case, at a young age he suffered horrible abuse, never received love and affection from his parents, and was forced to exist and function among peers that look down on him. All of these experiences filled both characters with angst and led them to hate the world and the people in it. All of their experiences lead both the characters to seek detachment from the society from which such hatred has arisen. Chinaski in *Women* express that, "I simply disliked people, crowds, anywhere, except at my readings. People diminished me, they sucked me dry. "Humanity, you never had it from the beginning." That was my motto" (*Women*, 231)

The fourth chapter of the dissertation is titled "A Psychoanalytic Study of Chinaski", This study is solely based on Lacan's "Mirror Stage". Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques aimed at understanding the unconscious mind of human beings started by Sigmund Freud. It has been used extensively in studying both the human psyche and in the study of character interpretations in literature. Henry Chinaski's life is examined and studied through a psychoanalytical approach by employing Jacques Lacan's *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. Chinaski is an unfortunate victim of his father's frustration who himself is frustrated with his unfortunate situation. Due to the Great Depression (1929) and the aftermath of it, finding work was

difficult to come by. Fulfilling his American Dream became a remote reality which frustrated him further resulting in him venting his anger on his wife and son. He hates the idea of working throughout his life. Even the post office job that he held for over decades starts with “It began as a mistake” (Post Office, 13), as he first thought it is an easy job which turns out wrong. But he manages to find shortcuts and work lesser as months pass by. Chinaski’s hatred of his father stems from his abusive ways as well as his incessant pushing of him to find jobs. It results in his attempt to live his own way, in a completely different way as compared to that of his father’s life. Unfortunately, Chinaski finds that he is constantly haunted and traumatised by his years growing up around his father. This experience haunts him for many years and he only manages to find his true self when he is in his old age. The role that his father plays is significant in every aspect of his life as it allows him to have a clearer perspective on how he wants to live. His inability to escape his father’s influence manifested in his nihilistic and misanthropic outlook of life.

What Lacan describes as the ‘mirror stage’ is a stage where a baby no longer feels one with the mother’s breast and starts to develop a kind of self-discovery, becoming more aware of the surrounding as well as the difference between itself and others when it views itself in the mirror. This is around the age of six to eighteen months. The child starts to form an image of itself through looking at the mirror, through noticing his movements. This is an important stage as Lacan believe that this formation of one self through looking at the mirror is crucial in trying to understand or make sense of the world as the reflection in the image gives a picture of them. It is an image of self-identification, one that is not a construct of others. What one sees in that image is what he called the “Ideal-I” (Lacan, 1286). But this image formed in a mirror is a fantasy, an unreal image that only seems real and because of that, one strives for “paranoiac knowledge”, which will never be fulfilled as the ideal image is a fantasy, formed in a mirror (Lacan, 1286)

Since the reflection of the self in the mirror is awkward and untrained due to the child being hoisted by the parents, there is an “unfragmented wholeness” (Fry, 136) about the image. Lacan believes this to be a result of “specific prematurity of birth” (1288). Compared with other animals who can manage to walk and fend for itself shortly after being born, a child needs protecting and to be taken care of as their growth is premature in comparison. But since the child is forming an idea about itself as early as that, the self “I” created is imperfect and fragmented. And from that it starts to recognize the things it sees in the mirror are not of its own but of another. From that, there is recognition that it has no name nor identity. It has taken the name of the father but that is starts to recognise the lack of, or difference in phallus, from which competition for desire arises. From there, the desire is no longer for the self but of other people. In the case of Chinaski, from his early childhood till his late fifties, his identity is one of a fragmented one as there is a part of him that constantly wants to gratify his own self desire, while at the same time there is a need to comply the social demands in order for him to live. He is torn between fulfilling his self desire, being the opposite of his father and trying to understand himself in the face of society’s different demands.

The last chapter “Conclusions” sums up the findings of the previous chapters. In his early childhood Chinaski was a well-adjusted child who conforms to society. Unfortunately, growing up he witnesses the anti-social behaviour of his uncles which eventually turn him into a cynic. Chinaski’s poetic prowess therefore finds root in his nihilistic bearings which motivate and inject his creative sensibilities. His misanthropic personality isolates him and drains him. Human interactions and conversations hinder Chinaski from being himself. He finds peace in solitude which also fuels his creativity thus enabling him to rid of the hypocrisy and false preaching’s of religious beliefs, and governmental control that surrounds him. The creative power of Bukowski lies in his ability to create a character out of his own image in a vulgar and comic way that highlights the life of the common people and tackles

many problems within the American society making him an important voice of American society and literature.

Chinaski's creator Charles Bukowski once said, "Somebody once asked me what my theory of life was and I said, 'Don't try.' That fits the writing too. I don't try, I just type." (Krisch) Thus Bukowski through this dissertation reiterates his important status in the context of American Literature. His creative abilities, commentation on society and character of Chinaski extends to his readers the importance of theories like Nihilism.

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