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*The Alienated Subject and the Capitalist Machine:  
The Case of Henry Chinaski.*

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Like anybody can tell you, I am not a very nice man. I don't know the word. I have always admired the villain, the outlaw, the son of a bitch. I don't like the clean-shaven boy with the necktie and the good job. I like desperate men, men with broken teeth and broken minds and broken ways. They interest me. They are full of surprises and explosions. I also like vile women, drunk cursing bitches with loose stockings and sloppy mascara faces. I'm more interested in perverts than saints. I can relax with bums because I am a bum. I don't like laws, morals, religions, rules. I don't like to be shaped by society.

**Charles Bukowski.**

## INTRODUCTION

‘Factotum’, published in 1975, tells the daily life of Henry Chinaski, writer's own transcript, a writer who lives with resignation and weariness after being saved from going to war, and accepts all kinds of rubbish jobs to survive, and to clear his conscience while focused on pursuing what really fulfils him: writing. His self-destructive behavior seems to respond viscerally to a sort of instinctive urge in a universe declining and lacking self-pity. Chinaski is too conscious of his curse, he is destined to live a difficult existence in which he finds people predictable or he simply "do not like" them. For the purpose of the analysis of his writing style, ‘Factotum’ and several poems from the anthology ‘The Pleasures of the Damned’ will be necessary.

It has been said that Bukowski with his terse, brusque and forceful prose, is the atrocious novelist of the great urban jungle: the destitute, prostitutes, drunks, in other words, he is the novelist of the human waste of the American Dream.

In the early 60's, when the Beat movement was in its zenithin, Charles Bukowski was a stranger to the American reader and a disposable talent for "scholarly demands" of Ginsberg. The truth is that the "beat generation" also became a "power center", which proposed the world's contemplative action, from the tradition of Zen Buddhism-in the belief that the interaction of different religious views conform a new spiritual awareness. This resulted in the recognition of indigenou cultures and the apology to the experiences with hallucinogens.

It was certainly, an egocentric existential attitude, narcissistic and anarchistic, as well, in which there was no room for the rude marginality of Bukowski, who vulgarized the ideal of Allen Ginsberg, one of the spiritual leaders of the hippie and flower power social movements spread across the World.

In defiance of the academic standards, Bukowski's irreverent verse legitimizes the role of the common man, who chooses his own righteousness and opt for an apology to the solitude in multitude, to the desecration of taboos, of marginality in which he always lived immersed. Hence, does Bukowski create a world of marginality? Is it possible to

understand this marginality from the center? Does a center even exist? Is this marginality only realized in the margin? Olivier Mongin and his urban experience of liberation will help us understand and develop this idea. A margin is created, since Bukowski goes away from the center to construct an eccentricity.

From a philosophical and sociological perspective, which was developed after World War II, has the assumption that the structure of identity is the product of the sociological crystallization process that occurs in a given time, depending on historical circumstances arose. This determined certain characteristics of the population and it was transmitted from generation to generation. The general conclusion from this was that every identity that is considered "hard" needs an inferior-other, a marginal to support its difference and thereby justify his alleged superiority.

Levinas emphasizes that life has an ontological or trans-ontological meaning in the dislocation of an autonomous self. To encounter death is not as important as death itself, but the death of another. Thus his philosophy tries to rescue the inter-relationships that occur in everyday life, suggesting that the existence of the subject is given elsewhere; its inner self is not for him/her but for another. He advocates a not self-centered subjectivity; on the contrary, the self for and towards the others constitutes his/her subjectivity. In the relationship with the other an apology is given where the subject is justified in its existence, not for himself but on the other, or, as it will be discussed later, the existence of a margin opposed to a center, where Chinaski is a passive subject. He cooperates, helps, he is aware of this displacement of the margin, thus what does exist on that margin that does not exist on the center and that allows for an accommodation within that margin? That is why the individual goes away from his/her essence whenever he/she wants to carry out its identity. There is a distance from the essence, as the fragmented subject turns into something contingent through discourse language.

To the extent that the Other questions by similarity or difference, the identity in which the subject stands, this question strikes at this poor construction, and for that reason, this becomes an alien enemy, an undesirable opponent. Identity is constructed from the confrontation of the individual ideal and the social ideal. For that reason, the process of building the sense that at the same time is giving it its origins is closely related to the values, principles and culture of the environment and is, without a doubt, a social

construction, as well. In other words, identity is not just the result of a personal definition, but includes either acceptance or rejection; a "burden" that lies on the subject from the different institutions he goes along through all his life.

There is no need, whatsoever, for resistance to create another place to stay, to develop, an alien scenario, as the need relies on the recognition of being considered and seen as different, of not been as everybody else, as the mass. There exists and attempt to be and feel out of the ordinary, atypical, since there is a never ending seek for the possibility of a form of existence that somehow at some point becomes authentic.

All his literature turns into a destructive tone amplifying characters and situations that society stigmatizes as the 'underworld', "I have always admired the villain, the outlaw. I like vile women, with half falling and face deformed by cheap makeup and evening street. I'm more interested in perverts than saints." (Bukowski)<sup>1</sup> But this part of Bukowski's work must be highlighted, since it is in this genre in which the writer feels freer to express with his simple and profound style all that he has to say. Bukowski's harsh literature, proposed a provocative literature full of lyrical satire-metaphor from which he constructed the myth of his existence, recalling Paul Ricoeur and its ideas.

In his poetry, as in his prose, we find much autobiographical material. We see a tricky, strange, but very interesting man that express with his alter ego Henry Chinaski, his misanthropy, his selfishness, his fondness for unbalanced women, his rudeness and obscenity, his alcoholism, his quarrelsome and erratic life, his passion for the night, his independence, his daily visits to the racetrack to bet, the difficult relationship with his parents, but we can also find the purity and depth of a romantic poet of noble sentiments, able to be thrilled by the weakest of men or the proximity of his own death.

The arrival point in our time is what Max Weber called the "disenchantment of the world" (Entzauberung der Welt). The sacred or the exceptional, which in the beginning of the human adventure clung to the things and beings around us, has been expelled from them.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract taken from another source other than the ones considered as references: *South of No North*, short story titled "Guts".

It is essential to wonder about the political role that the exclusion operating in social differentiation based on the capitalist system has in society, and to question what these mechanisms do to it. There is a need to explore what happens to citizens when they face everyday life. So it is much more than a study of the social environment and the powers of the capitalist system, which corresponds to a sociological study of people. Thus, the question stands for public subjectivity, rather than to oppression and transgression. Since transformation is taking place in society as an invading space contravening family and privacy by means of new media, job insecurity, monotony, that leads to more than a single way of being subject, and more than a model of subjectivity.

In this sense, as configured around the ethical work and obedience expressed as a political conformity in the contexts of extreme domination (dictatorships) and a full sense of resentment, rebellion, repression, the constitution of this subjectivity is given from totalitarian.

The market has redefined the language of the public by privatization, that is to say, the citizen becomes a consumer and the public life becomes a "market of opinions".

However, even if it exists a standard way of living this is not dramatically deteriorated. People are still living more or less the same or, in other words, they are not consuming well as life has become more stressful. It gets more distressing, since the institutions that held the subjectivity as an oppressed subjectivity, are in crisis. Because to maintain oppression is not enough to keep it through force or through contract, it is also necessary to make a subjective basis that makes this oppression tolerable. Therefore, the authoritative market molds the bodies of these individuals. They are closing in consumption and social instability.

We are, then, in front of a corrosive and dangerous literature where the most puzzling features of the "American Dream" are manifested, including war and the economic depression. His work is developed and written within this context, much more descriptive when portraying the man and his dreams. His writing is more critical and satirical than all the previous literature.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bukowski's literature can be carried into two types that go opposite ways: either the path in where value judgments prevail, so literature is identified as a threat to the good ways that unite society; or it can be taken to the avenue where it is covered as the paradigm of how you would think the world in order to overthrow everything that represents the binding of man.

Both perspectives have overlooked the central point in the words of Bukowski, who is not in the complaint of the famous "system" for the possible introduction of a better one, but on the score of the irremediable dissatisfaction of the subject caused by the absence of objects that could fill him/her, an absence that not only comes from the American culture or the American way of life but of culture *per se*.

A constant in Bukowski's work is the certainty of the impossibility of social salvation, always haunted by enjoyment. The constant of a hole from which society itself emanates:

we have everything and we have nothing  
and some men do it in churches  
and some men do it by tearing butterflies  
in half  
and some men do it in Palm Springs  
laying it into butter blondes  
with Cadillac souls  
Cadillacs and butterflies  
nothing and everything (Bukowski 2010, 48)

Bukowski is one of the most honest writers to prove without the jargon of the academy that there cannot be artistic creation without pain arising from the wound, and, from his position in society as a relegated man, shows the truth that determines society itself that arises from its discomfort "I feel good among marginalized because I'm an outcast. I do not like the laws or morals, or religion or rules. I hate to be shaped by society."

(Bukowski)

Bukowski criticizes with irony and sarcasm the position of a master that some certain intellectuals take, and the lack of questioning about his message from those who join the herd, who, on the other hand, feel authorized to advertise their lifestyle as the most valid. Here, it is possible to find the most compelling reason that Bukowski had to refuse to be called as the last representative of the beat generation. Then, it seemed clear that the movement ceased to represent a report of the American system and its positivist spirit, to become another system as totalitarian as any other system, in the sense that also suggested happiness and personal fulfillment, but in other respects. Such as a emphasizing in the annulment of what is known as desire.

The world in which the capitalist lives, in which we all live, is composed of matter or beings available to men, destined to be used, transformed, consumed, and no longer exhibiting the charms of charisma. It is a material and disenchanting world. Religion can only retreat to the privacy of consciousness, or escape to the afterlife of a transcendent God, or to an individual destiny after earthly existence. We are in a world devoid of charm, with bodies in wear, and where there is also an infantilization of the citizenship and human societies are developed to achieve a more rational and bureaucratic organization.

Not to yield desire, this is one of the premises that identify the work of Bukowski. The rejection to the affiliation to the masters whom the dominant ideology proposes, since after all, the master dictates to something that not even he can reach, which inevitably makes succumb showing the deceit that constitutes its ideology. Hence,

the completely dispassionate Chinaski resembles an automaton unable to manufacture the requisite "taste" for a job required by capital [...] Yet, Chinaski's reaction to the work seems entirely in keeping with the monotony of the jobs themselves; and the "passion" required of him indicates only the first of many hypocrisies evident in a system that denies the worker meaning yet insists that it exist. [...] Everywhere, work serves to efface human relations and quotidian pleasures rather than provide a matrix wherein they can thrive. In Factotum, rather than supporting and invigorating society, as it claims, capital colonizes and drains

it. (Dobozý 3)

It is about taking distance from all Messiah, to assume the truth of which at heart one is only in the world, which, represents so much a loss as a gain, being the first loss of the salvation hope, and the second gain to become a unique place in the world guaranteed by the particularity of the desire that lives to every one, desire that does not exempt of slips or bitterness, but that contains the peculiar satisfaction it has followed, one that can open the possibility of assuming the death before this one finds us and, paraphrasing Bukowski, to embrace it in the dark of our existence.

The mixture of nastiness and brutality with tenderness covered with humor makes this combination a magic recipe to make life more enjoyable and it permits us to put aside the searching of meaning of life.

That is how the importance of this old indecent man's words can be valued, in this epoque dominated by the idea of success and comfort, power and wealth that supposedly the free market and its propeller scientist will grant to us, finally. An idea that cannot fulfill what it tries and that has contributed to the multiplication of the discomfort that results in suicide, xenophobia, depression, bulimia, anorexia, addiction, etc. All desperate manifestations of impotence arising in the subject to comply with the formal obligation to "be good" and emanated from the ignorance of a desire cries out to take place. A Postmodern malaise that comes from a mandate that dictates that nothing is missing and the evidence that something is indeed missing.

## **Chapter One: Bukowski's Realism**

Realism is considered a kind of ‘literature that attempts to depict life in an entirely objective manner, without idealization or glamor, and without didactic or moral ends. Realism may be said to have begun with such early English novelists as Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett, and to have become a definite literary trend in the 19th century’ (*The Reader’s Encyclopedia*, William Rose Benét) (Childs 14)

Thus, realism finds its subjects in everyday life. Writers of realistic fiction tend to use simple, direct prose to depict ordinary men and women in everyday situations. They worth the individual above the plot, creating stories that were interested in the psychology of their characters. In general, realism refers to the representation of characters, events, and settings in ways that the reader will consider believable, based on real situations, that rely on the author’s capacity to portray a story and characters within a normal basis of social, economic, and psychological reality.

From a historic point of view, realism refers to a movement in the nineteenth century European literature and theater that rejected the idealism, elitism, and romanticism of earlier drama, poetry, and prose fiction. Henry James is considered the father of the realistic psychological novel. His mark on realism was to explore the psyches of characters dealing with complex social and ethical situations. James found inspiration in the complex manners and obligations of the elite. Many of James’s stories and novels can be read as cautionary tales warning of the excesses of wealth and independence.

The realism of Henry James tries to find the facts in the minds of the characters. External reality is merely the projection of consciousness. In order to reflect this recondite reality, in his great novels he uses a character narrator who is always an intelligent observer who finds a series of characters paraded in front of him, whose motives we understand as the character-witness is able to penetrate and transmit to the reader. The fragmented images that are projected in consciousness have an integration process that takes place in the mind of the observer character.

The narrators of James contribute to deploy a realistic narrative technique. The reality comes from within the novel, observed and expounded by the same character. It ends with the omniscient narrator and therefore artificial, since the omniscience condition is not human at all: there can be no illusion of life where there is no wonder, and the

omniscient narrator is obviously not surprised. The interpretation that the narrator does from the events, lead him to penetrate into the psychological motivations of the characters. While he did not write about poverty or the troubles of the working class, his characters often face challenges that result from the opportunities money and leisure provide.

It is the attempt to describe human behavior and their environment as they act and appear in everyday life by creating spaces, characters and secular situations, because realism in literature will tend to rationalize the events of the story. From this point we can talk about a quotidian life, since this secularized life is secluded from myth and religion. It is about integrating reality into a rational explanation. This approach to literature implies the belief of a real existence that it is independent of man's theoretical representations of life, that is why the writer knows and feels reality in a different way as before, so, in turn, he/she is able to represent the world, to represent life 'realistically'.

Hence, Bukowski can be marked in the spectrum of realism, or to be more specific, in what Bill Buford called *dirty realism* that regards "the silences, the elisions, the omissions" (5), but on this paper it will be more suitable to use his idea in the words of Dobozy, who states that "dirty realism exhibits a self-awareness regarding the loneliness, societal atomization and "barbarism" evident in its milieu" (6) Hence, the critique Bukowski does concerning the working culture, the protestant working culture it alludes dirty realism as it helps him and fits him to evaluate this matter from his own experience, with a writing style that produces "[...] unadorned, unfurnished, low-rent tragedies about people [...] They drink a lot and are often in trouble: for stealing a car, breaking a window, pickpocketing a wallet" (Buford) Bukowski addresses to the simple things of life, to what is mundane. The same happened with James' characters, which acted according to their true natures. Characters should be created without glorification and that setting and situations must be portrayed as faithfully to real life as possible.

Physical description underscores a character's essential personality and provides the reader with clues about his or her temperament. The reader can always expect actions and responses that are understandable in terms of that character's unique perspective. So, Bukowski represents - through Chinaski - all the outcasts, and the working class,

but, more important, the destitutes and all that people that have always been ignored from society, that have been marginalized for lacking a glamorous job, or because they simply want to be there. Society has marginalized them, but still they do not do anything to get into the center again. They are on a margin because they want it, just as Chinaski is. He experiences life from the bottom, from the filth, from the dirt where "people experience a weariness beyond fatigue" (Bukowski 1975, 46)

The latent danger of suicide is within the poet, writer or alter ego in this novella. It is an aspect of Bukowski's literature that in 'Factotum' is just grasped. The harshness of modern and postmodern world does not give anyone a truce. Being a writer becomes a pleasant and hard profession, like an oxymoron; at least, this is Bukowski's view. He did not disbelieve in the hazards of life, conflicts and troubles of authorship. Bukowski did not commit suicide but it took the burden of being rebellious throughout his career, and it is expressed in his harsh writing. "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." (Bukowski 1975, 40)

Bukowski writes for training and projecting his experience to future writers in a sincere act. He uses his experience and his earned name as a writer to warn the young and the novice who enters the arena of the office of being a poet. In a demanding and hard world he lists the risk of falling into drunkenness, madness, political partisanship, depression and suicide. The young man who started his career should make a free and conscientious choice, as the metaphor of a war is kept amid all the difficulties. There exists a severe criticism and creative work that should never stop.

In his poem 'Blue Bird', Bukowski defends and asserts its vulgar, harsh and rude ethos, celebrating himself with whores and alcohol. He cannot separate the vice of drinking from characterization that determines his style as a writer and that at the same time raises expectations to the readers.

there's a bluebird in my heart that  
wants to get out  
but I pur whiskey on him and inhale

cigarette smoke  
and the whores and the bartenders  
and the grocery clerks  
never know that  
he's  
in there.(Bukowski 2010, 494)

He is able to step back and warn writers not to fall into the abyss of disease. Even though he is in there. He and his writing into the capitalist world, but never leaving behind his real discontent, as “Bukowski's novel remains entirely in the present, offering - if it offers any model for subversion - a highly individual response to existing conditions.” (Dobozay 18)

Henry James, therefore, created the most lucid characters, able to penetrate the secrets of life hidden in a mobile subconscious. Until then the narrator comes and with it, we grasp the psychological reality into a work of art, made with the dedication of an aesthete. So, this is the way the psychological novel of the twentieth century is open, with the intensification of interior monologue and stream of consciousness in the free juxtaposition of fragmented times.



## **Chapter 2: Lack of Ambition**

'Factotum' is placed in 1944 Los Angeles where Hank Chinaski, which is presented to us in the opening pages, drifts through the sordid city lower-class streets looking for a job. He travels from town to town and goes from one job to another making him a 'factotum', since he has many jobs. From the very first moment we are told that he is looking for a job on the newspaper "Need ambitious young man with an eye to the future. Exper. Not necessary. Begin in delivery room and work up" (Bukowski 1975, 14) He then applies and gets the job: packing magazines for shipmen. He even tries to look ambitious for the job, but after getting it he cannot express but scorn for it because of the feeling, the demands, necessities that a person has to deal with when working, when getting into the system "That's when I first learned that it wasn't enough to just *do* your job, you had to have an interest in it, even a passion for it" (Bukowski 1975, 17).

Chinaski portrays the worthlessness and emptiness work has on life. He even isolates himself from this world rejecting ambition and belonging. It is possible to say, then, that the story is about Chinaski's relationship with work, but also women, and alcohol. He never stays long enough on a job, or stays long enough with a woman, or stays long enough sober. He goes from job to job and from bar to bar. Chinaski is always moving on, never creating real nor strong boundaries with anyone anywhere. From this, it can be said that through all the encounters he experiences the motif of resistance arises. A resistance towards hypocrisy, power, work, the capitalist world, all this arising from Chinaski's questioning the act of working, of getting a job because society requires it.

In "La Invención de lo Cotidiano" de Certeau develops his conception of resistance when it addresses the notions of strategy and tactics. The opposition established between the two locates a substantial core of its development: a complex approach of domination and the indication of a politicization of everyday life whose sign is the conflict and the introjections of the order, tension and not passivity.

His theory draws attention to the limits of domination, discipline, and order, emphasizing the incompleteness of any strategy of domination. The developments of this author are extremely attractive when he invites us to interfere in everyday creativity, which is elusive, dispersed, fleeting, even silent, fragmentary, and craft constructed "maneras de hacer," ways to move, to live, to read, to walking... (de Certeau 46). It is no longer a matter of thinking exclusively on the productivity of power, the

exercise of power, but in the productivity of *micro-resistance* mobilized from the daily practices, because "there are no practices without use", that is why de Certeau talks about practitioners and not consumers.

For instance, in 'Factotum', Chinaski has the feeling that every worker is exploited through conventionalities such as having gratitude for working, being dedicated, etc. But, Bukowski shows resistance on the personification of Chinaski who lacks this passion for a job. He simply does not understand "what a man had to do simply in order to eat, sleep and keep himself clothed" (Bukowski 1975, 67). He despises work, and it is a reality that he has to deal with everyday, and that is the reason why he never stays long in one job, as he either gets fired or quits. He does not seem to understand this working culture in which he is immerse:

How in the hell could a man enjoy being awakened at 6:30 am by an alarm clock, leap out of bed, dress, force-feed, shit, piss, brush teeth and hair, and fight traffic to get to a place where essentially you made lots of money for somebody else and were asked to be grateful for the opportunity to do so? (Bukowski 1975, 127)

"The hypocrisy aesthetic so visible in dirty realism and, in particular, Bukowski, mirrors the hypocrisy of capitalism itself." (Dobozoy 2) Chinaski embodies an anti-hero who rejects the working culture, but he does not do anything to rebel against this system, instead, he lives life as best as he can with the jobs he works on. He gives his minimum effort to that part of living called work. He resists, he tries to live outside of that, but he is still absorb in it, he is part of a vicious circle in which he cannot get out, but, in its place, he release this burden barflying, which considers alcohol and women. The problem Chinaski has does not only rely on specific situations, such as not having enough money or some quarrel in work. His crisis and dilemma relies on a whole system, a whole way of living. He cannot escape from this reality, but he is also aware that he cannot pretend that he is inside either. "Factotum dishes up the repetitive dreariness of a man condemned to jobs entirely lacking in substance or character, and for which he feels neither enthusiasm nor hatred" (Dobozoy 8) Therefore, the motif of resistance arises again, and appears all along the story.

One of the starting points of his resistance towards jobs might have arisen from the figure of his father. Since Chinaski was a boy we can see his perceptions towards work as something absorbing one's life, almost being the only reason for living:

I remember how my father used to come home each night and talk about his job to my mother. The job talk began when he entered the door, continued over the dinner table, and ended in the bedroom where my father would scream 'Lights Out!' at 8 pm, so he could get his rest and his full strength for the job the next day. There was no other subject except the job. (Bukowski 1975, 13).

His father, then, puts all his expectations onto him, all this ambition that Chinaski so obviously lacks, and that in the long run, will end up in making him a complete disappointment to his father, who wonders "How the hell are you going to make it in the world?" (Bukowski 1975, 26) and that is the whole point. Because he has no ambition, he has no aspiration to accomplish anything in life; he will displease his father in every possible way and making this action one of its main features of his personality. Nevertheless, he knows he has to work in order to survive, so reality comes as a smack on the face every once in a while for Chinaski, but he never loses his own principles, since work keeps on being a meaningless symbol which he rejects and despises. Work demands too much on a human being: determination, aims, having goals, constancy, loyalty and even giving oneself as a whole, which is something Chinaski has not even thought on giving to any job, as they destroy a human's being vitality, and it would impede people from thinking "You gave the boss 8 h, and he always asked for more. He never sent you home after 6 h, for example. You might have time to think" (Bukowski 1975, 57). Thus, in the words of Dobozy "The process of capitalist accumulation therefore comprises a simultaneity of two contrary operations; it sustains itself by contradiction, preaching what it does not practice (honest pay for an honest day's labor)." (3)

Work is so time demanding and life sucking that Chinaski only does it because he needs the payment to get drunk again. He depicts working and all the degradation that comes with it and the only exit he has is to keep drinking "When you drank the world was still out there, but for the moment it didn't have you by the throat" (Bukowski 1975, 67) But work is just a sad means to an end for Chinaski "all I want to do is get that check and

get drunk. That may not sound noble but it's my choice" (Bukowski 1975, 158).

Chinasky's resistance to job puts him in a position of an outsider to his culture; it locates him on a margin. However, this resistance to job brings him poverty and uncertainty to everyday activities, such as eating. This extreme individual resistance that Chinaski is so willing to go through is a really painful path, since it has a high price to pay.

"What appears as hypocrisy is the reflection of the hypocrisy around him, while his high degree of self-consciousness suggests that this hypocrisy forms at once a symptom of and response to existing conditions." (Dobozy 4)

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats. (de Certeau 42)

A tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power [...] it is a maneuver "within the enemy's field of vision" [...] It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. (de Certeau 43).

The strategy is anchored in a place, which enables a variety of forms of domain: time domain; visual domain, optical and panoptic; knowledge domain, including knowledge and truth. The ability to isolate a proper place is what allows you to assign the "other" a situation of dependency, of alienation, of lack of autonomy. That is the way it works according to de Certeau's strategy, his ownership of a place (place of power, physical location, location theory) is a kind of condition of possibility for its effectiveness.

On the contrary, it is the lack of such status that defines the tactic: its weakness and its

potential condition of strength. But it is always a strength marked by weakness, because as de Certeau argues it does not have the possibility to bow down the adversary. The subject who practices the tactics is not a subject that is held, but a subject that is limited to a sort of subordinate resistance. So, the tactic is just the maximum strength of the weak, the maximum strength that Chinaski has.

How do the tactics operate? What are the modes of governance of the ones who lack a proper place? De Certeau states that the tactics are effective in their operations over time. The tactic should act on the instant, to ensure rapid and unexpected movements, create surprises, to slip away. The resistance is exercised by the cunning of the weak in their intrusions on time. There is no revolution of the crowd that is not linked to the compromise on the individual, i.e., given up to desire in order to fade into the mass ideology.

In “Artes de Hacer”, de Certeau establishes the relationships between writing, reading and speech and between the space designed and defined; and practiced and transformed. For Michel de Certeau, the social space is the result of an ongoing dialectical conflict between power and resistance to power. Space is the product of the operations that orient it, temporalize it, place it and make it work. In each of these operations, a disciplinary force acts, and one that opposes it, too. De Certeau does not put this conflict in the larger political or social groups, but in small daily operations that give rise to social practice.

There exists a dispute that is held between subjects and institutions that are brought into play in the frame of quotidian life: ordinary man, anonymous figures who produce ordinary and anonymous practices. And this big scenario of quotidian life that so much fascinates de Certeau, a practical scenario not as glittering as the extraordinary actions of extraordinary men, but a scenario that has its own radiance: the everyday life, the quotidian life.

Understanding every act of consuming as a reading practice, and all production as an act of writing, our society, then, results in a spectacle for the eyes. This view is, however, anything but passive. De Certeau refers to reading according to its tactics, their ways of hunting the object and make it of ones own It refers to combine, and create metaphors

for landscapes that do not exist. The act of poetic transformation of reading is typical of all practices of use and consumption. In using language, a system of signs, syntax and grammar, a set of literal meanings, speech is a transformative act of meaning, an operation of its own creation. The spoken word is the practice of the language and the city tour is the practice of urban system. It is the utterance of the city. The spoken word is a practiced place that Bukowski knows too well.

### **Chapter 3: The Urban Condition**



Most deconstructive arguments go around the analysis of conceptual oppositions, and in here, a preliminary approximation around this will be done. Consequently, one term in opposition has advantaged over the other in a particular situation, for reasons such as one term considered more general, normal, central, while the other may be regarded as special, extraordinary, or marginal (Selden 89).

Deconstruction is primarily concerned with problems of meaning and interpretation of texts. The point of a deconstructive reading of a text it does not try to find the meaning of it, but to threaten the conceptualization or belief that there is a literal or “true” meaning. So, the facts given by the author provide clues for different interpretations, and I say *different*, because there is no meaning that is fully there. As a result, there is never a definite or final interpretation, since they all converge at some point. A deconstructive analysis, then, will pay attention to the marginal voices within the text, the silenced minorities and the oppressed creating an agreement with dissident social movements.

A deconstructive analysis looks for what is concealed, for what is unnoticed for the reader. The reader, then, needs to look for a special principle that responds to the acknowledged one, and even, to put the central one out of place. Behind this analysis it is also possible to find the opposition between the literal and the metaphorical elements within a text, which at a first glance may seem simply additional and peripheral, but they play an important role. If we could incorporate and make sense of the surplus meaning of the metaphors, it would then be possible to see its significance reaching its highest level of expression (Ricoeur 58). For instance, the racetrack as a metaphor suited Bukowski, as it represented something more than luck or chance. A horse player had to work at it to be any good and beat the odds, and the odds were definitely stacked against the crowd as the track took its via right off the top, when it wasn't outright and forthrightly fixing the race “I still had my thirty-five dollar car. The horses were hot. We were hot. Jan and I knew nothing about horses, but we lucked out” (Bukowski 1975, 95)

Hence, figurative language constitutes an important part of deconstructive analysis as it undertakes the processes of meaning making. When people try to express their ideas

language acquire more meanings than the literal ones, as a result, metaphors represent an act of deconstructing the predictable meaning intended ensuing a demolish of the literal meaning. A metaphor exists in the way its conventional meaning is absent. As Jonathan Culler declares “a speaker can mean different things by the same linguistic sequence on different occasions” (110). Every figurative expression deconstructs itself to go further than the literal meaning of words in order to provide new insights of an idea or expression. Deconstruction argues that significations are never present but absent as it happens in figurative language. “The deconstructor merely uncovers the hidden power and results of the disruptive logic inherent in language” (Spikes 23)

The metaphor, according to Ricoeur, also suggests a figurative language to make the discourse more attractive (61), but Chinaski does not try to persuade us, since there are no metaphors in him. It's just life, his life, the life of a man in the city. He says and describes things as they are, as he sees them. He has no attempt in making his discourse a more appealing one, in fact, it is just the opposite, and that is what strikes us: the dirtiness, the decline, the promiscuity.

Ricoeur mentions another element of language, the symbol, endowed with a full significance, which will allow us to complete the theory of the metaphor, where a literal or primary sense points to a second sense that, at the same time, is shown, displayed and hidden. So, it is possible to say that the symbol has a double meaning (67), alluding to a deep structure and a surface structure, and it is the text itself that promotes this visualization. It is as though the text reveals itself making its evidence accessible.

The position of Ricoeur argues that the symbol presents a double point, a double interpretation. This double point of the symbol would be the profound unity of its dual function: to hide and reveal. Every symbol fulfills both roles, but each symbol would stand at opposed ends of a single scale, which would go from a masking function to a revealing one.

Deconstructive arguments are likely to explain the opposition in which the two terms endure a relationship of conceptual dependence or similarity, as well as a conceptual distinction. It exists an attempt to explore how this similarity or this difference is suppressed. "She was desperate and she was choosey at the same time and, in a way,

beautiful, but she didn't have quite enough going for her to become what she imagined herself to be." (Bukowski 1975, 172) Hence, the opposition found in Bukowski's literature, especially in 'Factotum', considers on the one side the center, and on the other, the margin. Even though, the position of the subject seems to be waiting for something, and far from being a simple blank of social or sexual role, the subject is in a process, where he is developing a capacity of being other than what it is. Identity, then, comes as a failure, since he does not become who he was supposed to be as a result of his resistance to internalize social norms.

Bukowski despised America and the brand of capitalism, which is lined on industrialism and the petty consumer society, something he found abominable and tried to escape all the time living him aside in what I will consider a margin, his margin.

For Levinas, death is not a negative charge to the existing one, but on the contrary, it is understood in a positive sense as an opening and announcement of otherness, that according to this philosopher, is a prerequisite for the constitution of subjectivity, which is also a way to transcendence. Levinas states that being and transcendence will now be called essence and disinterest.

In 'De otro modo que Ser o Más allá de la esencia', Levinas emphasizes that life has trans-ontological or ontological meaning in the dislocation of an autonomous self. Death is as important as it may be when facing it, but the death of the other. Thus, his philosophy tries to rescue the inter-relationships that occur in everyday life, suggesting that the existence of the subject is given out of itself, not for itself but for another. This advocates a self-centered subjectivity that is not centered, but it is the responsibility of the self towards another. In relation to the other an apology is given, the subject is justified in its existence, not for himself but on the other.

Max Weber's thought has exerted a tremendous influence on our time, an influence that encompasses the broad area of social sciences and extends to the realm of philosophy, and in this case, even literature.

His monumental work responds to the attempt to overcome the disenchantment of the world and find a solution to the ethical irrationality that Weber diagnosed as essential

aspects of modernity, and as dimensions of existence that, according to his view, strayed toward the individual to a life devoid of meaning. It also threatens Western civilization as a whole with the irreparable loss of valuable humanist tradition. Weber thought it is marked by a titanic struggle between, on the one hand, scientific and "objective" analysis of civilization reality and mass democracy and, on the other hand, to the ethical effort aimed at "saving" the individual from the impersonal forces that overwhelm him/her, to restore a sense of existence, and protect the values of personal creativity in front of bureaucracy and collectivism. In a world perceived as increasingly subject to instrumental rationality, destitute of values and myths, Weber tried to sustain the politics and ethics on the free choice of individuals, within a context characterized by the weight of impersonal forces and the absence of a common regulatory framework.

I think that if they would let me just stay in bed I could  
get well or strong or at least feel better;  
but it's always up and back to the machine,  
searching for stockings that match,  
shorts that won't tear,  
looking at my face at the mirror, disgusted with  
my face. (Bukowski 2010, 179)

Weber diagnosed our time as the disenchantment of the world, the ethical irrationality, and the end of the illusions on a higher sense of existence. At the same time, his work is seen a deep longing for the "sense", a tireless struggle to find more, to unveil the curtain of darkness that covers life, a higher meaning and solid moral rock of values in which the subject can hold, can embrace and feel free and ethically autonomous.

Thus, this rigorous conceptual presentation of Mongin, of the so-called urban conditions, is articulated through an imperative proposal to recover the place, the urban experience, faced as it is, to the perverse consequences of modernity and globalization. In the words of the author, by reconsidering the political dimension of the city, its link to democracy in a globalization that divides, fragments, instead of gathering and relating. However, this emergency in recovering the place from the fight for the place as a possible succession of the class struggle in a post-industrial context is perhaps the

greatest contribution of Mongin, along with his discussion around the city and the urban.

So, from the introduction, the main problem presented in the book goes around that. According to the author, we have entered to the world of a *post-city*, where places that used to be autonomous, no depend form external factors, such as technology, media and transport. The balance once existing between places and flows has become an illusion and the European city model, conceived as a large agglomeration that gathers and integrates, is in the process of weakening and marginalization. The citizen space once had is losing ground in favor of a metropolis, which disperses and fragments.

According to Weber, the era of triumphant capitalism had locked the human being in an "iron cage", a term that symbolizes, on the one hand, our fragility before the vast and anonymous power of the economic cosmos around us and, on the other side, of its mechanical character that it is free from spiritual sustenance and inevitably submitted to the rationalization of existence. The cage is "iron" because the forces that have built modern science, capitalism and bureaucracy, are triumphs of our reason and they are so important and overwhelming that they have become irreversible realities. They are also, paradoxically, empty triumphs of the highest spiritual and cultural values that are driven by religious, ethical and political ideals. The human action has become merely a response to economic distress or purely mundane passions. The 'new victorious man' of capitalism is part of a mechanized collective that is pushed by overwhelming technical and organizative processes, but, at the same time, the individual is isolated and alone. He/she is a new type of subject who considers that depends entirely upon himself, in a terrible solitude, devoid of any magical power of salvation, a human being faced with the basic fact of being forced to live in a time that ignores God and in which the prophets are unknown.

Weber's thought moves both on a precarious surface between acceptances of the inevitable rationalization of the world, and on its desperate struggle against the dehumanizing effects of disenchantment of the world. That struggle led him to realize that the permanent relevance of our anxiety to find a higher meaning to life, our ongoing effort to make sense of the irrationality of the world has been-and remains-the fundamental psychological impulse that gives rise, for example, to religious belief

systems as Christianity.

I drank for some time, three or four days. I couldn't get myself to read the want ads. The thought of sitting in front of a man behind a desk and telling him that I wanted a job, that I was qualified for a job, was too much for me. Frankly, I was horrified by life, at what a man had to do simply in order to eat, sleep, and keep himself clothed. So I stayed in bed and drank. When you drank the world was still out there, but for the moment it didn't have you by the throat. (Bukowski 1975, 67)

Work as an end in itself, as a "profession," as something dear, it is something that capitalism demands and that is not achieved with high or low wages, but with education, by a religious moralization that is associated with economy. Thus, "Chinaski serves as a contested site between the social realities and pressures of his day and an idealized stoicism capable of resisting the all-encompassing pressures to conform to the marketplace." (Dobozy 14)

Mongin refers to the urban condition in its first meaning, i.e. designating a specific territory both as a type of experience, of which the city is the condition of possibility. To him, the city is understood as a polyphonic urban experience. It is, above all, a physical experience, then a public space, as well as an object that is viewed. The urban experience is part of a place that makes possible practices, movements, actions, thoughts, dances, songs and dreams. The city swings between a city object and a city subject (Mongin 38). Therefore, the initial direction of the urban condition from this sense is to understand the city as a condition of possibility of different relationships (body, stage, politics), as a place that shapes endless practices and that has a public connotation.

In this context, Lefebvre appears reporting the knowledge of the strategy of urban illusion, and other illusions related to that one. It is a blind camp, for dominance and submission to the order of the urbanization process. It is an urban class, which hides a class strategy: the space. The space does not resolve the conflict between use and exchange, even when presses to use and user. Urbanism blocks the path of knowledge

and urban practice, imposing coherence and logic of the state, preventing the thought from becoming in the study of what might be possible, the picture of the future.

But, what are the social needs inherent in urban society? The virtual object - possibly - linked to a process and praxis? Not only the anthropological needs developed socially, but also the necessity of a creative activity and not just products and consumable goods, tending towards a new humanism. Each object thus constructed will be submitted to critical examination and is simply a model of urban reality, provisional, changeable and critical. However, only fractions of classes capable of revolutionary initiatives can lead to full realization the solution to urban problems.

In this context, Lefebvre calls "urban revolution" to the set of transformations that occur in contemporary society to mark the passage from the period dominated by problems of growth and industrialization, to the one in which urban problems will dominate, and the search for solutions to urban society will occupy the forefront (Lefebvre 12). A revolution that does not involve violent acts, but it does not exclude them either, and has a threefold character: centrality, dialectic and urban praxis. The politicization of urban issues, involves a project to transform everyday life, including self-management, which can induce an urban self-management.

What does this mean? It means the impoverishment of the state, a radical incompatibility between the state and the urban. The state reduces the urban phenomenon towards institutions, the urban can only serve as it is "residing", destroying the state order and the strategy that organizes so homogenizing and oppressive space, absorbing the urban and dwelling. Hence, the town planning can be considered as a disguise and as an instrument: a disguise of the state and a political action tool of the hidden interests of a strategy and a socio-logic, ideology reducing urban practice and acting as if urban problems were resolved. But, what practice is possible if the inhabitants and the users remain mute? There exists a passivity that recognizes historical, sociological, theoretical and political reasons.

The urban revolutionary practice will cause the release of the daily life of the capitalist order, building a new society: the urban society, but, with one condition, that state repression disappears. The quotidian as a practice, is the scene of the bureaucratic

society that masks the real problems. The contemporary man is "prefabricated" by these constraints but at the same time, he is going through experiences of freedom.

When all forms of alienation have been compelled in the form of an urban revolution, a new man and urban society will emerge breaking up the state apparatus. And for Lefebvre, in my opinion, the becoming of men between alienation and the right of the city requires extending the class struggle to the space.

This urban condition also requires a bodily experience, from which the city takes shape. The body gives character and form to the city associated to the path of individual bodies that venture into it. Therefore, the city should be presented as a way in which one can move. The spatial framework is not arbitrary, ranges between center and periphery, center and margin, which favors a permanent move between two limits, a constant back and forth between the outside and the centripetal seduction for the inside (Mongin 55), which contributes to a mental image of the city. That is, a symbolic reference to a specific urban space, a feeling of belonging, which remains and persists even in cases where the city falls apart, crumbles and dissolves the practice and the urban experience.

From this dimension, the urban condition it also has political significance. The urban experience, then, is a liberating experience in several ways. This ideal type of city expressed in this urban condition it is not solely inspired in a poetic or scenic dimension as it is not based only in the city as a theater and stage, but in the institution of politics. Therefore, the ideas of participation, deliberation, freedom, citizenship, justice, equality, power, integration, etc. are associated with the ability of the city as a political experience that allows for the development of democracy and the establishment of the place from which society emerges. And this is something Chinaski just obtains in the margin.

Today, in the context of globalization and the worldwide trend towards metropolization of cities, where the urban experience in its original meaning is becoming more and more scarce would make the characterization of the city an unlimited space with difficult and even impossible exchanges and paths. The city is becoming a space that favors limited and segmented practices.



These changes in the global mapping, confronts the initial urban experience with a complex scenario, where fragmentation appears to be the common denominator to refer to different dimensions of the urban. So, given this scenario, it is important not to believe that the urban condition shaping in front of our eyes puts a definitive end to the urban experience, to the urban condition understood as an experience of multiple dimensions.

## CONCLUSION

That Bukowski and that Chinaski, surrounded by beer, whiskey, whores and room motels in which a large handful of secondary players result in a comprehensive whole in this dirty reality. The same self-antagonism, the filthy auto flagellation, the always dirty descriptions, the marginal manners, the specification of social, internal, and psychological chaos always shaping Bukowski's world. All manifestations that portray how he can resist reality, and, at the same time, the rejections embedded.

Life was hard on him, but he believed he had a good and strong shield over him that helped him went through all the difficulties put on his way. This shield is what I call "writing", writing in his typewriter, without forgetting the never indispensable alcohol. As he said in one opportunity "when I write, I'm the hero of my shit", hence, writing was what made him invincible and to tolerate everything happening around him. It turned out to be one easy and nice thing to do in this world.

For him there was no time to embellish language, it was about striking right down to the bone with an unusual directness. He had the tendency to say what he really mean. As I said before, Chinaski's father came as the image of what he had to resist, as his father wanted him to have an ambition he did not, but also, because, Bukowski's real-life father used to give him several beats every week, so, he taught him to tell and to deal with things as they are: bluntly with an atmosphere of pain, a pain without meaning.

There was the need to just get up, drink and write. That was it. That was what moved this world-weariness, full of bitterness and dissatisfaction, satiated with disenchantment that lead him to the border to be and feel and outcast. Bukowski seems to be just a man on the street that wrote for people like himself, people on the street.

He proclaims a refusal to work as an elemental wrongness of everything, always alluding to the absurd waste of life when others dictate it. People need to raise their voices, act if anything displeases them. Bukowski might have a passive way to show this, but he manifests either criticizing or not adding to what the majority says. It is about making mistakes in a messy world, confused and full of trouble.

people just are not good to each other  
one on one.

[...]  
we are afraid.

our educational system tells us  
that we can all be  
big-ass winners

it hasn't told us  
about the gutters  
or the suicides.

or the terror of one person  
aching in one place  
alone (Bukowski 2010, 222)

Through the margin, power is acquired. The margin is an end by itself, a way of life. Even if it looks as a life without a purpose, that is not so, because to live in the margin, to act from the margin has a function, a principle. It is the reason for a construction of an eccentricity that will turn to be the weapon of resistance to a social model that does not adequate to the necessities of the ones in discomfort.

It as if the system itself outrages society in a striking way leaving people to marginalization as its only chance to build new spaces. The system does not give them room anywhere and marginalization comes as the only line of attack. A tactic that has its purpose on whether you want to survive, destruct the system or go outside and speak out for what one think is right.

But, still, there is a lot to do. Much effort is needed to achieve success since it exists a repression that has not ended and the social impatience is reflected in the rise of urban and rural movements, such as the Chilean student movement on 2011. The country's political life needs to change from education, from the universities towards a more

critical perspective about the social problems. This tendency was manifested immediately in higher education institutions and these became in democratic spaces of academic renewal. There was a heated social debate that was supported by many claims that came from the repressed or marginalized sectors in the country.

If anything, the message of *Factotum* is that extreme individual resistance is more than anyone can bear. The forms of resistance that one commonly finds in organizations are hidden and insinuating, this seems hardly surprising, but the individual resistance of any magnitude, carries a high price to pay.

But, above all, he also believes there is still a chance to change things, to win, to rebel and be the victor, or at least, attempt to success in what you once thought lose.

there must be a way.

surely there must be a way that we have not yet  
thought of.

who put this brain inside of me?

it cries  
it demands  
it says that there is a chance.

it will not say  
"no." (Bukowski 2010, 224)

This project is intended to approach the study of the marginalized for various reasons, whether for political or philosophical ideas, by geographical origin, and for economic reasons. It is important to know also the protagonists who conducted the prosecution or marginalized so many human beings, in this case, the disenchantment of the world brought by the capitalist machine, that made the protagonist of *Factotum* set himself into an alienated world full of disinterest and self-destruction, so special attention is devoted to the characters of this book that have stand against this discrimination,

particularly, the protagonist, that through his writing and lack of ambition guides a faint light of hope amid so much barbarism.

Bukowski's speech is not only to write, is also a way of life, his way of life that take the behaviors it takes on a voluntary basis, and it is as if the cricket of conscience is saying what is wrong. In the world there exists lots of people living like Bukowski, but because they do not have another choice or possibility: it is just the way they live and may not be otherwise, because capitalism now reigns as the only form of relationship between the market and the state, since the other formulas have not work either. People are not having a good and healthy life as is the case of social democracies worldwide.

Bukowski's experiences are to be noted, since despite the good national macroeconomic numbers we have a reality that we can not forget, and that the role of a protective state into the social possibilities is a challenge that we must take.

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