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"I drink, I gamble, I write": Alcoholism and Autobiographical Fiction in Charles Bukowski's *Hollywood*

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of BA in English Philology

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Vilnius

2021

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of the professors, lecturers, and members of Vilnius University community for the knowledge and experiences I have gathered over my 4 years spent here. The education I received broadened my horizons, promoted my thirst for knowledge and equipped me with the tools to pursue my philological interests further. In particular, I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Linara Bartkuvienė whose profound knowledge, attentiveness to students, and facilitation of discussion is an example of the intellectual light in academia that we need. Furthermore, I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rūta Šlapkauskaitė and Junior Assist. Prof. Rūta Zukienė who both exemplify the passion and excitement for knowledge that I look up to.

I am forever grateful to my thesis supervisor, Grant Rosson, for guiding my research process and advising me every step of the way. The discussions we had helped me not only in writing this BA paper, but also shaped my view on any future research projects. I am forever thankful for your help, guidance and open mindset.

I am also thankful to my parents, who have encouraged me to seek knowledge and education since I was young, for their support and the passion for literature they have instilled in me. Lastly, I would like to thank my cat who has kept me company during my long nights researching and writing this paper.

Abstract

The purpose of this BA paper is to provide an investigation of the autobiographical nature of Charles Bukowski's novel *Hollywood*. The analysis is divided into two parts: the first part is based on Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical criticism and deals with the distinction between autobiography and fictional novel and how that is established, while the second part is based on Michael Angrosino's framework of ethnographic research and will analyze the way the character of Henry Chinaski is mythologized in the narrative. The analysis reveals that the novel, while being a piece of autobiographical fiction, has such a resemblance to reality that it complicates the division between autobiography and fiction. Furthermore, the results of the analysis show that Charles Bukowski mythologizes Henry Chinaski as an outsider, primarily through the images of excessive drinking and writing. Lastly, by mythologizing Henry Chinaski in a piece of fiction that is sometimes confused with autobiography, Charles Bukowski mythologizes his own image in American society.

1. Introduction

Henry Charles Bukowski Jr. (16 August 1920 – 9 March 1994) was an American poet, novelist, short story writer and columnist. Although he took to writing seriously only when he was almost in his forties, he was a prolific writer, having written six novels, about five thousand poems (Debrito, 2017) and many short stories. The author himself claimed that he began writing seriously only after having acquired enough experience in life. Having worked menial jobs for the first half of his life, Bukowski wrote short stories and poems which slowly helped him garner attention from American readers. He shifted to full-time writing after John Martin, the owner of Black Sparrow Press, offered to pay Bukowski an allowance in exchange for the rights to publish Bukowski's works. Although he lived a difficult life, Bukowski managed to find meaning in literary work: "If I stop writing I am dead. And that's the only way I'll stop: dead" (Ring, 1994).

Bukowski's prose was heavily influenced by his personal experiences - a lifetime of unskilled manual labor; sexual encounters with women; alcoholism and violence; gambling; living in desolate rental apartments; and self-imposed solitude. To a certain extent, his novels may be considered to represent the life of poor Americans in urban United States. However, his fiction also depicts life in general as a seemingly meaningless existence, filled with hardships, apathy, arrogance, and exploitation. His solution to it is escapism – either through excessive drinking or ceaseless writing. Furthermore, some critics argue that even the rowdy lifestyle depicted in the novels may not be a protest against social norms or an expression of a hyper-masculine lifestyle, but a reflection of the real-life conditions of Bukowski's time (Poynter, 2015: 20). Bukowski also depicts exploited people, who do not comprehend that they are exploited: in *Factotum*, as Giovanni di Stefano (2017: 277) points out, Chinaski's co-workers in the numerous factories, plants, and warehouses are so scarcely described and detailed that it is hard to distinguish them from the general public as individuals – this depiction is not only of their physical appearance, but is also "oriented toward a deeper reflection about how much a working activity leads people to be invisible and not distinguishable from one another"(Ibid.). Bukowski attempted to counteract the dehumanizing influence of manual labor by avoiding work as much as possible, living off incredibly small sums of money for months, while also engaging himself with literature, whether reading or writing. Later in his life, once his literary career had begun properly, Bukowski's depiction of exploited workers in *Post Office* and *Factotum*, paired with the anti-work ethic expressed through the fictional Henry Chinaski has made him a choice for Marxist analysis (see Poynter 2015).

Another distinctive feature of Bukowski's fiction is his urban setting. Primarily, his novels are set in Los Angeles – a city Charles Bukowski grew up and lived most his life in -, with the exception of *Factotum*, a novel based on Bukowski's life and attempts to find and maintain a job in the 1940s, which features his wanderings throughout several cities in the United States: New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Atlanta, and New Orleans (Brosseau, 2020). His focus on the streets of Los Angeles, particularly those of lower-income neighborhoods of Southern Los Angeles, are the places Bukowski is most familiar with and the places he is most deeply connected with (Wennersten, 1974: 38-39) (Brosseau, 2020: 79). Consequently, the urban setting is approached from a microscopic level, where the daily struggles take the forefront, while the common idea of the city as a place of opportunity and success is brought into question. However, Bukowski's critique of city life does not transform to praise of nature – natural settings do not appear in Bukowski's prose at all. The narrator, just like the author himself, spends his days exclusively in urban settings, mostly in bars, racetracks, or at home – whether it be in a rental room in his earlier novels, or his own house in *Hollywood*.

Although Bukowski never expressed any association with literary movements, he is sometimes classified as part of the Beatnik movement or as a dirty realist (Newman, 2018; Dobozy, 2001). The label of a Beat is mainly due to their stylistic similarities and ideas on life: their poetry is marked by "openness of language and experience [...], the emphasis on nonconformity and its difficulties, the frank portrayal of drug and alcohol use, the taking of menial jobs to survive" (Friedman, 2001: 132). Furthermore, even though Bukowski is several years older than the Beats, they lived through and were formed by the same events, such as The Great Depression and World War 2 (Ibid., 130). However, Charles Bukowski, unlike the Beats, did not receive a university education and his writing was not guided by a predetermined set of ideas on how literature should be written. Chronologically, their literary timelines did not overlap: the Beats were primarily active in the 1950s, while Bukowski's literary career truly began in the mid-1960s. Additionally, the Beats were middle-class writers, who traveled the U.S. in search of minority figures they could depict and glorify in their stories in order to rebel against the conformity of society. Most importantly, Bukowski denied any affiliation with the Beats, even actively disliking some of them (Rippin, 2009: 403). On the other hand, Bukowski was still titled as *King of the Beatniks* in major newspapers after his death (Poynter, 2015: 27). His disdain for the Beatnik movement may be due to his idea of writing from personal experience, thus he may have seen Beatnik literature as dishonest. In regard to the label of dirty realism, Bukowski fits the definition well: he often wrote about 'incidents of impoverished life among blue-collar workers [...] in a bare, unsensational style' (Baldick, 2001: 68) and he also wrote "strange stories: unadorned, unfurnished, low-rent tragedies" (Bufford 1993: 4). However, dirty

realism was not a movement, but rather a label attached to writers post-factum. Furthermore, dirty realism, as formulated by Bill Bufford is focused more on small-town life in United States, with an emphasis on writing stories about " people who watch day-time television, read cheap romances or listen to country and western music" (Ibid., 4).

In *Hollywood*, Charles Bukowski fictionalizes his personal experiences of writing a screenplay for a Hollywood production, *Barfly* – a movie about his past self. The narrative is presented in the first person, through the eyes of Henry Chinaski – a recurring protagonist in Charles Bukowski's fiction, who is a thinly veiled, fictionalized version of Charles Bukowski and is often conflated with the real-life model. Set in Los Angeles, the novel depicts frugal producers, trying to squeeze out a profit; impassioned directors and artists, who title themselves as geniuses; financial advisors, who try to trick artists out of their possessions. Covering the events between 1979, the year Bukowski wrote the screenplay, and 1987, the year the movie was released, the novel fictionalizes the difficulties Bukowski and Barbet Schroeder, the producer, overcame to produce the movie. Even though the novel departs from his previous works, it remains on par in terms of stylistics: irony and sarcasm remain as the primary literary devices; description is limited, while dialogues are used to build up the story; the narrator's observations on his surroundings help frame his view on people and society.

The novel remains in print to this day, yet its popularity does not translate to attention from critics and the academia, which is true to his other novels as well. The lack of critical attention to *Hollywood* may be due to several reasons. First of all, Bukowski and his writings were palpably more appealing to the media and readers in Europe, yet scholarly attention to his works usually comes from North American scholars. Additionally, critical attention would have to deal with very autobiographical works – it is difficult to distinguish the fictional from the real, which may discourage literary scholars as well, because it may seem their analysis is not of a literary creation, but of a life of the writer.

Moreover, his label of being a vulgar, obscene misogynist may discourage scholars from extending their interest towards his works. *Hollywood* – the last novel published while Bukowski was still alive - lacks critical attention, because after his death, Bukowski's works received even less critical attention. Additionally, when the novel was written, Bukowski's direct and authentic, even coarse, approach to literature was no longer a novelty, but a staple of his writing and a relic of the past in literature – thus, it may have appeared to some, that there is nothing new that could be additionally observed in this novel.

However, *Hollywood* should be approached from a critical perspective in order to understand the writer's thematic choices and the way he constructs the character of Henry Chinaski and, through Chinaski, forms the readers' opinion about himself. The author's nihilistic stance and the image of a social outsider combined with his newfound monetary success and popularity creates an interesting narrative, which satirizes the affluent in American society and reveals how Bukowski positions himself in society and the literary world. This BA paper aims to analyze the often ambiguous boundary between autobiography and fiction in autobiographical novels and how it is communicated to the readers. Furthermore, the BA paper will also analyze the individualistic perspective of the narrator, the author and how literature may serve as a tool to position oneself in society. The novel will be analyzed through the lens of Philippe Lejeune's (1989) autobiographical criticism and Michael Angrosino's (1989) framework of working with autobiographical materials for cultural research.

2. Theoretical Approaches to Autobiographical Materials

2.1. Philippe Lejeune's Autobiographical Criticism

It must be noted that Lejeune's theory of autobiography is based on reader-response theory, so the primary focus of it is the interaction between the author and the reader: how does the author establish that the text is an autobiography; how do the readers infer that information from the text; what, in Lejeune's terms, contract or pact is established between the author and the reader. Lejeune even goes as far as to claim that autobiography "is a mode of reading as much as it is a type of writing […]" (Lejeune, 1989: 30).

In his book *On Autobiography* (1989), Philippe Lejeune provides a definition of autobiography and, by examining how it is similar to and different from biography and the autobiographical novel, discusses the boundaries between autobiography and autobiographical fiction. Lejeune provides a definition of autobiography: a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Ibid., 4). However, it is pointed out that these criteria are not the only possible aspects of autobiography, as the "subject muse be *primarily* individual life, the genesis of the personality; but the chronicle and social or political history can also be part of the narrative" (Ibid., 5). Furthermore, the text may not be exclusively a narrative, but also a discourse and the perspective can deal with not only the past, but the author-narrator at the moment of writing (Ibid.). So, this definition is not restrictive, as it reflects the varied nature of autobiography – a deeply subjective genre of writing not only in its story, but also in its form – and implies a broader spectrum of forms and themes. Nonetheless, Lejeune points out two key criteria that are essential for a text to be an autobiography: "the author (whose name refers to a real person) and the narrator are identical [and] the narrator and the principal character are identical[…]" (Ibid., 4-5) – or, simply put, the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be the same person. By analyzing how the author establishes the identity (identicalness) between the author, narrator, and the protagonist to the reader, Lejeune categorizes personal narratives into biographies, autobiographies, and autobiographical fiction. So, the primary question is on what grounds this identity is established.

To begin with, autobiographies are often marked by autodiegetic narration (Ibid., 5) – narration in the first person, when the narrator is the primary character of the story (Genette 1983: 245) - , so the first-person pronoun *I* naturally appears to be a signal. However, this signal is far from

absolute: there are autobiographies written in the third person – this distancing may be an expression of pride or humility; and segments of certain autobiographies are written in the second person, usually to signal the difference between the author-narrator of the past and of the present (Lejeune, 1989: 6-7) – for example, I, the narrator, address my past self and tell him how his choices will impact his future – my present. While the second-person narration is used episodically by the narrator as a tool to address one's past self, while still signifying the author-narrator-protagonist quite clearly, understanding the third-person autobiography expands the understanding of the distinction between the pronoun and what the pronoun refers to. Autobiography in the third person highlights the fact that the narrator can be a character, even if the narrator is only implicit. However, in this case, this is established not through pronouns, but through an indirect equation: the author is the narrator, and the author is a character, thus the narrator is a character in the narrative (Ibid.). These different modes of narration reveal that the type of narration used is not the primary marker of an autobiography and, at the same time, reveal that grammatical person is a problematic point of reference at best. Furthermore, the grammatical person pronouns are context specific. Lejeune primarily focuses on the first-person pronoun "I" to discuss this problematic reference pronouns provide. Firstly, the I refers to the speaker only in the act of enunciation (when the person is speaking) and we identify the person as the I because he is speaking (Ibid., 9). Secondly, first person pronouns "mark the identity of the subject of the enunciation and of the subject of the utterance" (Ibid.). However, as Lejeune points out, this identification is only possible in speech, as extratextual context – primarily, being able to see and hear who is talking – enables identification (Ibid., 9-10). So, the use of personal pronoun I, much like the use grammatical person in general, is far too ambiguous and context-dependent to be the denoting factor. Thus, grammatical person and pronouns are not the signal of identity for the reader.

Lejeune proposes a solution to this conundrum: the indicators of the text being an autobiography are proper nouns - names. In his words, "it is in the proper name that person and discourse are linked even before being joined in the first person" (Ibid., 11) - any ambiguity about the referent of the pronoun is cleared up as soon as it is replaced by a proper name. The subject of enunciation of written texts is revealed by the proper name on the cover of the book (Ibid.) – through this simple convention the reader is able to understand who is responsible for the text and, in the case of autobiography, who is the real, physical person the *I* in the text refers to. Thus, "autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author) supposes that there is *identity of name* between the author […], the narrator of the story, and the character who is being talked about" (Ibid., 12). So, the proper noun is what grounds the existence of the subject of enunciation – even if we do not know the person the proper noun refers to, the fact the name is

being used implies to us that such a person exists. Additionally, this existence is supported further by other, non-autobiographical texts by the same person, if such exist (Ibid., 11-12). In Lejeune's terminology, establishing this identity in the text is called the autobiographical pact (Ibid., 14). This identity of name denotes all genres of personal literature, such as the journal, self-portrait, etc. (Ibid., 12). Although two problematic instances of identity of name arise: that of the pseudonym and of the fictitious name in the text. However, to Lejeune, these instances have straightforward answers. Firstly, the pseudonym – "a name that is different from the one found in vital statistics, which a real person uses in order to *publish* all or part of his writings" (Ibid.) – still denotes the author, but it is a second name, not a false name. Furthermore, pseudonyms are usually not used for autobiographies and are rarely mysteries in literature, as the authors usually explain the origins of their pseudonyms and not hide behind them (Ibid.). So, the "pseudonym is simply a differentiation, a division of the name, which changes nothing in the identity" (Ibid.). However, if the in-text narrator-protagonist has a name that is different from the author's – thus, a fictitious name -, the text is no longer an autobiography, but autobiographical fiction (Ibid., 12-13). Even if the in-text narrator-protagonist matches the out-of-text author, the text is still autobiographical fiction, as this is a question of resemblance at the level of utterance - what is being said - and not of identity on the level of enunciation - who is saying it (Ibid., 13). To Lejeune, all fictional texts in which the reader may suspect an identity of author and protagonist, but the author has denied or not affirmed this, are autobiographical texts, not autobiographies. Lejeune's criterion for discerning autobiography from autobiographical texts is absolute, much like the relationship of identity of the author, the narrator, and the protagonist – either they are the same or they are not, with no ambiguity in between. Resemblance, however, is a relationship of degree – the narrator-protagonist may resemble the author more or less and that is subject to debate (Ibid.). In short, relying on the proper names instead of grammatical pronouns is a concrete marker of the text being an autobiography – if the names of the author and the narrator-protagonist match – or a fictional novel – if the names do not match.

So, the autobiographical pact is established on the identity of name between the author, the narrator, and the protagonist. Lejeune denotes an implicit and an explicit way to establish this identity. To begin with, this may be established implicitly: by signaling to the reader that the text is an autobiography by the title of the book, such as *Story of My Life*, *Autobiography*, etc.; or by an initial section of the book, where the narrator-protagonist establishes that he and the author are one and the same (Ibid., 14). Secondly, this identity may be established explicitly by using the name of the author inside the text, thus indicating to the reader that he is reading the autobiography of the author (Ibid.). In order to establish the autobiographical pact, at least one

of these methods must be used, although it is common that it is established implicitly – in the title of the book or the introduction – and explicitly – via the use of the author's name as the name of the narrator-protagonist – at the same time (Ibid.). Contrastingly, Lejeune denotes the fictional pact, which would be established vice versa: explicitly, by a practice of nonidentity – the name of the narrator-protagonist does not match the name of the author – and/or by an implicit affirmation of fictitiousness – by the subtitle of novel on the cover of the book (Ibid., 14-15). Lejeune also considers possible exemptions to his definition: an autobiography being titled a novel, a book titled an autobiography using a fictitious name for the narrator-protagonist, or an autobiography with an anonymous author (Ibid., 18-19). However, these problematic cases are solved by the reader. Firstly, the issue of an autobiography being titled a novel would usually be the fault of the publisher, rather than be the decision of the author, and, if identity of name is established, the reader would be quick to pick up on the mistake (Ibid., 19). Secondly, a fictitious name of the narrator-protagonist of an autobiography would confuse the reader as it claims to contradicting pacts at the same time, so it would be neither fully an autobiography, nor fully a novel – the reader could read it as one or the other, but never be sure of its validity (Ibid). Lastly, in the case of an anonymous author, the reader would either find a name of the narrator-protagonist in the text and, by using historical information, would confirm or deny the autobiographical pact, thus discerning what the text is, or, if no name is given in the text, would have to decide for himself, but never be sure if the text is an autobiography or a piece of fiction (Ibid.). In general, Lejeune believes in the reader's ability to use the information in the book to identify what the text is: an autobiography, a piece of fiction (autobiographical or not), or something that is trying to be both.

While Lejeune analyzed identity by comparing autobiography and autobiographical fiction, the relationship of resemblance between the out-of-text reality and the in-text depiction of it is analyzed via comparison of autobiography and biography. In order to understand the difference between identity and resemblance, Lejeune introduces an additional extratextual referent – the model (Ibid., 22). The model is "the real that the utterance claims to *resemble*" (Ibid., 23) – for example, in the case of the protagonist in a biography, the model of the protagonist would be the real person the biography is about. This concept of the model is extremely important in autobiography and biography, as they are referential genres – their aim is not the effect of the real, but the image of the real (Ibid., 22). In Lejeune's contractual framework, this promise to truthfully refer to the real world is denoted as the referential pact (Ibid.). However, there lies a key difference between biography and autobiography on the level of resemblance to the real. In biography, the author is expected to be as truthful to reality as possible and submit the text to verification – to draw up the referential pact and keep to it. If the referential pact is not kept

and upon verification it is revealed that the biography is not truthful, it loses value and credibility. In autobiography, however, the referential pact goes together with the autobiographical pact, as the author-narrator-protagonist tells the story of his life, but the accuracy of resemblance is not essential (Ibid.). Due to the subjective nature of the autobiography, it provides a unique perspective: "the truth such as it appears to me, […] making allowances for lapses of memory, errors, involuntary distortions […]" (Ibid.). So, rather than being a deficiency, untruthfulness, whether on purpose or involuntary, provides unique value to the autobiography (Ibid., 23). As a referential text that refers to the past, the autobiography implies the question of resemblance between the protagonist of the narrative and the model upon which it is based, but this relationship is not the primary concern, as in biography. However, autobiography, with its potential inaccuracies and distortions, entails the effort by the author (thus, the narrator) to represent his relationship to the past and to represent the past as it was (Ibid., 25-26) – or, more exactly, the past as the author perceived it and remembers it. To Lejeune, even the instance of fraud – a completely fictitious retelling of one's life – provides autobiographical insights into the character of the author (Ibid., 26).

Lastly, Lejeune examines the idea that the novel is more truthful than the autobiography. The authors Lejeune denotes as upholding this idea are authors of fiction who had also written autobiographies (Ibid., 26-27). But Lejeune points out that these authors are not glorifying the novel as the more honest genre, but are indirectly signaling to their readers that the entirety of their written works should be read with an autobiographical dimension in mind: their works not only showcase the universals of human nature, but also the phantasms of the individual – of themselves (Ibid., 27). Thus, they expand the autobiographical pact not only to their autobiographies, but to the entirety of their works (Ibid.) to a certain degree. These texts then, are neither truly fiction, nor truly autobiographies – it is no longer one or the other, but one in relation to the other (Ibid.). Lejeune ascribes these texts to the autobiographical space – in this the reader is unable to definitively discern what in the text is fiction and what is autobiography.

It must be reiterated that the premise to this framework is not grounded on extratextual grounds or hermeneutical analysis, but on the concept of publication – so, on the level of the contract between the writer and the reader (Ibid., 29). Thus, codes of publication are being dealt with, which change and evolve over time and are not universal, immutable concepts (Ibid.). So, autobiography is not only a mode of writing, but also a mode of reading (Ibid., 30) – a contract between the writer- who promises to retell the story of his life in a way only he can - and the reader – who, upon seeing the signs of that promise, chooses to read it as such.

2.2. Michael Angrosino's Life-Story Research

The use of various biographical and autobiographical material in ethnographic research was discussed in Michael Angrosino's monograph *Documents of Interaction: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History in Social Science Perspective* (1989), which describes the potential use of life-writing materials, mostly focusing on autobiographies and other autobiographical material, in cultural research. In similar vein to Lejeune, Angrosino views autobiographies as documents of interaction between the author and the presupposed audience (1989: 6). Precisely, Angrosino claims that in ethnographic research "autobiographical materials are most fruitfully treated as documents of interaction between a subject recounting his or her life experiences and an audience, either the researcher recording the story or the readers of the resulting text" (Ibid., 1). Although it may appear that Angrosino is describing ethnographic work only with autobiographies that the ethnographer has recorded and written down from an oral retelling of the respondent, his proposed definition for an autobiography clarifies this assumption: "autobiography will pertain to the narrative account of a person's life that he or she has personally written or otherwise recorded" (Ibid., 3) – thus, Angrosino discusses any kind of autobiographical narratives, even fictionalized, as material for ethnographic research.

In order to provide more clarity, the terms used when referring to (auto)biographical narratives will be defined in Angrosino's terms: biography is "the narrative account of one person's life as written or otherwise recorded by another, reconstructed mainly, though not exclusively, from record and archives (Ibid., 3); autobiography, conversely, is the narrative account of one's life written down or recorded otherwise by themselves (Ibid.); life history refers to the story of one person's life retold to a researcher, usually focusing on certain key parts of the person's life (Ibid.); life story implies that the narrative account tells the entire story of a person's life (Ibid.); and personal narrative will be used as an umbrella term for any autobiographical narrative, including autobiography, life history, and life story (Ibid.).

Biographical materials were used as resources for historical, sociological, and anthropological research since the 19th century (Ibid., 13). In the 20th century, life stories and life were used extensively by researchers in Europe and the United States (Ibid.). However, European and American researchers used biographical material differently: North American scholars studied individual life stories "as a sociohistorical document, complete and revealing in its own right" (Ibid.), while European scholars focused on many collected accounts to "construct an image of

society as a whole" (Ibid., 14). These distinct approaches were shaped by academic and social undercurrents. European researchers focused on amassing a collection of narratives to provide an image of society or nation as whole – these national endeavors were also galvanized by nationalistic movements and ideas of national unity in European countries, especially those establishing independence from empires (Ibid.). On the other hand, In American academia, anthropologists and ethnographers were content to focus on an extraordinary individual's life and analyze it as if he were representative of the whole culture and this individualistic approach was aided by the rising emphasis on psychology in American academia overall (Ibid., 14-15).

The usage and interpretation of autobiographies, however, was complicated. At first, autobiographies were treated as self-written biographies – thus, they were taken as factual, objective accounts of the author's life and the primary concern of using autobiographies was their historical verification (Ibid., 5). However, since information in autobiographies may not be strictly historical, a more flexible canon of analysis had to be developed (Ibid., 6) – a canon that does not merely focus on autobiographies as a source of historical facts, but as a source of insight into the author's view of himself and a revelation of how they construct their self-image in a society. The ability of an autobiography to provide unique insight into a life of an individual allowed it to become a focal point of various studies that use personal experience as the focal point of research, such as Afro-American studies, women's studies, etc. (Ibid.). For example, the growth of Afro-American studies was driven by autobiographical research, as major black writers, such as Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, entered the literary world with their autobiographies (Ibid.). To Angrosino, autobiographies are "emanations of individuals and a reflection of their will to reveal and share part of their selves" (Ibid.), but the part they reveal is highly deliberate (Ibid.). The author chooses how to paint the image of themselves and the sociohistorical particulars of their lives – this deliberate selection reveals the author's views, whether philosophical, political, or personal (Ibid., 6-7). Contrastingly, biographers are not allowed such freedom to be selective and subjective in the writing of biographies of others (Ibid., 7). The autobiographer is allowed a less objective point of view (Ibid.) – and, much like in Lejeune's theoretical work, the factual inaccuracies or any distortions in such a narrative should not be disregarded, but studied, as they reveal the intentions of the author to construct an image of the self as they view it. Furthermore, this selectiveness and the ability to emphasize or ignore certain aspects of their lives or character serves an important function – to accentuate the individuality, the exceptional character of the author (Ibid., 7-8). The uniqueness of one's character is a driving factor of the autobiography, as it is "a record of individuality" (Ibid., 8). So, many social scientists have wrongly used autobiographies as a tool to draw general patterns of culture when they are better used to exemplify diversity and exceptionality in cultures (Ibid.).

However, the idea of every person's life being unique is a fallacy and it is the researcher's duty to find general patterns between individual lives (Ibid.). Angrosino proposes that the general patterns should be searched for not in the lives of autobiographers, but in the ways they convey their lives and ideas of self (Ibid., 8) – the form autobiographers choose to find common ground with the readers when providing the content of their life writing. He claims that even the most horrific individuals – such as Hitler – are able to connect with the readers of their autobiographies: they establish that connection by presenting their lives with the help of images common to their culture, history, and society (Ibid.). Essentially, "autobiographers create, in effect, metaphors of their selves by means of common literary devices" (Ibid., 9). This ability to share the unique self by choosing forms understandable by others indicates that the question of factual, historical accuracy should not be the primary concern in analysis of autobiographies – rather, researchers should focus on "the degree to which the autobiographer's chosen metaphors of self communicate to and link up with his or her intended audience" (Ibid.).

Thus, autobiographies rely on the author's creative capabilities more than it may appear at first glance. Angrosino notes that some researchers emphasize this creative, even fictional, aspect further: Renza (1980: 269 quoted in Angrosino, 1989: 10) claims that autobiography "transforms empirical facts into artifacts" and that transformation makes it into a certain type of fiction. Furthermore, other ethnographers ascribe to this view: one describes an autobiography as "an artifact, a construct wrought from words" (Mandel, 1980: 49 quoted in Angrosino, 1989: 10); another likened the process of writing an autobiography to "an act of mythological rearranging" (Hankiss, 1981 quoted in Angrosino, 1989: 10). Therefore, when discussing Hankiss' proposed typology of mythological rearranging, Angrosino reiterates the idea "that the thematic structure of an autobiography is not accidental" (Angrosino, 1989: 11) and, most importantly, that the autobiographers choose a thematic structure and, with it, an image of self, that he believes will be most desirable to his implied audience (Ibid.).

In order to properly analyze autobiography, Angrosino proposes relying on the framework of interactionism, as defined by Ralph Turner. The focus would turn to interactions between individuals and the roles they create and take up while interacting (Ibid., 22). It is important to note, that in this framework, interactions between individuals means not only talking directly, but, also indirect communication, such as writing a text - the interaction in this case would be between the author and his implied reader, with the author assuming a role he infers to be the most acceptable to the reader. Furthermore, these cultural roles are vague, or even contradictory, thus researchers propose that "people do not merely "take" roles, as earlier theorists would have it; they make roles in the sense of defining their responses in specific

circumstances from among a large repertoire of potentially available behavioral choices" (Ibid.). Thus, these "roles" are not so much defined roles, but an abundance of communicative choices, which the person is free to pick from and then communicate to others (Ibid., 22-23). Importantly, this role-making is used to reinforce the self as a person imagines it, but the person is also flexible with the roles he takes up: for example, when a strong leader feels that his "role" does not resonate with the people he interacts with, he may choose to change his leadership-based role and adopt a more egalitarian character (Ibid., 23).

After having discussed the theoretical premises of analyzing autobiographical works regarding the distinction of autobiography and autobiographical fiction and the use of such works in cultural research, the subsequent section of this BA paper will focus on the analysis of Charles Bukowski's novel *Hollywood*, focusing on the resemblance between the novel's world and its narrator and the interplay of roles the author chose in real life and the role of his fictional counterpart.

3. *Hollywood* as Autobiographical Material

Much like in his previous books, *Hollywood* is fragmented into short chapters, which resemble a collection of short stories centered around a main theme and a singular protagonist. However, this novel is a departure from the usual focus on the lower socioeconomical spectrum, as the novel does not focus on the low-income blue collar worker life in the United States, since the protagonist-narrator, just like the author, has finally achieved moderate success and is finally a successful writer. However, moving up socioeconomically has not changed Chinaski's critical outlook towards the everyday life, but it did provide a glimpse into the life of the rich and the famous of Hollywood, most of whom are depicted as self-centered, egoistic people who are just as boring as the poor drunks Chinaski spent his youth with

3.1. Fictional Pact, Resemblance, and the Autobiographical Space in *Hollywood*

In regard to Lejeune's distinction between autobiography and autobiographical fiction, Charles Bukowski clearly establishes this text as a piece of autobiographical fiction. The fictional pact is established from the subtitle of *novel* at the beginning of the book, which is followed by a claim that *Hollywood* "is a work of fiction and any resemblance between the characters and persons living or dead is purely coincidental, etc." (Bukowski, 2007: IV). As Howard Sounes points out in the introduction to the book, the sarcastic "etc." in the affirmation of fictionality reveals that it is disingenuous, as Bukowski relied heavily on people he interacted with for characters, especially so in *Hollywood*, which deals with the extravagant personas of Hollywood celebrities, film producers and American writers (Ibid., VII-VIII). Furthermore, Sounes goes as far as to designate the novel as a fictionalized journal and a roman à clef, implying that the story is true, but is veiled by disguising the real-life people with fictionalized names (Ibid.). The roman à clef is usually written in order to avoid libel lawsuits or to depict scandalous material without the risk of consequences (Winslow, 1995: 57) – Bukowski might have also adopted the strategy of roman à clef to a certain extent in order to avoid personal quarrels with people he knew, as he had ruined several of his friendships by depicting his friends negatively, much to their discontent – for example, some of his lovers he depicted in his novel *Women* were offended by the thinly veiled fictionalization of their sex lives (Sounes, 2007: 185-186).

Furthermore, the fictional pact is bolstered by introducing the name of the narrator-protagonist Henry Chinaski – as the novel starts in medias res, there is no real introduction of the narrator-protagonist – he is simply addressed to as "Chinaski" by Paul Renoir, an exaggerated stereotype of a niche artist. Although the names are distinct, the fictional name is based on the author's real name, Henry Charles Bukowski. Bukowski's first name, Henry, which he disliked using as it reminded him of his father, with whom he had a terrible relationship (Sounes, 2007: 22), is used for his fictional counterpart's name, while the narrator-protagonist's last name may be an amalgamation of Bukowski's preferred name and his last name. Additionally, both Bukowski and Chinaski are often referred to as simply Hank, which adds further confusion. So, in Lejeune terms, the relationship between the author and the narrator-protagonist is of resemblance, not identity. Thus, the author is also the model for the narrator-protagonist and the analysis of the text would focus on how close the resemblance between the author-model and the narrator-protagonist is. It appears that the question of resemblance was not given appropriate attention, as the majority of readers and news writers assume that Bukowski is Chinaski, Chinaski is Bukowski, and everything that happens in the novels is almost identical to what happened in Bukowski's life. Furthermore, this idea of identity, particularly from avid fans of Bukowski, would develop into Bukowski mythologizing Chinaski – and, in the eyes of mistaken fans, himself – into a persona that is appealing to the most devoted Bukowski readers, whom he termed "Chinaski freaks" (Miles, 2009: 279) .This cycle of self-mythologizing would come full circle back to the author as his fans meet him and expect him to be identical to the Chinaski of the novels and short stories (Ibid., 291). However, the idea of identity is suggested and reinforced by Bukowski himself, who has claimed times that his writing comes from his own personal experiences (Miles, 2009: 61; Sounes, 2007: 7). In general, Chinaski is extremely similar to Bukowski: an excessively-drinking writer, who gambles at the racetrack, prefers solitude, listens to classical music, and is a nihilistic outcast in society. Due to these assumptions by most readers and even some scholars, which were never denied by the author, *Hollywood*, alongside with 4 other Chinaski-narrated novels, is in Lejeune's proposed autobiographical space – it is unclear whether the text is autobiography or fiction, as it is autobiography and fiction in relation to each other. This relationship can be made more tangible by analyzing the resemblance between the author-model and the narrator-protagonist. Additionally, the resemblances of other fictional characters in the novel and their real-life counterparts help understand the autobiographical space of the novel more clearly.

Although Lejeune focused on the details of autobiography and biography when discussing resemblance, it is also viable to analyze the resemblance between the author-model and the narrator-protagonist an autobiographical novel. Primarily, understanding the level of

resemblance in *Hollywood* would aid the reader in further understanding the difficulties of reading such texts that are in the ambiguous autobiographical space. In order to compare Bukowski and Chinaski, biographical materials about Charles Bukowski will be utilized in this section, particularly biographies by Howard Sounes and Barry Miles, who relied on Bukowski's correspondence, personal interviews with people close to Bukowski, and various other written accounts to reconstruct Bukowski's life and persona without the mythical character he often created around himself. Thus, the following part of the analysis will discuss Charles Bukowski's life during the creation of *Barfly*, which is the basis for *The Dance of Jim Beam* in the novel, and compare it to the experiences of the fictional Henry Chinaski in this novel.

To begin with, the narrator-protagonist of *Hollywood* closely mirrors the author in several key aspects: in literary success and overall popularity, socioeconomically, and relationship-wise. *Hollywood* was Bukowski's fifth novel, all of which were published by Black Sparrow Press – the publishing company established by John Martin, who provided Bukowski with financial backing in order to let Bukowski quit his job and write full-time. Bukowski had written and published over 15 poetry collections, several short story collections and had steadily grown in popularity since the mid-1960s. Furthermore, Bukowski had sold the movie rights to a collection of his short stories and one of his novels, *Factotum* (Miles, 2009: 259), which helped increase his popularity even further. In *Hollywood*, Chinaski's increased popularity can be seen on a more personal level – in his interactions with people from various artists and famous people. For example, a fictional Hollywood star Tom Pell was such a big fan that he offered to play Chinaski in the movie for a dollar: "Pell is crazy for the screenplay. He's crazy about your writing, he's read all your stuff." (Bukowski, 2007: 97). When the possibility of Pell staring in the movie faded due to Chinaski's insistence on having Jon Pinchot – based on Barbet Schroeder - as the director of the movie, another fictional Hollywood celebrity, Jack Bledsoe, expressed interest in the movie and wanted to meet Chinaski, but he did not "want to be overwhelmed by [Chinaski]" (Ibid., 103). Here, Bukowski creates an image of a now-well-liked writer, who had lived the majority of his life in miserable roaming houses, getting kicked out of rented rooms, fighting in alley brawls, and barely scraping through finally drawing enough interest in his persona that two Hollywood stars are vying for the chance to play him in a movie, while one of them seems to even be intimidated by him. Interestingly, this story is almost identical to the story of the real-life *Barfly* movie, when Sean Penn promised to play the role for a dollar and even brought his wife at the time, Madonna, to meet Bukowski, but eventually backed out due to Bukowski's insistence on having Barbet Schroeder direct the movie (Sounes, 2007: 208-210), which was followed by Mickey Rourke's eventual agreement to star in the role, even though he had much less interest in the screenplay and the subject matter, particularly the alcoholism

(Ibid., 212), than Jack Bledsoe did in Chinaski's screenplay. The potential reasons for such discrepancies will be discussed later on.

By the time Bukowski wrote the screenplay for *Barfly* in 1979, he was well-off financially: he had bought a house in a middle-class neighborhood in San Pedro, Los Angeles (Sounes, 2007: 181, 205); he had also bought a new car (Ibid., 190-191); and was earning more than a hundred thousand dollars yearly (Ibid., 202) – a major improvement for a man who had sorted mail for the post office for a few hundred dollars in order to survive. An identical improvement can be seen in Chinaski's life as well. Interestingly, while Bukowski used his financial improvement for comical effect in his poems, his fictional counterpart Chinaski expresses concerns about it: "Now, after decades, I was a writer with a desk. Yes, I felt the fear, the fear of becoming like *them*." (Bukowski, 2007: 61). This theme of becoming something Chinaski opposes recurs in the novel: after consulting with a tax consultant, Chinaski thinks to himself: "Are you becoming what you've always hated?" (Ibid., 41).

Lastly, Charles Bukowski settled down with his partner and future wife Linda Lee from 1977 onwards, excluding short break-ups (Sounes, 2007: 171). Linda Lee was 23 years younger than Bukowski (Miles, 2009: 241) and managed Bukowski's eating and drinking habits: made sure he was eating healthy, drank less and enticed him to exchange beer and hard liquor for wine (Miles, 2009: 243; Sounes, 2007: 171). In *Hollywood*, Chinaski's partner, Sarah also takes care of Chinaski's health and is particularly vigilant about his drinking, but not only due to his health: "We better lay off the hard stuff. […] You know how you get when you're drinking that." (Bukowski, 2007: 3). It might be argued that this may be an additional reason why Linda Lee enticed Bukowski to shift to drinking wine, as Bukowski's eagerness for using real-life incidents in fiction has been discussed already.

Interestingly, even though Chinaski appears to be satisfied with his life with Sarah, he also appears to be very nostalgic about his past, particularly of his drunken days with Jane, a woman he spent his days with. He is so reminiscent of her that he even admits that the screenplay was actually written about her (Ibid., 177) – or, precisely, about both of them, together, as during the descriptions of filming the movie, only two characters get detailed attention: Chinaski, the protagonist, and Jane, whom he calls his lady. First of all, this provides us with an insight into Chinaski's creative process – at the core, his creations are nostalgic and based on his personal experiences and relationships. This can also be said about Bukowski, as mentioned beforehand – an instance of close resemblance between the author-model and the narrator-protagonist on the level of the creative process. Secondly and more importantly, Jane serves as a concrete extratextual referent – Bukowski dated Jane Cooney Baker in his late twenties-early thirties,

first having met her in a bar, which he frequented (Miles, 2009: 93). They spent several years binge-drinking, fighting constantly, and moving from place to place together (Sounes, 2007: 29-35; Miles, 2005: 93-115). Even though their relationship was volatile and skewed Bukowski's opinion on women in general (Sounes, 2007: 32), Bukowski wrote to his friend in 1965 that he had loved her (Miles, 2009: 115) and dedicated his poetry book *The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills* to her. These experiences were also the material fueling the screenplay of *Barfly* – yet another instance of Bukowski relying on his experiences for artistic purposes. This further complicates the autobiographical space the novel is in, as Jane – one of the two protagonists of the real screenplay and the fictional screenplay – is in the novel on the basis of identity, not resemblance. Furthermore, Chinaski not only includes Jane in the screenplay, but vividly remembers her while watching the filming of certain scenes, which results in one of the most poetic episodes in this novel:

> 'I want some corn!' she [the actress playing Jane] screamed.
>
> I remembered Jane going up that hill while I was carrying the large sack of bottles. Only when she had screamed 'I want some corn' it had been as if she wanted the whole world back, the world that she had somehow missed out on or the world that had somehow passed her by. The corn was to be her reward, her revenge, her song.
>
> (Bukowski, 2007: 185)

If it is based on a true story, then Bukowski relived a nostalgic moment about his past love on the set of *Barfly* and put it into an autobiographical novel; if it is fictional, then Bukowski decided to depict his past love with a poetic passage, which entrenches her persona as he remembered her: mad, drunk, heart-wrenchingly desperate, and one-of-a-kind, as compared to the actress who plays her: "Then when Francine [the actress] began ripping at the ears [of the corn] I knew that it wasn't the same, that it could never be the same." (Ibid.). While Bukowski, as mentioned before, uses fictional names for the narrator-protagonist and the characters he interacts with, this is not necessarily the case with deceased people. As mentioned in the initial section of the analysis, Bukowski used fictional names for characters based on real people in order to avoid legal and personal consequences, but Jane, along with quite a few other dead people - particularly writers – occur in the text with unchanged names. The decision to not fictionalize the character of Jane may have been due to Bukowski's sentimentality towards his time with her: even though their time was stressful and volatile, he wrote some of the most

powerful poems about her after her death (Miles, 2009: 134). Additionally, it is possible that her death assured Bukowski that it is impossible to suffer personal or legal consequences for portraying her the way he remembered her. Lastly, Howard Sounes argues that by including Jane in this and two other novels without fictionalizing her Bukowski immortalized his love, who was bound to be forgotten (Bukowski, 2007: XV).

But the references to deceased writers, particularly those that were considered to be part of the literary canon, implies an attempt at the referential pact, particularly when Chinaski implies similarity with other famously heavy drinking American writers: "I had been preceded by some good drinkers. Eugene O'Neill, Faulkner, Hemingway, Jack London."(Ibid., 261). Furthermore, this passage implies a continuation of a tradition of heavy drinking writers, in which Chinaski participates. Particularly, Chinaski implies a direct correlation between drinking and good writing: "The booze loosened those typewriter keys, gave them some spark and gamble." (Ibid.). Lastly, to readers that conflate the narrator-protagonist with the author-model, this would imply that Bukowski himself is claiming to be a continuation of this trend. Bukowski also utilizes broader cultural references in *Hollywood*: in an episode with Jon-Luc Modard (based on Jean-Luc Godard), in which Chinaski satirizes the seemingly too often used label of genius he lists, William Shakespeare, Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, Mark Twain and several more "dullards" (Ibid., 28) as Geniuses whose writings "laid on you like a slab of cement" (Ibid.). Even though most scholars and readers would not take up such a critical stance, Chinaski seems to regard his opinion and feelings about literature as a benchmark for their value – this also positions Chinaski as a rebel against the literary canon.

Moreover, Bukowski further entrenches his novel in the ambiguous autobiographical space by using real locations not only on the city level, as the novel is set in Los Angeles, but on a street level as well, as parts of the novel are set in real locations, such as the awkward interaction with a potential producer of the screenplay in Musso's. Charles Bukowski frequented Musso & Frank Grill and was so liked there that the restaurant stocked a specific wine just for him and stopped stocking it after his death (Sounes, 2007: 242; Miles, 2005: 51). The fictional Chinaski reminisced about Musso's: "one of the nicest things about Musso's was that when I returned again, after fucking up, I was always greeted with warm smiles. So strange." (Bukowski, 2007: 18). Similarly, the bartender at Musso's had to kick Bukowski out several times, yet he remained a special customer (Sounes, 2007: 170). Furthermore, the Hollywood Park Racetrack is used in the same manner: Bukowski would visit it often throughout his life, even bringing his girlfriends there (Sounes, 2007: 34, 158, 170); and Chinaski " [had] been playing the horses for over 30 years" (Bukowski, 2007: 191) at the Hollywood Park Racetrack, which helped him to

escape the daily struggles, keep life simple and ground him into the reality of humanity: "The greed, the fear, the anger were all here" (Ibid., 221). Interestingly, Bukowski used his time observing people at the racetrack to fuel his writing, reiterating the idea of having to look at humanity in order to write that Chinaski does in the novel (Miles 2009: 288). This real-life setting is further reinforced by the way Charles Bukowski describes Los Angeles' locales - through the eyes of Chinaski Los Angeles is depicted as familiar, trivial, and ordinary; the locations Chinaski visits are given scant detail; and there is a distinct lack of precision in naming locations, as the readers are given street names and little else to guide them – as if the readers are familiar with the city to the extent that Bukowski and his fictional counterpart are (Brosseau, 2020: 76, 80, 83). This familiar, yet ambiguous geographical spacing, coupled with a few certain locations, which are not fictionalized, but referred to in their real names suggests a relationship of identity for the setting of the novel and real-life Los Angeles.

To summarize, Charles Bukowski affirms the fictional pact in *Hollywood* by establishing that the text is a fictional novel on the cover pages and by employing a fictional narrator-protagonist Henry Chinaski, who is a recurring protagonist of the majority of Bukowski's novels. However, Bukowski problematizes the fictionality of the novel to the reader by placing *Hollywood* in the autobiographical space, where the novel is both autobiographical and fictional. The autobiographical space of the novel is primarily signaled to the readers by providing an almost identical resemblance of the narrator-protagonist and the author-model. This resemblance is established on several levels: the character of Chinaski mirrors that of the author; the life of the protagonist, particularly his success in later years, which led to a better socioeconomical standing, also echoes that of Bukowski; the relationship and marriage to a younger woman who takes care of Chinaski's health is identical to that of Bukowski's as well. Furthermore, references to real people and locations strengthen the sense of the text being an autobiography: the character of Jane is an extratextual referent, which implies that the text is based on reality, rather than fiction; references to American writers are used to establish Chinaski as a successor to the likes of Hemingway or Faulkner, thus implying a sense of the real. Lastly, the autobiographical space of the novel is further problematized with broader cultural references and by using Los Angeles and certain Los Angeles' locations as a setting for the novel.

After having discussed the thin boundary between reality and fiction and the seeming identical resemblance between the author-model and the narrator-protagonist indicated to the reader by the author, the following part of the analysis will focus on how Charles Bukowski constructs the character of Henry Chinaski and, through him, shapes the public's perception of himself.

3.2. Self-Mythologizing Through Roles

As noted before, the creation of autobiographical material is a deliberate process, during which the author projects himself as a unique individual to the implied audience. The manner in which Bukowski mythologizes Chinaski and through him, himself, will be analyzed by employing the interactionalist concept of roles and the way they are communicated to the audience.

In the four preceding novels, Henry Chinaski takes up the role of the outsider in American society: he despises work, drinks excessively, acts recklessly, has ludicrous sexual encounters, and, ultimately, views life as a meaningless misery. However, in *Hollywood* Chinaski has become a successful writer who, instead of renting a run-down apartment in the lower-class neighborhoods of Los Angeles and drinking himself to death, buys a house, a brand new car, and is invited to participate in the life of Hollywood celebrities. The socioeconomic rise of the narrator-protagonist (and the author-model) seems to not change too much about Chinaski – even though now he is financially secure and frequents companies of artists, cinematographers, and writers, his attitude of not fitting in, criticizing society, and mocking self-centered people remain constant. In part, this continuity of character is predisposed by the expectations of Chinaski's fans: in the episode at the biker bar, Chinaski is recognized by several people in the bar, but as he leaves without causing a fight or drinking an unreasonable amount of alcohol, like the character of the previous novels would, one of his fans exclaims: "Chinaski, come on, stay and drink with us! Be a good guy! Be like your writing, Chinaski!" (Bukowski, 2007: 45). Even if this passage is pure fiction, the implication is evident: the people who read about Chinaski expect him to fulfill a role of the belligerent drunk who fights everyone. This instance echoes Angrosino's explanation of choosing roles that are acceptable to the audience: Chinaski assumes this role in his writings, but, as soon as it becomes evident that he does not fulfill that role with the bikers, they express their discontent with him, because Chinaski does not assume the role they expect of him.

However, Chinaski overall still lives up to the role of the critical outsider: he remains a heavy drinker and a gambler, he still maintains a critical, even antagonistic view of people, and remains an atypical writer. The primary practice that helps him maintain the role of the outsider is drinking, as he drinks at almost every social event he attends and uses drinking as fuel for his writing process– the character of a drunk is a role his readers expect him to be.

Primarily, drinking is depicted as the catalyst for social interactions. From the initial chapter, Chinaski is depicted as drinking, even opening a beer whilst picking out what drink to drink (Ibid., 3) – and then he decided to "bluff the screenplay and sit around Marina del Rey for months sucking up drinks" (Ibid., 4), because in *Hollywood*, discussing art presupposes drinking. Likewise, any celebration requires drinking as well: "We went on drinking, celebrating something" (Ibid., 41). Most importantly, Chinaski uses drinking as a way to ease the boredom of social interactions: during the meeting with Jean Paul Sanrah and Jon-Luc Modard all of the participants are drinking, but once Chinaski gets tired of Jon-Luc Modard's talking, he becomes practically unresponsive, just nodding to what Modard says and drinking excessive amounts of wine: "The drinks poured and Jon-Luc kept on talking. I'm sure that he said many astonishing things." (Ibid., 29). Similarly, at the movie wrap party, Chinaski is overwhelmed by the amount of social interaction and turns to excessive drinking and curt replies when he gets approached by a person who claims to have drank with him in the past, a female bartender who claims her girlfriend had been married to Chinaski, and a minor role actor in the movie who wants Chinaski to read his novel. However, it is clear that drinking does not help Chinaski socialize better, perhaps even renders him more asocial, as Chinaski points out himself: "[Sarah] knew if I went in [the kitchen] I would start in on sundry bottles and then start in on my way to being nasty" (Ibid., 4).

Moreover, *Hollywood* offers an insight into Chinaski's – and, through him, Bukowski's – writing process. Chinaski seems to write only under certain conditions: "… turn on the radio to a classical music station, light a cigarette or a cigar, open the bottle. The typer did the rest." (Ibid., 89). So, in order to be able to write, Chinaski must create a certain atmosphere for himself in which, seemingly, the writer has little agency. Furthermore, Chinaski hinders his own function by intoxicating himself, thus making writing even less of a mindful activity, but rather an act that is not entirely in his control. This mode of seemingly automatic writing led to Bukowski becoming a prolific writer of prose and poetry, yet it also resulted in the narrator being unable to write when he must write the screenplay – a type of writing that Chinaski had not done before. Thus, when the words do not come on their own, Chinaski has difficulties writing, no matter how prolific he may be. Additionally, the narrator requires solitude when writing, which may even be disturbed by the director of the movie Jon Pinchot staying in Chinaski's home. However, these inabilities are solved rather easily: the initial inability to write is resolved by Chinaski receiving payment for the screenplay, while the disturbance of writing by Jon is solved once Jon moves out. Lastly, Bukowski, through the character of Chinaski, suggests that to him writing and drinking are closely related: he establishes that connection in the episodes of the novels in which Chinaski is writing, which are all preceded by several drinks

and the drinks entail a successful writing session, as revealed in a passage where Chinaski experiences writer's block and is baffled by it: "In decades, I had never had a writer's block. Writing had always been easy for me. The words just rolled out as I drank and listened to the radio." (Ibid., 75). This connection is reiterated in the screenplay he writes about his past self - "a young man who wanted to write and drink" (Ibid., 82), as if those two things are interconnected. This seamless writing is in part self-mythologizing through Chinaski - as some readers would understand that Bukowski is such a writer, that he never experiences difficulties when writing – as with his first novel, *Post Office*, which he wrote in 20 days (Miles, 2009: 229), even though he has struggled with novels in the past: Bukowski struggled to write his second novel, *Factotum*, having to take out several chapters because they were so similar to his short stories (Ibid., 229-230); writing *Ham on Rye* was also difficult, as Bukowski rewrote sections of the novel he found lacking "verve or energy" (Ibid., 270). So, by detailing the writing practices of Chinaski to the readers, Bukowski implies the revelation of his own writing practices, which, even if revealed, remain indefinite, as the act of writing is depicted as an activity in which Chinaski participates in body, but not in mind – the body creates a required atmosphere by drinking, smoking, turning on the classical radio station, but the writing itself is seemingly done by the typer with Chinaski simply reliving his past in the process. Furthermore, Bukowski implies that to Chinaski – and through him, Bukowski - writing is a seamless process that requires little effort or mindful participation by the writer and if, for the first time, difficulties arise, they can be solved in a matter of minutes. This reinforces the role of Chinaski – and Bukowski – as a writer and, paired with the excessive drinking during his writing sessions, a poet of the drunk low-life.

Furthermore, the character of Henry Chinaski is mythologized further through his interactions with other people. This is done on two levels: through direct interaction with famous stars and indirectly through the things Chinaski experiences with the people he interacts with. First of all, while in previous novels Chinaski primarily met people from the lowest socioeconomical standing, in *Hollywood*, Chinaski meets and satirizes celebrities, writers, and movie producers. The already discussed episodes of Hollywood writers meeting Chinaski in order to play him in the movie and the discrepancy between the real story of Bukowski meeting Sean Penn and Mickey Rourke helps understand selective self-mythologization better. As mentioned before, the Tom Pell-Sean Penn story is almost identical, but by fictionalizing his experiences with Mickey Rourke, who had never read Bukowski's work and was not very interested in the screenplay due to the heavy alcoholism in the story (Sounes, 2007: 212), Bukowski mythologizes Chinaski and himself as a major cultural icon of Los Angeles and opts out of depicting the conflicting perception of himself as a writer who is both so interesting to draw the

interest of Sean Penn, but also put off the likes of Mickey Rourke. Moreover, interactions with other representatives of the mainstream culture also build the image of Chinaski as a cultural icon. Jon Pinchot expresses confidence that Chinaski's screenplay will be good even before he starts writing it and potential backers show up soon, with one producer telling Chinaski he wants to finance his movie and that "You've got a marvelous sense of dialogue. I've read your work: *very* filmatic!" (Bukowski, 2007: 19). The potential backers and the praise Chinaski receives from them builds the image of a successful writer even further. If, however, Chinaski does not receive praise from artists, it is usually heavily satirized stereotypes of egotistical, self-proclaimed geniuses, like Paul Renoir, who exclaims that Chinaski deserves "a *certain* place" (Ibid., 5) in the literary world. Lastly, Bukowski further entrenches Chinaski as an outsider in Hollywood and as a unique individual by the seemingly insane things he has seen and retells to the readers. While the idea that life in Hollywood is atypical is being built throughout the story, certain passages reinforce that idea heavily, such as the episode where Jon Pinchot threatens to cut off his finger if Firepower, the company who owns the rights to the movie, does not sign a release form. The tense meeting between the company's lawyer, Chinaski, and Jon Pinchot with an electric saw in hand is a story that Bukowski uses to emphasize the seeming insanity of overcoming the hurdles to produce a movie. Even though Chinaski is merely a spectator in this ordeal, Sounes notes that it is enough to accentuate the idea that "nothing in his past life, mad though that had sometimes been, compared to the world of movies" (Ibid., XIII). Interestingly, Barbet Schroeder, the prototype of Jon Pinchot, actually threatened the head of Canon Films that he will cut his finger off in his offices unless they continue the production of *Barfly*, which was stopped due to lack of funds (Sounes, 2007: 212).

Lastly, Bukowski strengthens the role of Chinaski as an outcast through his memories. The two primary catalysts for memories in *Hollywood* are writing and watching the filming of the screenplay – both of these activities are heavily autobiographical to Chinaski, as he relies on personal experience for writing the screenplay and then the experiences are relived once again when that autobiographical material is acted out on set. There is emphasis on reliving memories when writing the screenplay, as Chinaski begins the screenplay and notes that "That bar came back to me. I remembered…" (Bukowski, 2007: 32) followed by a very specific description of the experience of a non-descript bar. The only distinct detail about that bar is "how you could smell the urinal from wherever you sat" (Ibid.) and the excessive amount of drinking it was required to endure the smell. Through this bar Bukowski articulates the low-life outsider status of Chinaski in his youth and then contrasts it to the economical success of Chinaski of the present: "Within an hour I was 45 thousand dollars richer. 30 years of starvation and rejection were starting to kick in." (Ibid., 34). In a following writing episode, memory is implied by

admitting that Chinaski is writing the screenplay about his younger self, reiterating that in the process of writing memories return to Chinaski and by revealing why Chinaski chose such a topic: "How all this could become a screenplay, I didn't know. I only knew that it was the only part of my life I hadn't written much about." (Ibid., 82) – once again reiterating the idea of writing from and about personal experience. The focus of his recollections are barfights with the bartender and drinking alongside the "lost souls that lived in and off bars, daily, nightly and forever, until they died" (Ibid., 83). Once again, Bukowski positions his fictional counterpart as an outcast, frequenting places where fights are expected and the people at the bottom of society end their days in. However, even in that bar Chinaski positions himself as an outcast - he even states "I was the outsider" (Ibid., 82) and claims that bar fights were "all play-acting with me" (Ibid.), because he did not feel anger while fighting – "It mattered and it didn't" (Ibid.).

Chinaski also relives his past while watching the filming of the movie. In the bar which is used as a set for the movie, Chinaski expresses nostalgia about his youth, when he was "drinking and fighting and playing with words."(Ibid., 154). Once again, this segment is used to provide a mythologized view of the outsider drunken poet: "What mattered was drinking and sitting at the [typing] machine. […] I starved so I could have time to write" (Ibid.). As discussed before, the close resemblance between the real life of Charles Bukowski and the fictionalized version of it in *Hollywood*, has led a significant portion of his readers to assume that Chinaski is Bukowski. So, to them, these passages imply that Charles Bukowski was a complete outsider in society: down economically so much that he starved, yet choosing to write instead of working; spending his days drinking excessively in run-down bars, etc. However, in reality Bukowski was careful with his money, saving up most of it in a savings account, as he was always worried about his finances and wanted to have a financial safety net (Miles, 2009: 194; Sounes 2007: 45).

4. Conclusions

Charles Bukowski's *Hollywood* is a piece of autobiographical fiction that is deceptive in its closeness to reality. Even though, by Philippe Lejeune's definition, the novel cannot be considered an autobiography, the details and near-perfect resemblances between the real models and the fictional characters heavily signify to casual readers that the amount of fictionalization is minimal. Paired with the author's various remarks about the autobiographical nature of his works, it is understandable why such a mistake can be made. Lastly, the identity of geographical locales and references to real writers imply a level of reality to the novel, which further problematizes the distinction between reality and fiction. However, the fictional aspects of the novel are key, as they help inscribe Chinaski and, through him, Bukowski into society as a solitary outcast who is heavily critical of the society around him. Moreover, the selection of material for the novel also serves to further entrench the idea of the Chinaski and Bukowski as an outcast, yet a person who is famous enough to be the focal star of a Hollywood movie. Specifically, the images of heavy drinking both in the past and the present and the image of a writer going against the literary establishment help build the mythical character of the narrator. Furthermore, the narrator's interactions with people in Los Angeles not only bolster the character, but create an idea of life and work in Hollywood as a collection of stories, each crazier than the one before.

Bilbiography

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Summary in Lithuanian

"Geriu, lošiu, rašau": alkoholizmas ir autobiografinė kūryba Charleso Bukowskio romane "Holivudas"

Šiame bakalauro darbe nagrinėjama riba tarp autobiografijos ir autobiografinės fikcijos Charleso Bukowskio romane "Holivudas". Romanas paremtas tikrais Charleso Bukowskio išgyvenimais, patirtais kuriant filmą "Barfly", tačiau romano naratyvas pateikiamas fikcionalaus Henrio Chinaskio akimis – kritikuojami savimylos menininkai, gobšūs kino industrijos atstovai ir tuo pačiu, mitologizuojamas paties pasakotojo paveikslas. Pirmoje analizės dalyje lyginamos fikcionalaus pasakotojo ir kūrinio autoriaus gyvenimo detalės ir pagrindiniai bruožai, kiti fikcionalūs veikėjai ir realūs jų prototipai bei aptariama kūrinio vieta – Los Andželas. Dėl labai glaudaus pasakotojo ir autoriaus bei kitų fikcinių veikėjų ir jų prototipų panašumo ir dėl pasirinktos romano vietos tikroviškumo daroma prielaida, kad autorius kūrinį fikcionalizuoja minimaliai, skaitytojamas pateikdamas autobiografišką kūrinį. Antroje kūrinio dalyje analizuojama kaip Charlesas Bukowskis konstruoja Henrio Chinaskio paveikslą kūrinyje: pasitelkdamas alkoholiko, rašančio naktimis įvaizdį, Bukowskis kuria prieš srovę einančio rašytojo paveikslą - aprašydamas Chinaskio kontaktą su įvairiais kultūriniais veikėjais mitologizuoja Chinaskį kaip įtakingą poetą; pasitelkiant kritišką požiūrį į kitus kuriamas nepritapėlio įvaizdis. Nors kūrinys remiasi realiais įvykiais, šių įvykių perteikimas ir parinkimas padeda kurti išpūstą, netgi mitologinį Henrio Chinaskio ir dėl neįtikėtino panašumo, paties autoriaus įvaizdį.