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# A Postmodern Criticism of the Enlightenment: Anthropocene Disorder and Nihilistic Anti-humanism in Charles Bukowski's *Pulp*

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**Abstract.** The anti-detective novel, *Pulp*, the last book Charles Bukowski wrote, is among his most significant works. This article illustrates Bukowski's hostility towards the Enlightenment and modernism. Through a postmodern outlook, Bukowski parodies the rationality of the Enlightenment by depicting a world that is replete with irrationality and meaninglessness. The narrative involves a drunk detective who takes cases that are highly peculiar and irrational. Bukowski's detective constantly finds himself in irrational and meaningless conversations and in the author's attempt to portray the miserable condition of postmodern man. Moreover, from an ecocritical perspective, this article asserts that Bukowski is a nihilistic anti-humanist who fails to sympathize with humanity and finds no solution for the environmental collapse that is caused by the disorder in the Anthropocene. The only response to the parasitic nature of humanity is hatred and disgust for both himself and his species. As a result of his despair with the cause of humanity and anthropocentrism, Bukowski's Detective Belane is enraged with humans and frequently causes violent scenes.

**Keywords:** Charles Bukowski, *Pulp*, nature, postmodern condition, anthropocentrism

## Introduction

Recent scholarship on Charles Bukowski's works is frequently centred around the style, language, and portrayal of female characters, particularly in his novels. On his route from anonymity to becoming "one of the best authors" of dirty realism (Debritto 2011, 309), Charles Bukowski established a firm ground opposing human rationality in many of his works. These texts are usually associated with "boredom and absurdity, meaninglessness and unproductivity" (Notash and Bordbari 2018,

132), and the failure of humans to define themselves within the predominant social and cultural structure of their societies. Considering Bukowski as merely "an underground author who championed only alternative periodicals" (Debritto 2012, 326) mainly results from his vulgar language and content while failing to account for his fame in the 1990s and onward. Bukowski's texts have also been labelled as misogynistic works in which female characters are consistently objectified. The popular diatribe against Bukowski's works tends to castigate both his style of writing and characterization. Yet, many of Bukowski's poems and novels are "drawn directly from his own experience and filtered through his sardonic, cynical wit" (Kane 2004, 413). Arguably, at the centre of the majority of his works, there lies constant anxiety in relation to the condition of humans. Thus, Bukowski's misanthropy stems from his pessimistic views on humanity and man's condition.

Published shortly after Bukowski's death of leukaemia in 1994, *Pulp* is the last work of fiction Bukowski penned; by then, Bukowski "had attained a recognized measure of success" (Madigan 1996, 449), and his major works had been canonized. The story circles around an ineffectual detective who fails to solve his cases, lacks morale, and is entirely ignorant of his surroundings, particularly the environment. Bukowski's anti-hero, Nicky Belane, represents the everyday encounter of postmodern man with a world that fails to correspond to any logic or reason, which used to be the means of understanding for man since the Enlightenment. As a sceptical school of thought, postmodernism came to oppose an established sense of identity, language, reality, and the condition of human existence. In fact, postmodernism "rejected many of the central tenets of modern western rationality" (Browne 2010, 79). Upon similar arguments, postmodern thinkers "presented the Enlightenment not as a common project of the advancement of knowledge, but as a vehicle of power" (Turnbull 2010, 6). Bukowski's *Pulp* can be considered postmodern fiction since it is entangled with specific elements of postmodern literature – for instance, impossible plots, dark humour, parody, and paranoia constantly appear in this anti-detective fiction.

As a postmodern metaphysical detective story, *Pulp* challenges the inaccessibility of truth and knowledge. The content and style diverge from the traditional detective fiction by distorting the logical order. The detective no longer represents "the instrument of pure logic" (Holquist 1971, 141); on the contrary, he/she is also bewildered, which stems from the chaotic disorder of his/her quest to find truth. By distancing itself from the everyday experience, "[p]ostmodernist writing, and the metaphysical detective story in particular, give us not familiarity but strangeness" (Marcus 2003, 250). The account of the cases that detectives encounter is illogical and eccentric. Additionally, the reliability of the narrator is sometimes at stake. Bukowski's *Pulp* is considered as an anti-detective novel rather than conventional detective fiction, in which the detective is "never able to unravel the conundrum, get to the bottom of the

mystery, and/or establish who is responsible for the crime or crimes" (Kravitz 2013, 45). In this sense, the whole genre parodies conventional detective fiction in which a series of clues are logically and chronologically anticipated. Unlike detective fiction, metaphysical detective stories imbibe mystery, chaos, bafflement, and uncertainty.

This article discusses Bukowski's *Pulp* as a criticism of the rational world and its reliability. Furthermore, it seeks to illustrate that the poor condition of human existence can be considered a fruit of the Enlightenment. Lastly, this article asserts that, in the context of Bukowski's *Pulp*, the Enlightenment's anthropocentric views can arguably be held accountable for the environmental disasters that are brought upon all species. Through a misanthropic view, Bukowski's novel indirectly celebrates deep ecology, which asserts that "anthropocentrism should be substituted by ecocentrism; a shift from Anthropos, the human, to eco, the Earth" (Montaño 2006, 181). This stems from, I argue, a hatred towards humans who have overpopulated the planet and are irrational, irresponsible, and violent beings. In this sense, his anti-hero, Belane, epitomizes postmodern man, who fails to make sense of the world around him; he is also irresponsible and violent, and although he seeks to find meaning and rationalize the world, he fails. Similar to several of his other novels, *Pulp* "is centred over [sic!] the second post-war period in the United States, in a moment and a crucial historical, sociocultural, and political context for people's lives" (Stefano 2017, 5). This is not a coincidence since the Second World War was arguably a turning point for the worse in human history, which contributed to the development of postmodern ideology. The dream of the Enlightenment to achieve a promising future was entirely ruined by the implications of the world wars.

A particular characteristic of Detective Belane, similar to the majority of anti-heroes in metaphysical detective fiction, is that he is an outsider; this characteristic is widely portrayed in most of Bukowski's works. Being an outsider is "being taken out of society or living an extreme alternative lifestyle with an inability or refusal to conform" (Clements 2021, 93). It appears that Bukowski's lifestyle was very similar, so the text is almost autobiographical in relation to this particular characteristic feature. Bukowski's anti-heroes represent people who fail to conform to rationality, which is entirely flawed and fails to correspond to the loneliness and meaninglessness of the postmodern man. His writings "commonly call that notion of knowability into question" (Swope 1998, 208). Analogously, the other characters in the novel "seemed lost in a bleak world which is incorrigibly characterized by misery, loneliness, and death" (Ebrahimi and Farahbakhsh 2020, 6). Portraying such characters, I argue, is rage towards the failure of rationality that the Enlightenment has offered humans. The characterization of Bukowski's *Pulp* questions the inherent power of rationality and human emancipation that was promoted by the Enlightenment. Both

Bukowski and his main characters were "plagued by self-doubt" (Baughan 2004, 67). Yet, arguably, this constant doubtfulness is an external factor, which brings man to the verge of absolute doubtfulness, rather than a psychological aspect of the author or his characters. In the following section, I demonstrate the postmodern perception of the Enlightenment in relation to the position of man and his relation to nature.

## A Postmodern Criticism of the Enlightenment: The Centrality of Man and the Otherness of Nature

The emergence of the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement centralized the position of man as a rational and intellectual being who was in charge of his surroundings, himself, and nature. The period is also called "the age of Reason [which] is sometimes periodised by French historians as the years 1715, the death of Louis XIV, and 1789, the start of the French Revolution" (Peters 2019, 886). The Enlightenment can be considered as one of the most significant movements in the history of humanity. It is a turning point in history that changes the viewpoint of man towards himself and his surroundings. In fact, "Rationalism, enlightenment and the ideologies inspired by them are definable elements of modern European politics" (Mihailescu 2017, 270). This positivist view towards the state of knowledge and an indiscriminate trust in the rationality of humans are arguably accountable for the ramifications that were brought upon humans and the environment at present. Relying on the Scriptures, the Enlightenment asserts the superiority of man over his surroundings. Wolff argues that "according to Locke [...] while we have no natural superiors on earth, we do have one in heaven" (2016, 18). Relying on such narcissistic metanarratives stems from a belief "rooted in the great Judeo-Christian" (Baudrillard 1975, 63) tradition that "institutes a dualism of man and Nature" (Baudrillard 1975, 63).

Postmodern critics, however, criticize these views since they consider everything a social construct. The Enlightenment's promising view on the status of humans in society is nothing but a delusion, according to the postmodernist view. Hobbes, for instance, asserts that humans without society would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (2012, 186); and he argues that it is within society that humans can prosper. It appears that Enlightenment thinkers rely largely upon the virtuous essence of humans. Rousseau, for instance, pointed out that we have "an innate repugnance at seeing a fellow-creature suffer" (2004, 73). The plan of the Enlightenment thinkers for the future of humanity was radically utopian. The ramifications of two world wars made postmodern man rethink and question everything, including himself. In fact, the postmodern view abolished the "optimistic vision, according to which truth can be attained" (Diaconu

2014, 168). Truth is a construct, and there is no such thing as absolute truth; what exists, however, is relative and partial truth; that is what humans can only achieve. Moreover, the postmodern view of humanity is not naively promising; it is tremendously critical in which man is held responsible for the environmental, social, and individual destruction that occurs within societies.

Postmodern man is alienated, and society fails to correspond to his needs since the purpose of society that the Enlightenment thinkers proposed has never been met. Postmodern man is thus prone to investigate the difficulties he encounters on a regular basis. The concern of postmodern man is merely to survive rather than to create a steady life of bliss. The views of postmodern man are, therefore, rather pessimistic and antisocial. As Benatar states, "if people were prone to see this true quality of their lives for what it is, they might be much more inclined to kill themselves" (2008, 69). This pessimism arguably stems from the failure of the Age of Reason, which proved to be insufficient for the needs of the postmodern man. Postmodern man inhabits a solitary life within society. He is utterly lonely and is unable to communicate. He feels a void of meaning that cannot be filled either with the Enlightenment's rationality or any other social construct; it is an "environment void of meaningful communication" (Hatcher 1994, 200). Postmodern man is entirely desperate.

Yet, the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment is not solely in relation to the condition of man and the void of meaning. It goes beyond man's perception of himself and also encompasses the environment. It argues that, similarly to all other constructs, "nature is always in some ways culturally constructed" (Garrard 2004, 10). While the Enlightenment constructed nature based on its function to serve human greed, postmodernist and environmentalist thinkers assert that "we need to develop a value system which takes the intrinsic or inherent value of nature" (Garrard 2004, 18). The application of the Enlightenment's ideology towards nature has brought nothing but overexploitation, excessive use of natural resources, and environmental disasters; for instance, global warming and overpopulation. The problem with the Enlightenment's understanding of nature is that it is purely anthropocentric; that is, a "belief that value is human-centred and that all other beings are means to human ends" (Kopnina et al. 2018, 109). This view allows little room for humans to be concerned with other species and beings. The centrality of humans guarantees a world in which only the needs of humans are met. Enlightenment thinkers were not concerned with the consequences of overpopulation or overexploitation.

As a result of the Enlightenment's ideology, the Anthropocene emerged, which is dated "from the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the steam engine" (Clarke 2015, 1). The Anthropocene is "the geological epoch that the Earth entered with the Industrial Revolution, around 1800" (Clarke 2015, 1). As the failure of the Enlightenment's ideology became clear in the contemporary age of environmental

issues, postmodernists started questioning the value of humans and their centrality. The Enlightenment's faith in humanity was lost in the postmodern condition, and people became disillusioned. Environmental collapse, climate change, and the havoc caused by humans "stroke the credibility of any claim that moral value resides solely in humanity" (Clarke 2015, 147). Postmodern man castigates the Enlightenment's ideology for the unreliable assurance and trust that was bestowed upon human rationality. In this sense, "postmodern culture, then, has a contradictory relationship to [...] liberal humanist culture" (Hutcheon 2003, 6). In the following section, Bukowski's outlook is illustrated in relation to the condition of humans and the consequences of Enlightenment ideology in the context of *Pulp*. Subsequently, I demonstrate how Bukowski's opposition to the Enlightenment's ideology and anthropocentrism morph into misanthropy.

## Bukowski's Critique of the Enlightenment: The Gloomy Condition of Postmodern Man

Bukowski's anti-hero, Nicky Belane, is an alcoholic detective in his mid-fifties who struggles with countless everyday problems only to survive. He accepts cases that are "all uncanny and strange" (Ebrahimi and Farahbaksh 2020, 5). The account of the cases seems very unrealistic, and the reader finds it difficult to rely on the narrator's storyline; there is an alien attack, a mysterious Lady Death who curiously kills people whenever she is present, the long-dead French novelist Céline, and the account of the Red Sparrow. Bukowski's choice to create such cases and characters arguably stems from opposition to, and hostility towards, human rationality, which does not suffice to bring meaning to this postmodern condition and this void of meaninglessness of postmodern man. Nicky Belane fails to make sense of the cases that he has taken. Accordingly, he constantly feels a void that troubles him considerably. Nothing in these cases responds to human rationality. The first case that he takes concerns Céline. A woman calls Belane and asks him to find Céline for him. Belane tells the woman that "Céline is dead" (Bukowski 2009, 1), but the woman insists, "he isn't, I want you to find him, I want him" (Bukowski 2009, 1). The French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline has long been dead, and the narrator is aware of this; however, this woman named Lady Death insists on finding Céline.

When Belane meets Lady Death and inquires about her name, she simply responds to call her "Lady Death" (Bukowski 2009, 2). Lady Death becomes another unsolved and enigmatic case for Belane. These names and cases do not seem logical to him; however, he accepts the situation and seeks to adapt to it. The meaninglessness and instability in the world that Belane lives in make him depressed, and "the world described by Nick Belane is a dark and vicious

place, where everyone is always dejected, depressed, and lost" (Ebrahimi and Farahbaksh 2020, 5). The reason why Belane accepts such wonderfully strange cases is that he does not largely rely on man's rationality; he understands that the world he lives in is not rational and meaningful. How Lady Death murders her victim never becomes known, and Belane never inquires about it. In this sense, "postmodernism, as a farewell to modernity and its discourse as a whole, would of necessity represent a departure from rationality" (Gasché 1988, 528). Belane is stuck in a world full of meaningless conversations, meaningless interactions, and meaningless cases.

The third case, which is shortly followed by the previous ones, is that of the Red Sparrow. Someone named Mr Barton phones Belane and asks him to "locate the Red Sparrow" (Bukowski 2009, 6) for him. Belane, who is now very confused, asks Mr Barton to give more information about the Red Sparrow: he asks, "this Sparrow doesn't have a name, does it?" (Bukowski 2009, 6), and Mr Barton replies, "No, it's just a Red Sparrow. I know you can find it. I've got faith in you" (Bukowski 2009, 6). The conversation between Belane and Mr Barton takes place several times, and each time Belane seeks to persuade Mr Barton to give up searching for the Red Sparrow, he fails since Mr Barton keeps telling him that he has faith in him. Indiscriminate faith is portrayed as a mockery of the Enlightenment's ignorant faith in humans. Bukowski parodies the Enlightenment's faith in the rationality of humanity and the hopeful delusion that with rationality man will always prevail. As Linda Hutcheon claims, "parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (2003, 11). Belane must constantly be on the watch for something that he does not know if it actually exists. He desperately says, "I was supposed to locate a Red Sparrow that maybe didn't exist" (Bukowski 2009, 125). These cases make Belane more confused, but he is not concerned with making any sense of these cases; in contrast, he only looks for earning money just to survive.

The encounter of postmodern man with the capitalist world gives him no space to rationalize the world around him. The condition of postmodern man, in Bukowski's view, is so dark that he claims, "just to get your shoes on in the morning was a victory" (Bukowski 2009, 67). Postmodern man is concerned with much more trivial issues; therefore, he finds no time to face matters like rationality behind which there "lies a barely disguised utopianism that makes it easier to understand" (Langford 1992, 24). The postmodern world, however, shares more with dystopias than utopias. On the other hand, the death of the detective at the end of the novel, which is symbolized by being eaten by the Red Sparrow, delineates the failure of the former to make sense of his cases. Dismayed and overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of his cases, Detective Belane wonders repeatedly, "this isn't the way it happens" (Bukowski 2009, 174). He does not believe that he is dying, and this disbelief represents the assumption that the

detective prevails in conventional detective fiction. As Ewert (1999) asserts, "the bodies of dead detectives (and their victims) warn the reader away from the quest for knowledge" (181). The death of Belane resembles the death of logic.

Another case that Belane took is even stranger than the previous ones. Someone named Mr Grovers calls Belane and requests help to save him from a space lady. When Belane inquires more about this space alien, Grovers tells him that he cannot get rid of her, since he says "she controls my mind" (Bukowski 2009, 57). This space alien, named Jeannie Nitro, is apparently an abusive space alien who has taken control of Mr Grovers. Bringing such unbelievable cases into his narration, Bukowski is exaggerating the condition of postmodern man, for whom meaning is lost and nothing makes sense. Simultaneously, he parodies both the rationality and seriousness of the modernist genre of the detective story by bringing extremely oppositional examples. Parody is an inseparable tenet of anti-detective fiction, and "due to the parodic nature of the genre and its endless uses, it is often considered as a facet of postmodern literature" (Tyers 2021, 274). The cases that Belane narrates are overly irrational and neither modernism nor the Enlightenment can comprehend the status of such cases rationally. The postmodernist view seeks to identify any establishment that has a claim over the truth to question and criticize it. Truth and rationality are not the only things that Bukowski ridicules. He depicts an indecent view of human beings, which does not correspond with the anthropocentric viewpoint of the Enlightenment. Chapter twenty-two of the novel illuminates the author's view towards humans; "we were all disgusting, doomed to our dirty little task. Eating and farting and scratching and smiling and celebrating holidays" (Bukowski 2009, 73). Bukowski's project of humanity attempts to illuminate the failure of the hopeful dream of the Enlightenment concerning humans. They are no longer dominant creatures who seek to bring justice and bliss to their world. Bukowski's humans are infinitesimal creatures who are constantly engaged with trivial jobs on a daily basis. Through Bukowski's lenses, Belane is shown to be a nihilist; "existence was not only absurd; it was plain hard work" (Bukowski 2009, 91). The cases Belane took were not the only absurd issues he faced. For him, existence turns out to be a burden rather than an opportunity. As Belane points out, "we were all chasing after a lot of nothing. Day after day. Survival seemed the only necessity" (Bukowski 2009, 107). Postmodern man is, indeed, very disillusioned, and hapless.

The conversations, and sometimes hostile arguments, with bartenders were also absurd and meaningless. In chapter twenty-nine, for instance, Belane gets into a conversation with a bartender. "I walked in and took a stool. The barkeep walked up. 'Hi, Eddie', he said. 'I'm not Eddie' I told him. 'I'm Eddie', he said" (Bukowski 2009, 98). By creating similar scenes and absurd conversations that usually end in violence, Bukowski parodies the rational dialectic of the Enlightenment. In another bar, Belane gets into another absurd conversation

with a bartender; "the bartender looked over. He caught my eye. 'I'm hungry,' the barkeep said. 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.' 'I wish you'd eat some of those I've bet on,' I told him" (Bukowski 2009, 53). The account of the conversations Belane has is almost always similar to all the other characters in the novel. Violent scenes are excessive, and vulgar language is very common in their conversations. There is no single account of truth. Nothing makes sense, neither the account of the cases nor the conversations Belane has with other people. The absurdity and meaninglessness of the world is not the only thing that Bukowski criticizes; anthropocentrism is another issue that Bukowski abhors.

## The Enlightenment's Anthropocentrism and Bukowski's Nihilistic Anti-humanism

Ecocriticism is a moderately new school of thought, which is highly concerned with the encounter between man and the environment. Ecocriticism covers a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects such as "cultural differences, values, health issues, climate change, social and political discourses, identity issues, capitalism, racism, gender discrimination, language, religion, technology, as well as their interrelationships with human and nonhuman nature" (Özgün and Arargüç 2021, 326). Recent scholarship has been significantly ignorant of the ecocritical aspects of Bukowski's texts, and most works have largely focused on capitalism and gender studies. Ecological concerns, however, are a highly significant aspect of Bukowski's *Pulp*, in which he illustrates the ramifications of the Enlightenment ideology, which led to the Industrial Revolution and engendered countless environmental disasters. The fruit of Enlightenment is narcissistic anthropocentrism through which man has become ignorant of other species and his environment. The very beginning of the novel represents the encounter of Belane with his environment; "It was a hellish hot day and the air conditioner was broken" (Bukowski 2009, 1). These signs of global warming appear throughout the novel, and the only response of the characters is ignorance.

Another sign of man's revolting anthropocentrism is Belane's excessive hunger for killing flies. At the beginning of the novel, Belane asserts: "A fly crawled across the top of my desk. I reached out with the open palm and sent him out of the game" (Bukowski 2009, 1). In the fourth chapter, Belane expresses his hunger for killing flies: "I had work to do. I looked around for a fly to kill" (Bukowski 2009, 12). Killing flies, which seems to be a hobby for the detective, is portrayed as an insignificant issue; in fact, Bukowski's utilizing flies instead of any other creature illustrates how unimportant and trivial the environment is for people. In later chapters, Belane illuminates the state of humans and animals in the contemporary era – he asserts: "I killed four flies while waiting. Damn, death was

everywhere. Man, bird, beast, reptile, rodent, insect, fish didn't have a chance" (Bukowski 2009, 56). Postmodern man is a confused and confusing being. On the one hand, Belane is aware of human interference within nature, and, on the other hand, he keeps killing flies. As a result of human interference with nature, death becomes dominant in Bukowski's view. This is only inferred until Belane faces the alien that Mr Grovers talked about.

When Belane eventually meets the space alien, Jeannie Nitro, she explains to him the reason for their invasion; "I'm from the planet Zaros. We are overpopulated. We need the Earth for our excess people" (Bukowski 2009, 101). Leechlike, similar to humans, the space aliens seek to dominate and exploit the planet. This proposes a different outlook for detective Belane, one that involves empathizing with the planet as a host body that is condemned to be exploited and misused. Jeannie Nitro and Belane visit each other a few more times, and Belane secretly seeks to kill her and asks Lady Death for her help. The last time Jeanie Nitro visits Belane, she tells him that the space aliens have changed their minds about invading Earth; "we've thought it over, it's just too awful. We don't want to colonize your earth" (Bukowski 2009, 127). When Belane inquires more about the issue, she says, "the earth. Smog, murder, the poisoned air, the poisoned food, the hatred, the hopelessness, everything" (Bukowski 2009, 127). It appears that an alien creature is well aware of the circumstances of postmodern life.

The condition of postmodern man is not the only thing that the space alien mentions, she is more concerned with the condition of the environment; she says: "the only beautiful thing about the earth is the animals and now they are being killed off, soon they will be gone except for pet rats and race horses" (Bukowski 2009, 127). Jeannie Nitro illustrates the significance of this environmental crisis that has affected the condition of humans. She later says, "it's so sad, no wonder you drink so much" (Bukowski 2009, 127). The response to environmental disasters that are mainly caused by humans is melancholic. The aesthetic pleasure that stems from the unity of man and nature is beyond human's grasp. The imposed otherness upon nature forbids the unity of Detective Belane with his environment. Val Plumwood asserts that "Western culture has treated the human/nature relation as a dualism" (2015, 2); this dualism that was intensified in the Enlightenment separates humans from nature. This separation takes place by inferiorizing nature as unreasonable, irrational, and chaotic. Bukowski's creation of a metaphysical detective story nullifies this dichotomy by illustrating both man and nature as chaotic and unreasonable. Anti-detective fiction necessarily breaks away from conventional detective fiction by undermining the power of human rationality. Although this dichotomy is abolished, Belane fails to fully grasp the idea of unification with nature; he, therefore, remains distant and ignorant. Bukowski's response to such an environmental collapse that is caused by humans is a sense of disgust and hatred towards mankind.

While remaining distant from nature and its representations, Belane seeks to channel his anger and passivity towards environmental issues into sheer hatred. The fact that Belane does not envisage any viable alternative to protect nature and the planet stems from the mistrust of the postmodern ideology towards any established school of thought. In this sense, Belane is suspicious of any feasible solution to guard the planet. Concerned as he is, Belane is wholly disappointed and rejects the naivety of modernist viewpoint that promised redemption. In fact, he sees himself equal to the other people and not a saviour who seeks to protect the environment. For instance, he points out: "boring damned people. All over the earth. Propagating more boring damned people. What a horror show. The earth swarmed with them" (Bukowski 2009, 154) – yet, he does not foresee any remedy for overpopulation. Instead, he becomes fully disgusted by humans.

Bukowski's anti-hero, Nick Belane, has a very strong sense of hatred for other people. As Clarke points out, "Anthropocene disorder also affects a deep sense of bemusement and wonder at the nature of humanity itself, as well as disgust" (2015, 147). This sense of disgust is widely depicted throughout the novel. The failure of humans to live in harmony with nature provokes a sense of wonder and hatred; Bukowski is aware that "humanity is and must be parasitic [and] it lives only in its robbing and destruction of life that is not its own" (Clarke 2015, 153). Having this view in mind, Belane is a nihilistic anti-human who has accepted the gloomy condition of humanity but refuses to sympathize with his species. Chapter twenty-two elucidates Belane's hatred for humanity; "I decided to stay in bed until noon. Maybe by then half the world would be dead and it would be only half as hard to take" (Bukowski 2009, 74). The hatred towards humans is not only a way of thinking for Bukowski's detective, since Belane is also very violent towards other people. The novel is filled with violent scenes in which Belane rapidly takes violent actions. One of the accounts of his violent actions is when he gets into a fight with the mailman. "I walked over and scooped some broken glass from the floor. Then I came back, opened his mouth and dropped the glass in there. Then I rubbed his cheeks around and slapped him a bit" (Bukowski 2009, 37). Bukowski, however, never introduces a solution for the environmental problems that man encounters; in this sense, he is a nihilist. He has accepted the horrifying condition of humanity and the planet with despair and rage. It can be argued that his misanthropy stems from the condition of humans and the environment. Although there might be various reasons why Bukowski is a misanthrope, I have argued that one of the most significant reasons is the Anthropocene disorder that has dominated the postmodern era.

## Conclusions

Bukowski's *Pulp* satirically illustrates a world in which rationality and meaning are lost concepts and the narrative circles around a drunken detective who fails to make sense of the cases he takes. Bukowski's exaggeration of an irrational world parodies the Enlightenment's rational dialectic. As an efficient postmodern element, parody is utilized in a sustained manner throughout the novel. The conversations between the characters are humorous and absurd; almost every conversation in the novel involves some misunderstanding, and the characters have difficulty understanding one another. This exaggeration is a vehement response to the Enlightenment's ideology. Moreover, Bukowski has taken a radically pessimistic view of humanity as a result of environmental crises. The misanthropy, which is dominant in the novel, I argue, is a response to humanity's ignorant exploitation of the environment. Bukowski is a nihilist in the sense that he finds the world and humanity absurd. He is also hapless concerning the environmental disasters caused by human beings, and his only response is enraged physical and verbal violence towards his fellow beings. Bukowski's anti-hero, Nick Belane, represents an environmentally hostile person who despises himself and his species while being aware of environmental circumstances. To Bukowski, I argue, there is nothing to be done to save the planet.

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