



HarperCollins e-books



# War All the Time

**Charles Bukowski**



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POEMS 1981-1984

**CHARLES BUKOWSKI**

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## some of my readers

---

I liked it coming out of that expensive  
cafe in Germany  
that rainy night  
some of the ladies had learned that I  
was in there  
and as I walked out well-fed and  
intoxicated  
the ladies waved  
placards  
and screamed at me  
but all I recognized was my  
name.

I asked a German friend what they were  
saying.

“they hate you,” he told me,  
“they belong to the German Female  
Liberation Movement...”

I stood and watched them, they were  
beautiful and screaming, I  
loved them all, I laughed, waved,  
blew them kisses.

then my friend, my publisher and my

girlfriend got me into the car; the

---

engine started, the windshield wipers

began thrashing

and as we drove off in the rain

I looked back

watched them standing in that

terrible weather

waving their placards and their

fists.

it was nice to be recognized

in the country of my birth, that

was what mattered

most...

back at the hotel room

opening bottles of wine

with my friends

I missed them,

those angry wet

passionate ladies

of the night.



## [talking to my mailbox...](#)

---

boy, don't come around here telling me you  
can't cut it, that  
they're pitching you low and inside, that  
they are conspiring against you,  
that all you want is a chance but they won't  
give you a  
chance.

boy, the problem is that you're not doing  
what you want to do, or  
if you're doing what you want to do, you're  
just not doing it  
well.

boy, I agree:  
there's not much opportunity, and there are  
some at the top who are  
not doing much better than you  
are  
but  
you're wasting energy haranguing and  
bitching.

boy, I'm not *advising*, just suggesting that  
instead of sending your poems to me

along with your letters of

---

complaint

you should enter the

arena—

send your work to the editors and

publishers, it will

buck up your backbone and your

versatility.

boy, I wish to thank you for the

praise for some of my

published works

but that

has nothing to do with

anything and won't help a

purple shit, you've just got to

learn to hit that low, hard

inside pitch.

this is a form letter

I send to almost everybody, but

I hope you take it

personally,

man.





## the last generation

---

it was much easier to be a genius in the twenties, there were only 3 or 4 literary magazines and if you got into them 4 or 5 times you could end up in Gertie's parlor you could possibly meet Picasso for a glass of wine, or maybe only Miró.

and yes, if you sent your stuff postmarked from Paris chances of publication became much better.

most writers bottomed their manuscripts with the word "Paris" and the date.

and with a patron there was time to write, eat, drink and take drives to Italy and sometimes Greece.

it was good to be photo'd with others of your kind

it was good to look tidy, enigmatic and thin.

photos taken on the beach were great.

and yes, you could write letters to the 15 or 20

others

bitching about this and that.

you might get a letter from Ezra or from Hem; Ezra liked to give directions and Hem liked to practice his writing in his letters when he couldn't do the other.

it was a romantic grand game then, full of the fury of

---

discovery.

now

now there are so many of us, hundreds of literary magazines,

hundreds of presses, thousands of titles.

who is to survive out of all this mulch?

it's almost improper to ask.

I go back, I read the books about the lives of the boys

and girls of the twenties.

if they were the Lost Generation, what would you call us?

sitting here among the warheads with our electric-touch

typewriters?

the Last Generation?

I'd rather be Lost than Last but as I read these books about

*them*

I feel a gentleness and a generosity

as I read of the suicide of Harry Crosby in his hotel room

with his whore

that seems as real to me as the faucet dripping now

in my bathroom sink.

I like to read about *them*: Joyce blind and prowling the

bookstores like a tarantula, they said.

---

Dos Passos with his clipped newscasts using a pink type-writer ribbon.

D. H. horny and pissed-off, H. D. being smart enough to use her initials which seemed much more literary than Hilda Doolittle.

G. B. Shaw, long established, as noble and dumb as royalty, flesh and brain turning to marble. a bore.

Huxley promenading his brain with great glee, arguing with Lawrence that it wasn't in the belly and the balls, that the glory was in the skull.

and that hick Sinclair Lewis coming to light.

meanwhile

the revolution being over, the Russians were liberated and dying.

Gorky with nothing to fight for, sitting in a room trying to find phrases praising the government.

many others broken in victory.

now

now there are so many of us

but we should be grateful, for in a hundred years

if the world is not destroyed, think, how much

---

there will be left of all of this:

nobody really able to fail or to succeed—just

relative merit, diminished further by

our numerical superiority.

we will all be catalogued and filed.

all right...

if you still have doubts of those other golden

times

there were other curious creatures: Richard

Aldington, Teddy Dreiser, F. Scott, Hart Crane, Wyndham

Lewis, the

Black Sun Press.

but to me, the twenties centered mostly on Hemingway

coming out of the war and beginning to type.

it was all so simple, all so deliciously clear

now

there are so many of us.

Ernie, you had no idea how good it had been

four decades later when you blew your brains into

the orange juice

although

I grant you

---

that was not your best work.



## windy night

---

they smile and bring the food

they smile and bow

as a light hurricane rattles the

blinds

as the scarlet ibis appears

and dances in the guano

on my plate

I'm not hungry anyhow

Leda, Tyndareus, Clytemnestra,

Castor, Pollux or anybody else

I know wouldn't

eat this stuff.

I ask for a doggy bag.

they smile and scoop the meal

into there.

later in my kitchen I divide

the meal onto their plates

place them upon the floor

as my 3 cats remain motionless

staring up at me

as I ask them, "What's the matter?"

What's the matter? Eat it!"

---

the hurricane scratches

branches against the window

as I switch out the kitchen

light

walk out of there and into

the other room

switch on the tv

just as a cop shoots a

man at the top of a fire escape

and he falls and falls

toppling and flattening in the

street:

he will never have to eat

Szechwan shrimp with Chinese

peas

again.



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