

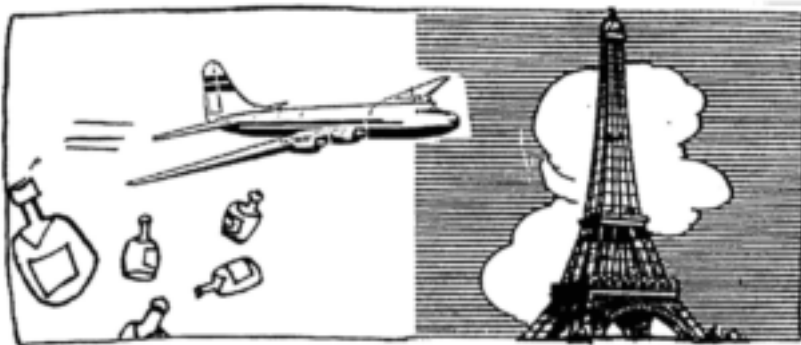
# 8 Europe

In May 1978, accompanied by Linda and the photographer Michael Montfort, Hank returned to Germany, 53 years after being taken to America by his parents. In Mannheim, Hank gave his only poetry reading outside the US. He was urged to do so by his

friend, the editor Carl Weissner, who had published his books in Germany. But the most memorable experience came in Andernach, where he met his mother's brother, Heinrich Fett, who was 90 years old.



Mannheim, 1978 —



Although the journey was stressful, Hank flew to Europe again in October 1978. He had been invited to appear on the TV show 'Apostrophes', organised by Bernard Pivot, who had a major influence on the European cultural scene, promoting the careers of new writers. Also, of course, Bukowski wanted to get to know Paris.



Everything seemed to go wrong. He turned up drunk at the studio and provoked the presenter by offering him a drink in front of the cameras. He behaved in the old, ill-mannered, iconoclastic way: he noticeably stroked the leg of a female writer sitting next to him; he got bored with listening to the other guests, who would not let him speak, and, in one of the most memorable moments in French TV history, he suddenly got up, tore out his earpiece and walked off the set mumbling to himself. The next day, he said he could remember nothing about what had happened, but he later wrote that he was irritated by the presence in the studio of a 'shrink who had given the shock treatments' to the French writer Antonin Artaud.



When a security guard tried to calm him down on his way out, Hank pulled out a knife, but he was quickly subdued. Meanwhile, Pivot went on air to tell viewers that Bukowski's behaviour showed the decadence of American literature.



Hank's behaviour turned out to be a master stroke. In France, Pivot was seen as a star. But the media also wrote up Bukowski's performance as the most fitting attitude that a cultural agitator could adopt. Sales of his books rocketed in France. Critics dubbed him the last of the Beatniks, and this, naturally, infuriated Bukowski.

Throughout the fifties I was drunk,  
and I detest all that bohemian  
Greenwich Village,  
Parisian bullshit.  
Algiers, Tangiers...  
that's all romantic  
claptrap. I feel  
more like a punk  
than a Beatnik.



In his usual way, Bukowski recounted that episode in *Shakespeare Never Did This*, which he wrote immediately after those two trips to Europe. Alternating prose with verse, he illustrated it with a series of beautiful photographs, all taken in Germany. His comment on the French episode was simple:

