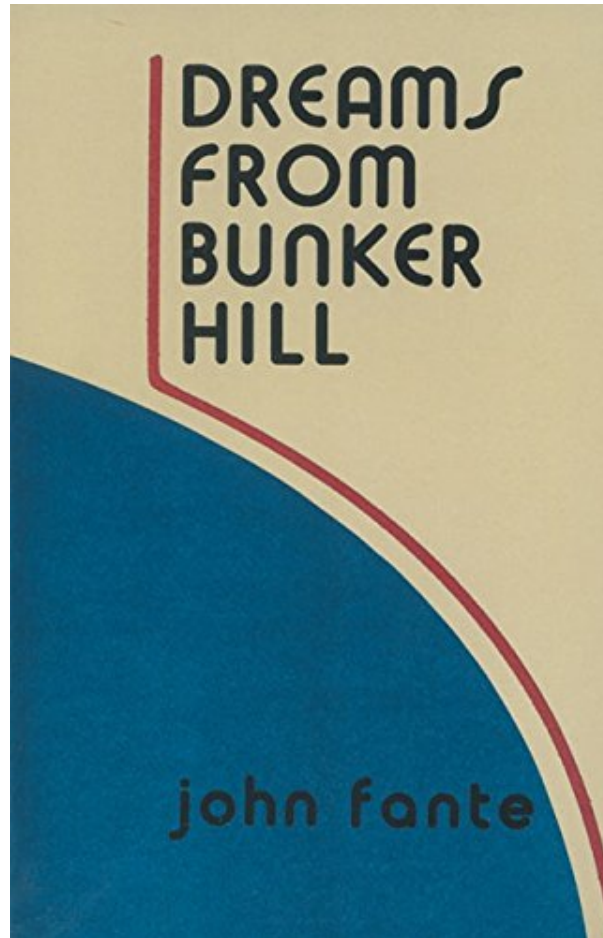
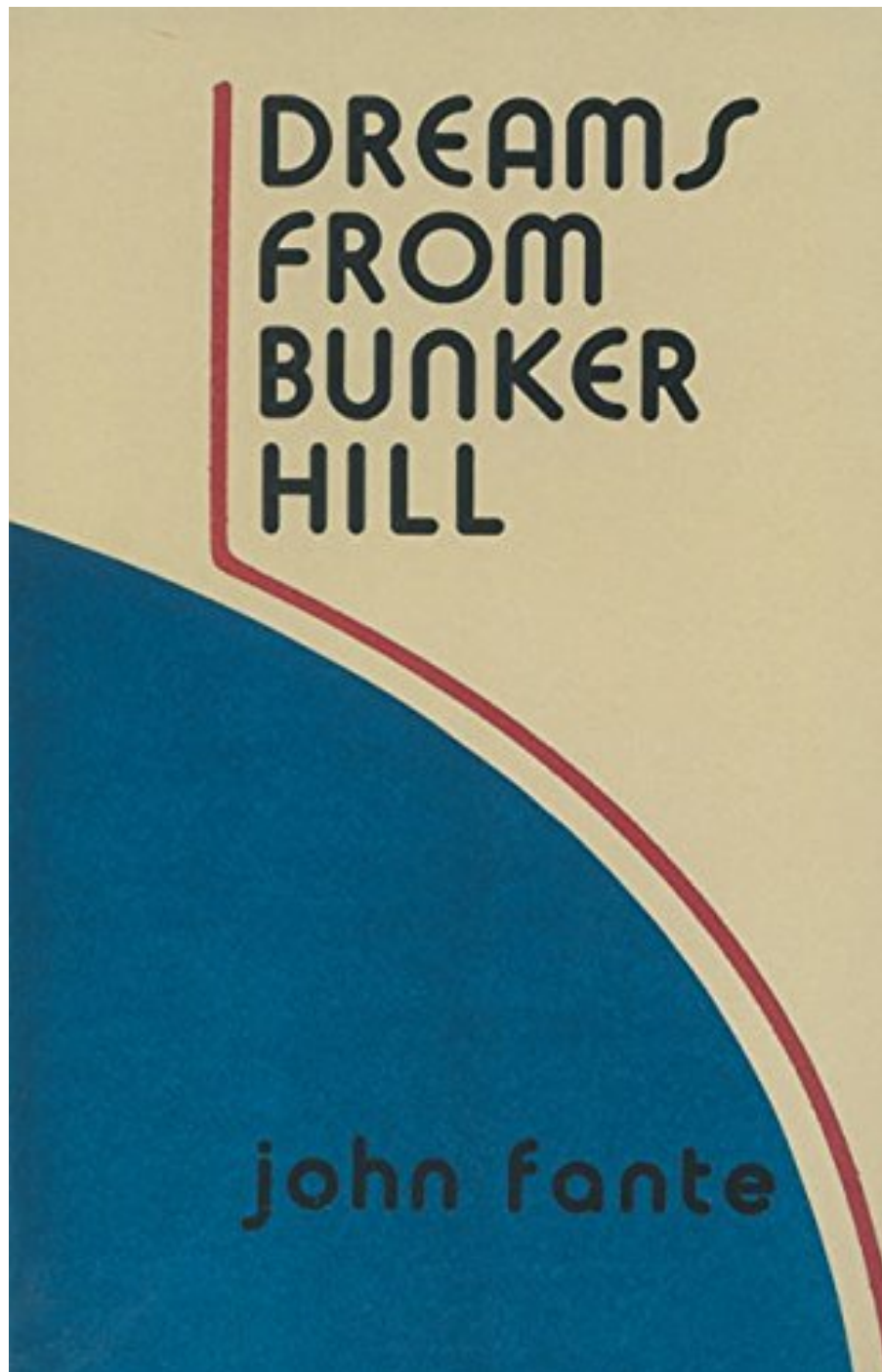


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John Fante began writing in 1929 and published his first short story in 1932. His first novel, *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*, was published in 1938 and was the first of his Arturo Bandini series of novels, which also include *The Road to Los Angeles* and *Ask the Dust*. A prolific screenwriter, he was stricken with diabetes in 1955. Complications from the disease brought about his blindness in 1978 and, within two years, the amputation of both legs. He continued to write by dictation to his wife, Joyce, and published *Dreams from Bunker Hill*, the final installment of the Arturo Bandini series, in 1982. He died on May 8, 1983, at the age of seventy-four.

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My first collision with fame was hardly memorable. I was a busboy at Marx's Deli. The year was 1934. The place was Third and Hill, Los Angeles. I was twenty-one years old, living in a world bounded on the west by Bunker Hill, on the east by Los Angeles Street, on the south by Pershing Square, and on the north by Civic Center. I was a busboy nonpareil, with great verve and style for the profession, and though I was dreadfully underpaid (one dollar a day plus meals) I attracted considerable attention as I whirled from table to table, balancing a tray on one hand, and eliciting smiles from my customers. I had something else beside a waiter's skill to offer my patrons, for I was also a writer.

- Sales Rank: #246587 in Books
- Published on: 2002-08-17
- Released on: 2002-08-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.94" h x .38" w x 5.88" l, .46 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 152 pages

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20 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

another wonderful job by john fante

By Kirk Alex

you don't realize just how good john fante is until after you've read (better yet: attempted to read) so much bad writing our nation's bookshelves are filled with. i'd read this one years before and remembered it as being a decent read, etc. but there i was the other night, looking for something to read; i needed a book fix, i had to have something to read. reached up for *Dreams from Bunker Hill* and began my second reading of it...stayed up all night getting into this warm, compassionate tale. fante had heart, intelligence and the story of old time hollywood moves right along. stayed with it until i was finished about 5 a.m.

fante makes it look easy, but quite a few of us know better: good writing is never easy to write or come by.

we thank buk for making us aware of fante and wish fante's recognition had happened earlier in his life...but

you know what they say about wishful thinking... at least people are reading him now, as well as his son dan. i dare say, here and now, dan's prose is even stronger and better than bukowski. try either fante and you'll see what i'm talking about.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

This guy is too much!!

By JoeyD

This story is absolutely hilarious. This guy Fante was nuts! I know I am not a shrink, but I think it's safe to say that his elevator didn't quite go up to the top floor. However, I challenge anyone out there to pick up one of his books and see if they can easily put it down. The guy knows how to write. He may be insane, but the man holds your interest and he makes it real hard to stop reading.

"Dreams from Bunker Hill" takes place in Los Angeles in the late 1930's where Fante's favorite protagonist Arturo Bandini is a struggling writer who is given a job as a Hollywood screenwriter. Obviously, the world of Hollywood is no place for our wacky anti-hero. To me, Bandini seems to be a cross between Howard Stern and Jerry Lewis (obviously not the real Jerry, but the comedic characters he played). Arturo never stops with his antics, each antic seemingly eclipsing the one before it with its stupidity and insanity. There are more than a half dozen scenes in the novel which had me actually keeling over with laughter. Of course, not everyone shares my strange sense of humor. If you are the self-effacing, not too serious type, then you will probably love this guy. This is my third book of his, and so far my favorite. I may not like him as much as Bukowski, but I am really enjoy the majority of his writing and will continue to read more of his work. Like Hank, Fante grows on you, like it or not.

Fante definitely isn't going to be everyone's favorite dish. However, love him or hate him there is definitely no denying this guy was a true original. He was Bukowski's hero (he actually referred to him as 'God') and it is overtly clear after reading one page of Fante where Buke drew his inspiration. If you are a true fan of Hank's, then you positively must read this man. Most of his fans and critics agree that this is one of his better novels. I give it four and a half stars.

33 of 46 people found the following review helpful.

Fante's Best

By Kenneth E. Wagner Jr.

Many Fante fans will vehemently disagree that this is his best work. That is probably because they are really Bukowski fans, and Bukowski liked Ask the Dust better. Of course, many Buk fans are as conformist as anyone, and they now follow him blindly as Pat Boone fans probably do Mr. Boone. These are the same people who think Buk could do no wrong (then what was up with Women?). I say that as a huge Buk fan, but as somebody who is not looking for a hero, but a good writer (which is what Buk was).

Ask the Dust is great, and it has a better ending, but Dreams of Bunker Hill is Fante's best work. Here he lays bare the soul of a struggling writer in a world that does not care one bit for talented people. He gets a glimpse into the sophistication of Hollywood, and sees it for its falsity. The scene where he confronts Sinclair Lewis had me laughing for hours. And the strange relationship he has with his landlady is Fante at his best: love can be such a strange thing that it is wonderful.

Fante should get much more academic notice, as should his follower Buk. What could help would be to realize that he, like Buk, was not always a "party-down wild man." Fante, like Buk, was VERY well steeped in the classics. He was incredibly widely read: from Anderson to Schopenhaur. Writing was hard work to him. For all the posers out there who want to be writers without hard work, please stop using Fante (and Buk's) name in vain. He's just better than you are or will be. When you realize his stuff please realize that the ease with which it reads is related to the difficulty with which it was composed.

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