

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE BEAT GENERATION I: THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Beats, like Elvis, continue to live. In the cover story of the current issue of New York magazine, Rebecca Mead writes, "Beatniks [and 'wannabeats'] are back. Poetry readings at [Greenwich Village] cafés and bars like Fez, Limbo, Coffee Shop, No Bar, and Anseo are pulling in youngsters with serious glasses and idiosyncratic facial hair. More established haunts, like the Nuyorican Poets Café, are moving beyond the hard-core spoken-word crowd, to whom they have catered since the seventies. And even MTV, that barometer of what sells in youth culture, has begun slipping 30-second poetry spots between videos" ("The Beats Are Back," 3 May 1993: 32). And in China, Wang Shuo, an emerging literary celebrity, has been christened the "Chinese Kerouac": "Critics often refer to his works as pizi wenxue, or hooligan literature" (Sheryl WuDunn, "The Word From China's Kerouac: The Communists Are Uncool," The New York Times Book Review, 10 Jan 1993: 3). More substantially, Viking/Penguin has just added The Portable Beat Reader (edited by Ann Charters) to its distinguished "portable" series, which became the occasion for a review by Bruce Bawer ("Geniuses All the Time," The New Criterion, April 1992: 60-66) that is every bit as scathing as the 1950s Partisan Review high-culture attack by Norman Podhoretz ("The Know-Nothing Bohemians," reprinted in Doings and Undoings, Farrar, 1964). That Kerouac, Burroughs, Ginsberg, et al., still generate such heat is justification enough for the present collection.

The Beats attempted to restore Dionysos to art, to integrate, as it were, alcohol and drugs into the literary culture. To be sure, there was a down side. Richard Hill writes, in "Kerouac at the End of the Road" (The New York Times Book Review, 29 May 1988: 11): "No body wanted to believe he died of drinking. He did. Drinking was part of his pilgrimage." It may be argued that the price is too high if lives must be destroyed in order for art to be created. Yet, that causal connection is dubious at best, despite Jack Kerouac's (and the other Beats') "pilgrimage." What matters now is the work itself; and these essays by Sue Wiseman, Steven Whitaker, James Oliver, Steven Perrin, Tom Roder, and Sue Vice are the sorts of assessments that demonstrate the permanence of the achievements of The Beat Generation.

I wish profoundly to thank Sue Vice for her gathering and editing (with the aid of George Wedge) this collection. Professor Wedge, who will edit the Fall 1993 issue of Dionysos. The Beat Generation II: The American Perspective, is still accepting submissions (Department of English, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2115; 913/842-0382).

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THE ARTIST AND THE BOY GANG: BEAT BOYS AND GIRLS

Sue Wiseman

In that magic year, 1968, over a decade after the Beat phenomenon and just after the famous Albert Hall reading, the British poet Michael Horovitz interviewed Gregory Corso in Penthouse, which was carrying on the Esquire tradition of mixing features on bodies (women's) and brains (men's). Corso opined:

A beat person in the United States is not a person who has a beard--exactly--the consciousness is changed by the beat--it is entering the lives of people who go to college, who are married, who have children. They do not, then, by their learning lock themselves up in a room and sleep on floors and don't take baths: that's not it . . .

By 1968 things were a bit different and Beat ideas and personae had been absorbed into the wider social movements around Vietnam, etc. Even so, a beat is not exactly a person with a beard, but almost. The beat goes on but the beards remain the same--it is, of course, no surprise to find that particularly in casual conversation these poets equated "persons" with the ability to grow facial hair. What is of interest is the more detailed ways in which the masculinity of the "naked," "angelic," "gentle" and often blitzed Beats did have certain specific shapes in relation to ideals and stereotypes of American manhood in the late 1950s. And this, in turn, seems to have had certain implications for the women in their circle of which Carolyn Cassady (Neal Cassady's wife) and the dead Joan Vollmer are probably still the most famous despite the later success of Beat or post-Beat poets like Diane Di Prima.

Barbara Ehrenreich paints a comic but also poignant picture of American manhood in the 1950s facing the stark choice between married suburbia ("little boxes on the hillside . . . all made of ticky-tacky / And they all look / Just the same") and the playboy consumer-male.² Perhaps it is true to say that by the late 1950s American Society, amidst the technological revolution both desired and feared the large corporations. In 1958 Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote in Esquire about "The Crisis of American Masculinity." If we accept (as I think we must) that in 1958 Esquire as a publishing venture was in tune with the times, then it can be seen as speaking to contemporary concerns--not that there necessarily was a "crisis in masculinity" but that (and maybe this is the same thing) people were interested to read about social problems put in these terms. Schlesinger writes:

Today men are more and more conscious of maleness not as a fact but as a problem. The way[s] by which American men affirm their masculinity are uncertain and obscure. There are multiplying signs, indeed, that something has gone badly wrong with the American male's conception of himself.

The reasons he gives include that women "seem an expanding, aggressive force," (my emphasis) but more threatening and symptomatic is that

homosexuality, that incarnation of sexual ambiguity, should be enjoying a cultural boom new in our history. Such developments surely express a deeper tension about the problem of sexual identity.

Drugs get off lightly in 1958--the time of illicit benny habits but before the public "tea" culture hit headlines. However, homosexuality is presented as threatening not because of "out" gay men but because it is "the incarnation of sexual ambiguity"--a definition with cold war connotations suggesting the alien lurking unnoticed in our midst--even passing as one of "us." To fend off such perils, Schlesinger recommends that American man develop his "comic sense, his aesthetic sense and his moral and political sense." The comic is the surprise here but, perhaps, the power of comedy to both make low the over-important and to restate boundaries makes it valuable for Schlesinger's man who needs, above all, to re-learn the possibility of being that magical mysterious thing--an "individual."

The individuality that Schlesinger and others felt had been lost by American people (men) was also dear to the Beats. As Joan Johnson later acidly noted they found theirs riding the railroads, hitch-hiking, living rough." But politics was less so, morality was outmoded and work an encumbrance that was to be got around or done when one really needed money. Drugs--different sorts as the years went by but in the beginning benzedrine, morphine, and dope--were pleasurable and a ready way to alter mental states. This was a sensibility shared by Kerouac, Ginsberg, Cassidy, Burroughs, Corso, and to an extent, Snyder. Kerouac and Ginsberg were lovers as were Ginsberg and Burroughs, and, if Barry Miles's biography of Ginsberg is anything like accurate, Ginsberg was a lover of many other men in the movement. This mixture of romanticist outsiderism with traits constructed as opposed to it by the homosocial/homosexual split is, I think, a key to why the Beats provoked such reaction and particularly revulsion among the chattering classes." They were like the monkey's claw in the story. It was as if the wish for the new, real American man--frontierish, tough, earthy, untrammled by wives and babies--had come true, but with horrible riders. Not only were these men committed skivers, bums, but they were also druggies, junkies, homosexualists.

The great prayer for an American man had been answered by syringes and a disregard for the full stop or formal verse. Listen to Norman Podhoretz's diatribe against the Beats who "have been advertised as the spokesmen for all the hipsters, all the junkies and all the juvenile delinquents in America--as though it were some kind of virtue to speak for a vicious tendency." Podhoretz is an

unsympathetic character who loathed (and envied?) the Beats for their unconventional lifestyles, but he is significant as a cultural barometer:

I think the unveiling of the Beat Generation was greeted with a certain relief by many people who had been disturbed by the notorious respectability and "maturity" of post-war writing. This was more like it--restless, rebellious, confused youth living it up, instead of thin, balding, buttoned down instructors of English composing ironic verses with one hand while changing the baby's diapers with the other.'

The Beats offered rebellious youth as opposed to emasculated maturity (not manhood) but their promise was--for Podhoretz--fatally flawed by a refusal of adulthood. The discursive field of the cold war with its dominant fear of infiltration and contamination is now deployed against the Beats who are not the promised man but men worse than manqué:

Isn't the Beat Generation a conspiracy to overthrow civilization (which is created by men, not boys) and to replace it not by the State of Nature where we can all roam around in free and easy nakedness, but by the world of the adolescent street gang? . . . The San Francisco writers . . . are a perfect reflection of "the fear of maturity," the fear of becoming a man that Brustien finds in American youth at large. (Podhoretz, "Beat" 150)

The mature men are diaper-changers, the Beats are boys; the Real Men (who will save America) are yet to appear.

Podhoretz's malice aside, he pinpoints rather precisely the Beat manipulation of the desirable categories of American manhood. As Ehrenreich notes, they refused the twin traps of twin-tubs or paying for sex in Playboy clubs (52-54). And this did represent a very real challenge to the codes and conventions of manhood. But what Ehrenreich is less alert to is the way that, inevitably, this refusal of manhood of a particular kind could not be a transvaluation of all values but was a bricolage and reorganization of some of the ideas of manhood at the same time as refusing others. Beats did not work (much), shave (much), buy houses. They did run around having drugs and fun. They wanted to break down--or at least refuse--social conventions but the realization of the potential of the individual was no easy or asocial thing. Thus the Beats did reject many of the implications of American manhood but they did take up and theatrically act out some of the highly ideal aspects of "being a man"--importantly the ideas around self-realization, free movement, search after a new spiritual home. Their attitude to marriage is a place where the confusions in their positions are articulately visible. Both Cassady and Kerouac used marriage and homes--Carolyn Cassady describes Kerouac and Cassady using the attic of her home with Cassady as a writer's den, and keeping her out--and many of the Beats married several times.'

Gregory Corso's poem "marriage" articulates the unease the Beats felt around autonomous 'self-realization.' Imagine the Beats at a wedding: "All her family and friends / and only a handful of mine all scrounging and bearded / just wait to get at the drinks and food." On the other hand, "there's got to be somebody! / Because what if I'm 60 years old and not married, / all alone in a furnished room with pee stains on my underwear." The refusal of marriage is here posed explicitly as a refusal of adulthood and maturity which is, nevertheless, inevitable and in its figuration of a lonely late middle-age, uninviting. The refusal of the contemporarily defined role--if not the title-- of husband was as Podhoretz noted a motif of the Beat male. And perhaps it should not be surprising to find precisely this articulated as a dream-text by Ginsberg. As Joan Johnson put it:

In a "dream-letter" from John Clellon Holmes recorded by Allen Ginsberg in 1954 are the words: "The social organization which is most true of itself to the artist is the boy gang." To which Allen, awakening, writing in his journal, added sternly, "Not society's perfum'd marriage." (79)

This is complex in that we could read Ginsberg's posing of his own thought as a dream-letter from Holmes as a reluctance to articulate this thought quite openly himself. But however we choose to read it--and the part which is posed as unconscious seems to be reinforced by a thought acknowledged as conscious--it strikingly vindicates Podhoretz's understanding of the Beats' relationship to masculinity.

As a model of masculinity one can argue back and forth about whether or not it is a "better" model than the 1950s beer and bruises marriage. Certainly, it was different in its use of drugs and its refusal of work. And it is here that we can begin to see the contours of women's relationship to the Beats. First there is, of course, Joyce Johnson's own response to Ginsberg. It comes a couple of pages later in Minor Characters: "The social organization which is most true of itself to the artist is the girl gang. Why, everyone would agree, that's absolutely absurd!" (81). The delay in response seems to me as interesting as the sentiments expressed. She gives the reader time to take in Ginsberg's dream text and then when we have, presumably, decided what we think about it, she inverts its gender--terms giving her opinion only in the code of sarcasm. This, in itself, mimics the careers (such as they were) of herself and Carolyn Cassady who only found voices in print long after their famous lover Kerouac was gone. Her inversion of Ginsberg's early note--and Ginsberg was later helpful to other women writers, for example corresponding with and then meeting the poet Diane Di Prima--makes it clear the Beat persons in the 1950s --if not exactly "men"--were boys. Johnson's commentary is amusing and poignant, and she illuminates her sense of herself in relation to what she feels to be the serious misogyny of Kerouac's prose at the same time as the valorization of the wild roadman in her

composition classes.

In the marginalization of women from serious pursuits because nobody--including, from the accounts of Cassady and Johnson, the women themselves at the time though not later--thought hard about how the arrangements functioned for women, there is little difference from other areas of American society. Even the Time-Life caricature of the Beat "chick" with a baby lying amongst the beer bottles still saw "chicks" in the home. The Beat eschewal of responsibility in favor of pleasure did have certain implications. On the one hand it offered women a "freer" way of life. But the drug culture and the Beat refusal of the work ethic combined to have other, sometimes more insidious, effects on women in the circle. To use an extreme example, Alexander Trocchi's partner ended up working as a prostitute to support their heroin habits. As a role for women in the movement this is not typical, but it might be symptomatic. If men did not work, women, especially these women living away from the 1950s family unit, would have to if they could. Or get money in other ways as Edie Parker did from her family to help Kerouac. This must have seemed--as Johnson says--adult, but it was also symptomatic of the way in which the Beat refusal of masculine adulthood although cheering in itself, was not--of course--the end of the category or of the economic necessities of life, booze, drugs. The criminal underworld of Herbert Hunchke engaged Burroughs as a dealer, but some people, they have to work.

So, having eschewed the American models of manhood, Beat-dom reincorporated women, not in the usual place at the kitchen sink--though partly there and resenting it, as Carolyn Cassady makes all too clear--but covertly in the roles of those parts of masculinity which the Beats themselves refused to accept but which were necessary to life--women in the Beat stories have places to live (from Carolyn Cassady's room and house to Joan Vollmer's flat, though Ginsberg, too, shared his flat beyond endurance), and some had jobs or money. The Beat woman was not the old model of '50s womanhood, but, in the drug culture of the late '50s, was not the "expanding aggressive force" of Schlesinger's article. She provided audience, companionship, money--but not much writing until the '60s got underway. The Beats might have articulated a new phase in Schlesinger's crisis of masculinity and brought with it certain changes for a minority of women, but Esquire published a photo essay rearticulating the image of the schoolmistress-intellectual stereotype as it ended with the words: "Rich girls don't read books (they don't have to)."

NOTES

1 Gregory Corso, "On the Beat With Gregory Corso," Penthouse 1.8 (Aug 1968): 12. See also the interview with Ferlinghetti just after the reading in Penthouse 1.4 (1968) 24-26, 71, 73, in which he attacks the English and claims the virtues of youth and vigor

for American English.

2 Barbara Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men (London: Pluto, 1983) 29-51.

3 Arthur Schlesinger, "The Crisis of American Masculinity," Esquire, Nov 1958: 63.

4 Joan Johnson, Minor Characters (London: Harvill, 1983) e.g. 70-80.

5 Barry Miles, Ginsberg (London: Simon, 1989); Eve Kossofsky-Sedgwick, Between Men (New York: Columbia U P, 1985) 1-15.

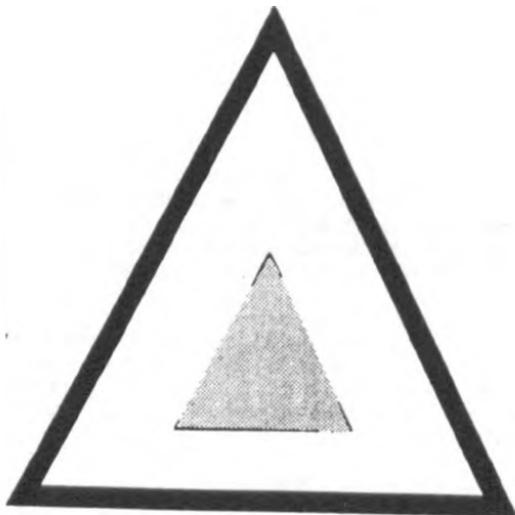
6 Norman Podhoretz, "Where Is the Beat Generation Going?" Esquire 50.6 (Dec 1958): 147-150.

7 Norman Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," in The Beats, ed. Park Honan (London: Dent, 1987) 216-229.

8 Carolyn Cassady, Heart Beat (Berkeley: Creative Arts, 1976) 9.

9 Gregory Corso, "Marriage," Honan 23.

10 "How to tell a rich girl," Esquire Jan 1959.



BURROUGHS AND DE QUINCEY: TWO TASTERS OF "THE DIVINE LUXURIES"

Steven Whitaker

There exists a considerable canon of literary texts written by drug-addicts who wish to relate their private experiences to an un-addicted public. Two of the most famous of these texts are Thomas De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821)¹ and William Burroughs' Junky (1953),² both of which managed to disquiet the reading public on their publications. The time separating the two publications might encourage a view of the texts as typical of two opposing trends in the tradition: De Quincey as a conscience-stricken Romantic, Burroughs as an amoral and "external" commentator. However, a short formalist analysis and comparison of the two texts reveals the limitations of this conception.

When De Quincey's essays concerning his addiction were first collected into a book, opium was widely available as "medification." It is well-known that in 1821 the drug's properties were not fully understood, and its effects were often regarded as mysterious; but society did not generally condemn its use. This observation is incompatible, it would seem, with De Quincey's tone throughout his Confessions as a penitent who "obtrudes on our notice his moral ulcers and scars" (29). Surely, it is rather Burroughs, writing in a society which is ostensibly united in its opposition to "junk," who should recount his story of addiction with embarrassment and shame. But this paradox is not so unaccountable if we appreciate that the lack of any scientific understanding of withdrawal and its related suffering (in De Quincey's society) left the addict a single gloomy explanation of his or her craving--it is a moral failing, a weakness in character. De Quincey even debates the "propriety" of publishing.

Burroughs, on the other hand, utilizes a transparent style to narrate a story of police corruption, child drug-abuse, homosexuality, prostitution (and so on) without moral comment. The explicit assumption is that addiction is merely an unexceptional way of life which is "drifted" into. "You become a narcotics addict because you do not have strong motivations in other directions," the prologue to Junky states (xv). However, the prologue also aligns Burroughs' novel with a "confession" genre, typified by De Quincey's seminal text. Why should childhood experiences, and other details of the un-addicted life, such as favorite authors, be included in Junky if anyone could "drift into junk"? The prologue obviously compares to De Quincey's long passages documenting the hardship of his youth, the details of which, he stresses, are vital, because his experiments with opium were initially conducted "to mitigate pain" rather than "to create pleasure." Burroughs' understated and deceptively scientific attitude to drugs--"Junk wins by default," he declares--must be regarded with suspicion, for the language he employs to describe the unhappiness preceding his first experiments is characteristic

of the penitent excusing past behaviour: "loneliness" at university, "dullness" at home. In fact, Burroughs' story, as the prologue makes clear, is written as if heroin addiction is not an unusual way of life, yet Junky is located in the tradition of De Quincey, in which the author positions himself as someone who is extremely unusual. Why else would the "confession" interest the public?

The stylistic differences between the two texts cannot, then, be linked to two opposing attitudes to narcotics. De Quincey's penchant for the adjective "divine" throughout his Confessions is hardly surprising, since the intoxication of opium, according to the author, is a type of other-worldly experience that transcends words. His style deconstructs a relationship between drug-user and drug that might be called worship; many "mystic" signifiers, taken from a religious register, obscure the signified, the actual effect of opium on the addict. For example, a "fix" becomes "a secret of happiness about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages" (72), and the drug itself is addressed in the following way, "thou [opium] hast the keys of Paradise" (83). The drug mysteriously "fulfills" De Quincey, and "exquisitely" completes his empty existence. Even the chemist who first sells opium to De Quincey is portrayed as a supernatural influence: the man (if man he was) that first laid open to me the Paradise of Opium-eaters" (83). But this reverent style is plainly deconstructed by De Quincey's attention to the "content" of his opium-induced reveries. They are not so ineffable after all. By meticulously relating the details of his dreams (his pains and pleasures), De Quincey dispels the notion that opium leads to a transcendental--or "divine"--mode of being which is beyond description. Again, it can be suggested that, in general, the addicted author reveres his or her subjective experience rather than the abused substance; De Quincey surely considers his dreams "divine" rather than the opium. Not many other authors have believed a minute account of their daydreams and nightmares would interest the public.

Burroughs certainly avoids giving an "interior" account of an addiction. Occasionally in his text, Burroughs allows himself a description of the "kick," but it remains earthly, rather than spiritual: "like lying in warm salt water" (7). As for De Quincey's "divine" visions, more than a century on, the addict's similes are less striking: Bill has an experience "like watching a movie" (7). Burroughs' earthly diction, "external" view of the addict, and acceptance of the drug as a commodity (not a "celestial pleasure"), all imply the redundancy of the grand terms used by De Quincey to glorify literature's most famous addiction.

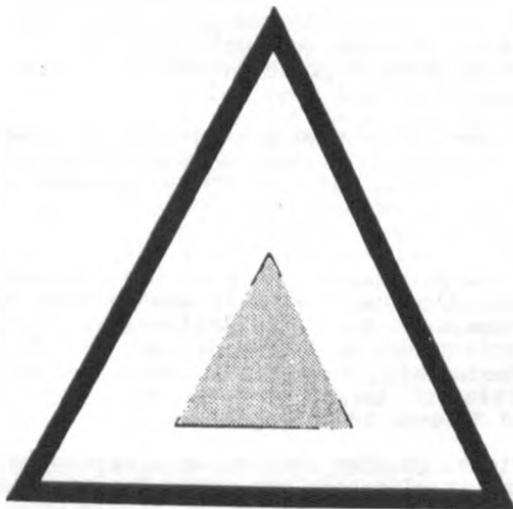
This opposition remains, however, present only on a linguistic level. Ultimately, Burroughs' careful refusal to write in the "visionary" style does not separate him from the line of writers, in which De Quincey might be the foremost member, who privilege a reality--their own reality--that is distinct from the reader's.

Both addicts briefly mention families, but the plots of their "stories" require only characters who are entangled in the addict's unique and isolated world; characters, that is to say, who sustain the addiction (in Burroughs' case) or who are the stuff of the addict's dreams (in De Quincey's case). "Life telescopes down to junk," Burroughs writes; but, whether in the "form" of a novel or a confession, the addict's text focuses on the addict, not the addiction. It is therefore necessary to conclude--keeping in mind the popularity of the two texts--that Burroughs and De Quincey were exceptional men engaging in an unexceptional habit. Perhaps this is the assumption underlying every confession of an opium-eater.

NOTES

1 Thomas De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-eater (London: Penguin, 1971).

2 William S. Burroughs, Junky (London: Penguin, 1977).



DETERRITORIALIZED DESIRING-PRODUCTION AND DEFERRAL OF THE VOID:
THE ADDICTIVE DYNAMIC OF LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI'S POETRY

James Oliver

Introduction. Ferlinghetti's poetry is striking for its wandering but addictive caress of transient phenomena. His style is characterized by its collusion of a fluid colloquial diction with the expressionist precision of his Open Field composition, and a cinematic production of time and space. In this paper I will use Freud, Zen, and Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, and cultural contextualization to demonstrate how a reading of this poetry as a process of experiential addiction shows how this unique style expresses a particular psychological dynamic. I should clarify from the beginning that when I term the poetry addictive I refer to a process effected by and affecting both the reader and the writer.

As an introduction, Moscow in the Wilderness, Segovia in the Snow.' not only manifests the key characteristics of this poetry, it provides an excellent analogy for its process. The poem is opened by a symbolic swallowing and rebirth: "Midnight Moscow Airport / sucks me in from Siberia / And blows me out alone." This image of a black hole, punctuating and focusing existence, through which the poet passes, is one of the illuminating surfacings of a key psychological structure which is the driving force within the body of Ferlinghetti's work. The mood of these lines is of an exit and entrance which is apocalyptic and inevitable, suggesting a rhythm of death-birth voids, intensified by and intensifying life between and beyond them, a dynamic I shall discuss with reference to other poems.

The third line of the poem suggests the nomadic dynamic of Ferlinghetti's writing. At the literal level, we see the hobo identity of the subject. Firstly, Moscow is experienced through a bus trip, a journey of approach that I will argue is a key structure in the poetry. Secondly, there is the internationalism we expect from Ferlinghetti, here an American in Moscow contemplating Spanish music. Indeed, the imagery of the poem overlaps nations, the bus driving through Moscow and the music "driving thru the night land / of Antiquera / Granada / Seville." Like many of Ferlinghetti's poems, this is written across national boundaries: Moscow-San Francisco, March, 1967, a symbolic connection reinforced in the dedication to the writers Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeni Yevtoshenko.

The experience is also related as a psychological journey in which everything is affected: the music "melts Moscow." Like the drive of the poem "Segovia comes on / like the pulse of life itself." The energy of Segovia, "He plucks his guts / and listens to himself as he plays," inter-connects with the poet's imagination, which creates "Tracery of the Alhambra / in a billion

white birches / born in the snow." This brings us to the psychoanalytic theory of Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, where, as in this poem, the inner rhythm of life is seen as manifested by the connective, creative processes Deleuze and Guattari call "desiring-machines": the desiring machines pound away and throb in the depths of the unconscious" "like the pulse of life itself."

Another sense in which the poem is nomadic is its network of signification. The text shifts fluidly from the imaginary to the real, the metaphysical to the political to the artistic, and brings together opposites with disarming ease, as in the lines "and who knows if he slept / with Franco," followed calmly by "He knows black condors fly / He knows a free world when he hears one." This is the schizophrenic realm Deleuze and Guattari celebrate:

what Freud and the first analysts discover is the domain of free synthesis where everything is possible: endless connections, nonexclusive disjunctions, nonspecific conjunctions, partial objects and flows. (54)

The overwhelming effect of the poem, and Ferlinghetti's poetry in general, is of liberation working within totalitarian repression to destroy it.

The poem also exemplifies the nomadic form so striking in Ferlinghetti's poetry. The position of the words on the page is irregular, allowing great subtlety of timing and freedom to represent rhythms and patterns of speech, thought, feeling and motion. The previous quotation from the poem demonstrates this, with the three place names spaced in a way which rhythmically suggests the "pulse of life" and spatially the freedom of movement driven by this force. The poem moves with the process of desiring production, which has shifts and cycles but is unbroken. All of Ferlinghetti's poems are unpunctuated and rarely are stanzas split: the emphasis is on connection and flow.

Another important factor in the psychological dynamic we are considering is a Zen appreciation of the conceptually independent "suchness" of being ("Tathata"): "He has no message / He is his own message." This is also exemplified in a moment of Zen "pointing"; bypassing rational discourse in favor of spontaneous demonstration: "What is important in life? says the bird / Segovia says Nada but keeps on playing / his instrument."

The last thing to note in this introduction is that whilst there is a "longing sound" to the poem, it does not dwell on objects, whether of beauty or repression, rather it is immersed in a process of transitory involvement with phenomena. This is the dynamic we shall investigate, which "yearns & yet does not yearn."

Deferral of the Void. I shall begin a theory of the addictive dynamic of Ferlinghetti's poetry by analyzing the role of the void already mentioned. In "The Mouth of Truth," the title phrase works on many levels. It refers to the stone mouth which according to myth bites off the entering hand of a liar, and is worked into a sexual image, a metaphor for the mouth of the woman in the poem, in which "she fondles" a cigarette, in place of a lover. Her mouth in turn becomes a genital metaphor. The poem is working towards a point where "the truth will out" from the mouth. For when "she's asleep on her back [. . .] the lower lip so sensitive / will quiver / the throat utter some deep sound." The end of the poem asks: "To whom will she tell it / in what dream / and what 'dark dove with flickering tongue' / pass below the far horizon / of her longing?" This is suggestive of a sexual coupling to which the poem has been moving. In Freudian terminology the Pleasure Principle is at work, whereby "unpleasure corresponds to an increase in the quality of excitation and pleasure to a diminution." The sexual act partially fulfills "the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli."

Clearly, however, this state of "Nirvana" is frustrated in the poem. In relation to the writer it is a four stage deferral: firstly in that the experience is textual not actual, secondly that it occurs in a dream, thirdly that the other object of the coupling is anonymous and symbolic, and fourthly that the coupling never occurs: it "passes below the far horizon / of her longing."

I wish to argue that these antitheses--attraction to and deferral of the void--are synthesised in the addictive dialectic of Ferlinghetti's poetry. The deferral thesis requires explanation. On one level it is merely the familiar concept of foreplay:

It is easy to show that the value the mind sets on erotic needs instantly sinks as soon as satisfaction becomes readily available. Some obstacle is necessary to swell the tide of libido to its height.*

Also however, we find in Ferlinghetti's poetry an identification of "the dark mouth of truth," the void, with death and emasculation. For in the above poem the negative connotations of the two elements in the suggested coupling, almost suppressed by their skillful working into erotic significance, imply an apocalyptic result, should the coupling occur ("dark dove with flickering tongue" is taken from T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding," where it refers to a bomb blast). The affinity of "nirvana" and death was recognized by Freud:

The consideration that the pleasure principle requires a reduction, or perhaps ultimately the extinction, of the tension of the extintual needs (that is, a state of Nirvana leads to problems that are still un-examined in the relations between the two primal forces, Eros and the death instinct).⁷

This is where the philosophy of Anti-Oedipus comes in, with its rejection of the theory of regressive impulses and Oedipal desire. In the poem "Berlin" Ferlinghetti reacts this way to being inside Woolworth's: "Is this like dying / inside an amoeba . . . I'm already being digested / inside Woolworths / Mother I'm in you again." For far from relishing re-embodiment in a womblike "earlier state of things" (Freud, Pleasure 30) this void is associated by Ferlinghetti with destruction and consumerism, which is highly significant in relation to the political thesis of Oedipus as a tool of capitalist repression: "It sucks you in / into the soft machine / I'm suffocating / in this gucky smell."

A useful representation of fear of the void in this sense (and at the same time a sexist one) is the Chinese belief that men should avoid frequent sexual intercourse, since it drains the power of the male yang to feed the female yin.

This void dialectic is manifested in Ferlinghetti's awareness of the cyclical nature of desire. In poem 29 of A Conev Island of the Mind we can see this production of an addictive process at play. A three page prose poem run-on sentence, its form embodies its theme of the unbroken dynamic of desire. For even in the very moment of Nirvana "when that hunting cock of flesh at last cries out" desire is reborn: "the sweet cock's sword so wilting in the fair flesh fields away alone at last and loved and lost and found upon a riverbank along a riverrun right where it all began and so begins again." The process is thus cyclical because climax is immediately anti-climax, and for the reasons discussed above, this void is deferred, and it is deferral of the void Ferlinghetti is addicted to. The majority of the above long poem, for example, dwells on the "search," the "hunting love," although it inevitably ends in climax. The realm of forepleasure is what is celebrated, where "there's always complications" which delay.

For the production of erotic excitation contains the seeds of its own extinction, which can only be deferred, like the lovers "resisted and resisting / tearing themselves apart / again / again / until the last hot hung climax / which could at last no longer be resisted / made them moan." This resistance is produced powerfully in the structure and music of the poem, in its suspended repetition of "again," "hung" on the page, and the tense slow beat of the monosyllabic words in the next line, the appropriate rush of "which could at last no longer be resisted," and the final ease of "made them moan."

In "Come lie with me and be my love" Ferlinghetti incants a litany of desire "As night passes," arousing desire even in describing the setting, through the sympathetic fallacy and ecstatic sounds of "In the sweet grasses / Where the wind lieth / Where the wind dieth," with "dieth" anticipating the ambiguous void of climax. As the processes are invoked--"And have enough of

kissing me / And have enough of making love,"--the poem seems to be moving to the limits of this erotic ecstasy of foreplay. However, in the last line it subtly draws itself back from the brink of extinction with the line "Without making love." The poem thus captures a sense of unending forepleasure.

Desiring-production. Having used Freud to understand the tensions that pull Ferlinghetti into the realm of forepleasure, we need to develop an application of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "desiring machines" to understand the intensity of the addictive production of this poetry. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the subject is a locus for the synthesis of objects, organs, where "there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow" (Deleuze 5). These desiring-machines where "one machine is always coupled with another" (Deleuze 5) engineer flows so that "everywhere there are breaks-flows out of which desire wells up" (Deleuze 37). Hence we have "desiring-production"; desire produces and is produced.

Connection. This theory makes sense of the self-sufficient productive nature of desire in Ferlinghetti's poetry. For Ferlinghetti is a poet who revels in connection. In "dog" (Coney, 67), "The dog trots freely thru the street" producing a metaphor for Ferlinghetti's ontology, "touching and tasting and testing everything." We also see here that desiring-production must not be conceived of in any narrowly sexual sense. For Ferlinghetti, lack of such connection is synonymous with death. Refuting Rexroth's article "Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation," he writes "Only the dead are disengaged."

The poetry should thus be seen as a chain of binary operations, in its production and its reception, as the following lines suggest: "and I have made a hungry scene or two / with beauty in my bed / and so spilled out another poem or two / and so spilled out another poem or two / upon the Bosch-like world" (Coney 10). We see here also that desire is not the plugging of a void of lost mother love with a single object *cathexis* (Freud's term for the channeling of libido), but the generation of desire everywhere in uninhibited connections.

Like the subject of "The Great Chinese Dragon" in Starting From San Francisco (37), Ferlinghetti's poetry wanders anarchically through the infinite possible desiring machines which the sensitive subject can synthesize, just as the "omnivorous" dragon eats "a hundred humans and their legs pop out of his underside and are his walking legs." Always connecting, he is "drunk ogling the girls . . . he has big eyes everywhere." Thus the title of one of Ferlinghetti's collections: Open Eye, Open Heart. He knows no boundaries--"he eats cake out of pastry windows"--and is anti-Oedipal--"he says No to Mother."

The poem is a column six pages long, but the unpunctuated flow of "this great pulsing phallus of life" must eventually dissipate its excitement in the final "wild orgasm" of the dragon, at which point it significantly faints, "since even for a dragon every orgasm is a little death." The poem then, has put off this "little death" for a very long stretch and we now see how this deferral and the deterritorialization of desire culminate in the addictive process and peculiar qualities of Ferlinghetti's writing.

For whilst Ferlinghetti connects intensely with phenomena "he sees all women dove-breasted and he will eat their waterflowers," he does not dwell there, for his desire is intensified by deterritorialization, where "what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic," a vagrancy which at the same time is a deferral of the void in the senses discussed earlier. Thus we can begin to see how Ferlinghetti's poetry is driven by an addictive desiring-production which shifts irrepressibly from machine to machine, manifested in a caress of transient objects: people and things in passing (that is, things passing or him passing them). For now we shall consider the poetry as a direct case of desiring-production, and come later to how the issue of textual (as opposed to bodily) production augments this addictive process.

Deterritorialization. This dynamic explains Ferlinghetti's immersion in what he calls the "sweet street carnival" in Pictures of the Gone World (23), an energy field of intense connections, augmented by and augmenting, the poet's vivid perception, imagination and "energy of recording (Numen)" (Deleuze 76). For the poetry is conceived of as at once both intensely internal--"a kind of Coney Island of the mind, a kind of circus of the soul" (Coney 8)--and external--"The Street's Kiss."¹⁰

Poem 22 in Pictures of the Gone World celebrates this realm of deterritorialized desiring-production, gyrating through the sensations in the park, intensifying them through juxtapositions which seem casual yet which are mutually enhancing: "and girls / on the grass / and the breeze blowing and the streamers / streaming / and a fat man with a graflex / and a dark woman with a dark dog she called / Lucia". Here for example the streamers image engineers a sense of ecstatic, liberated desiring-production which animates beautifully the preceding image, and endows the subsequent perceptions with warmth and sensitivity. In poem 25, happiness is envisioned in this same spirit, as peripatetic joyful connections: "looking at everything / and smelling flowers / and goosing statues."

Temporality. This ephemeral flirting with a multitude of phenomena is a process of the migration of desiring-production from machine to machine, which entails a preference for transience over stasis. Vagrancy implies movement, and thus we see that deterritorialized desiring-production has two interdependent dimensions: space and time. In terms of time, then, stasis is associated with death and

loss for Ferlinghetti. He describes the "terrible depression" of a scene "In Golden Gate Park that day" (Coney 8), where "a man and his wife," unable to connect, "just lay there," a stillness which even challenges the birds "calling to each other / in the stilly air / as if they were questioning existence / or trying to recall something forgotten." The specification that this couple are married is important. Ferlinghetti rarely deems it significant to place his subjects in a family context. We are drawn here to see this relationship as "something forgotten" in terms of desire, held together only as a social convention, a repressive territorialization of desire.

In opposition to such stasis is the locomotive image of poem 2 in Pictures, where "the bright saloon careens along away / on a high hilltop / its windows full of bluesky and lovers," poignantly juxtaposed with the terminus which they can see in the distance but don't really comprehend; "wondering what that graveyard / where the rail ends / is." Train travel is a persistent motif in Ferlinghetti's poetry, which whether presented as a vehicle of perception, or a metaphor for the process of life, is clearly suited to the dynamic we are discussing, a process of transient encounters, driven by a process captured in the image "A train pulls out of Third Street Station / not going anywhere / discharge of aimless sexual energy."¹¹

Cinematic Effects. Larry Smith in his perceptive study of Ferlinghetti draws attention to the poet's "cinematic renderings of life" in his "fine sense of timing and image" (118). The psychoanalytic application I am discussing provides a mechanism for understanding this dynamic. To take one example, at the end of poem 13 of Pictures, after building a psychological portrait of a lover's sensitivity and sensuality, he focuses on a moment to watch her "sigh and rise / and stretch / her sweet anatomy / let fall a stocking". The spacing prolongs this moment, and the poem ends like a film cut, one which is an opening rather than a closure, a technique of erotic suggestiveness. The isolation of the last line suspends the moment, and leaves the tense of "let" open to a present-imperative reading which captures a sense of immediacy and involvement.

Cinematic technique, then, is a way of capturing the erotic transience of deterritorialized desiring-production, through vividness of focus, and control of time (primarily protraction of it).

Ferlinghetti is heavily influenced by Jacques Prevert, and the following description of that poet's style by Michael Benedikt couldn't better describe Ferlinghetti. It shows how a sensitive perception of such style points up the dynamic we have been discussing:

The poet's own diction is an implicit rebuke to this [sterile formality]: casual, colloquial, and fluid, alive with sudden shifts of mood, it moves with ease from sentiment to irony, anger to tenderness, flatness to a kind of ecstasy of delicacy.¹³

The phrase 'ecstasy of delicacy' captures the way Ferlinghetti's writing produces intensity in the way it flits from phenomenon to phenomenon.

The Poetics of Deterritorialized Deferral. We can now suggest a theory of the function of art in general in terms of desiring-production in order to further develop an understanding of Ferlinghetti's writing. At one level it is substitution; not in the sense that it is not desiring production, rather that it is limited to the internal sensations of the writer and reader. For Ferlinghetti it may be seen as partial compensation for the frustrations society sets up to block deterritorialized desiring-production, the social "constipations / that our fool flesh is heir to" (Pictures 25).

Secondly, as we noted in reference to "The Mouth of Truth," the fact that this involves substituting the textual for the actual is in itself a deferral, and thus can be seen as an active mechanism of eroticism.

More specifically, however, artistic desiring-production allows great control over forepleasure: in the spatial dimension, to deterritorialize desiring-production "over all the obscene boundaries" (the subtitle to his collection of European travel poetry)-- both in his Whitmanesque breadth of connection, and his surreal imagination, and temporally, to protract and preserve it. As we have seen, Ferlinghetti makes great use of this potential.

Overall, this process of artistic production can be compared with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the energy of recording (Numen).

The capture of eroticism (in the broadest sense of desiring-production) is the key to the role of art for Ferlinghetti. Like the people of "a new visionary society" envisioned in the poem "After the Cries of the Birds," his poems are "butterflies in amber / caught fucking life."¹⁴ For the essence of these poems is production, not representation, temporality not stasis. Their significance is to be found in their role as process, rather than as printed symbols. In his introduction to Anti-Oedipus Mark Seem says of those who "talk figures and icons and signs, but fail to perceive forces and flows [. . .]: their function is to tame" (Deleuze xx).

Ferlinghetti contrasts the bankruptcy of the icon with the vitality of desiring-production in "They were putting up the statue" (Coney 6). He describes the priest "propping up the statue

/ with all his arguments . . . while no birds sang / any Saint Francis passion / and while the lookers kept looking / up at Saint Francis" the poet perceives "passing thru the crowd / all the while / [. . .] a very purely naked young virgin / wearing only a very small / bird's nest / in a very existential place." The repetition of "all the while" emphasizes the sense of continuous flow and connections which the body manifests, "passing thru the crowd," although alienated from this "fabrication of docile and obedient subjects" going on around her (Deleuze xx), "her eyes downcast all the while / and singing to herself." Beyond the factor of being imaginary, she is typical of what creates an addictive fascination for Ferlinghetti, in her characterization as unattainable, ephemeral, and nomadic.

Objects of art for Ferlinghetti are valuable in their diachronic dimension, as freezings of, or elements of desiring-production, created in their active relationship with the viewer. This is the process of "I am waiting": "and I am perpetually waiting / for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn / to catch each other up at last / and embrace" (Coney 53). This image of the lovers frozen in the chase, into which the viewer's desire is woven, circulated into an infinite series on the Grecian Urn is a recurrent image in the poems which captures the function of art in Ferlinghetti's desiring-production.

This leads us to another issue which manifests this dynamic in the poet; his part in a counteraction to the dominant New Critical/New Formalist concept of art as a "verbal icon." This is a revolution he proclaims in "Populist Manifesto": "Poetry is dead, long live poetry."¹⁴ Even such critics as Murray Krieger, who in the light of post-structuralism reject the concept of the poem as having an objectively stable unity and closure of meaning, insist on the poem's essence as an illusion of closure created by conventions of interpretation. Krieger does not recognize, however, that "the dream of unity, of formal repetitions" is not a universal definition of poetry.¹⁵ This is because, like Freud's use of the Oedipus complex, he takes what he recognizes to be a particular social convention, and universalizes it. In this case it is the "need for closure" (Krieger 540) (my italics) and for the "structural apocalypse [of] an intrusion of the spatial imagination on the radical temporality of pure sequence" (Krieger 540). Krieger says of his universal subject:

The metaphorical habits he has learned from childhood, from religion, from previous traffic with the arts--leads him to seek an apocalypse, an end to history, in the work as he seeks in it to bring chronological time to a stop.¹⁶

A recent poem by Ferlinghetti, "Endless Life," is a paradigm for a poetic which seeks to avoid bringing time to a stop, revelling in "the flows of jazz and jism" produced in a progression of desiring machines. It sustains an intensive energy through six

pages of unbroken but ephemeral connections with an extensive spectrum of desiring-production, in which there is "no end to the sweet birth of consciousness." For Ferlinghetti is conscious of himself as a dynamo inside a dynamo, a process he reveals in: "Endless the ticking breathing breeding / meat-wheel of life" (210). The passage is not ended by any narrative, ideological or metaphorical closure, but breaks off and is followed by a short stanza which suggests apocalypse beyond the revelry, one that the poet puts off: "In the last days of Alexandria / The day before Waterloo / The dancing continues / There is a sound of revelry by night."

Thus Ferlinghetti's writing is intensely poetic, even though it emphasizes linear sequence over "the miracle of simultaneity" (Krieger 542). "The persistent impulse to close the form he creates and on our part to close the form we perceive" is neither his, nor necessarily ours (Krieger 540). The style of his deterritorialized deferral spins itself out against self-referential metaphorical closure. For one thing it is constantly inter-textual in its carnival of illusions, which connect non-exclusively between all realms and of culture. Secondly, in form not demarcated by punctuation, nor striving for a self-reflexive concentric enclosure of structure, concept or emotion, the poems are sections cut from, and creating, deterritorialized flow. This is the mode of production outlined by Foucault in his introduction to Anti-Oedipus: "Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems" (xiii). Whether the long flows of the "Oral Messages" or the meandering Open Field poems, they proceed as a chain of conjunctions, disjunctions and reproductions--inter-relating desiring-machines.

Obviously there are metaphors in Ferlinghetti's poems, but as a whole they avoid totalizing metaphorical closure in favor of metonymy. The dynamics of this association of desire with metonymy rather than metaphor, differs from Lacan's theory, which sees in metonymy a chain of substitutions predicated by lack, rather than the positive production of Deleuze and Guattari's theory, a linear process intensified in Ferlinghetti's writing by a compulsion to deferral.

Interrelated Features. I shall now examine how a variety of aspects of Ferlinghetti's poetry and life illuminate and are illuminated by an understanding of the addictive dynamic of Ferlinghetti's desiring-production.

1 Politics. An addictive attraction to deterritorialization of desire has political implications, extensively developed in Ferlinghetti's poetry. In 22 of Pictures for example, we saw Ferlinghetti's "crazy" democracy of the park. This is juxtaposed with the ironic bathos that closes the experience: when a man asks "are you by any chance a registered / DEMOCRAT." In 25, the activities which

constitute happiness are contrasted with "our Name Brand society" and the territorialization of "its priests / and other patrolmen."

Ferlinghetti's anarchism correlates clearly with this dynamic. Ferlinghetti was writing at a time of great disillusion with communism, especially after Krushchev's "secret speech" exposing Stalinism, and by the invasion of Hungary in 1956. This was also a time of great corruption and repression in the U.S. unions, often run as businesses, with heavy mafia involvement. In "A World Awash With Fascism And Fear" he protests against a society "where even unions are rank with the file of force." In a desire for a "nontotalitarian socialism," he opts for anarchism, combining deterritorialization with the engagement of desiring-production, in "the resocialization of poetry."¹⁷

That this deterritorialized desiring-production is implicitly revolutionary is clear in "In a Time of Revolution for Instance" where he contemplates a beautiful upper-class woman. He considers "when her eyes slid over me" that under other circumstances "in a time of revolution for instance / we might have made it" (Open) (Endless Life 102). In this form "Desire does not 'want' revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants" (Deleuze 116).

The sexual and internationalist politics of this addiction to deterritorialized desiring-production are envisioned in the liberating, comic and ecstatic ending of "The Situation in the West followed by a Holy Proposal."¹⁸ The proposal is for "an enormous hardcore Fuck Corps" to begin the process "in which to recognize ourselves at last across the world / over the obscene boundaries!": "And blessed by the fruit of transcopulation / and blessed be the fruit of transpopulation / and blessed by the fucking world with no more nations!"

i Zen. As Fromm expounds in Psycho-Analysis and Zen Buddhism, the liberation of the unconscious from surplus-repression has much in common with Zen. Ferlinghetti's use of Zen, then, is not surprising, though the way it intensifies his addictive desire is more complex, and can only be summarized here. The title of Ferlinghetti's Pictures of the Gone World suggests the Japanese genre "ukiyo-e," which translates literally as "passing-world pictures,"¹⁹ a term applicable to Ferlinghetti's immersion in process. However, as a result of his resistance to the repressions of reality, an attitude which Zen condemns as a move into the futile realm of karma (intervention and counter-intervention), this Zen sensitivity to phenomena only intensifies his addictive engagement with phenomena, since it instigates a sense of search and longing.

ii Bebop Jazz. Ferlinghetti was one of the pioneers of the poetry and jazz performances which became such an integral part of the Beat culture. The form of bebop jazz can clearly be seen in terms of

detrterritorialized deferral; its tone is one of artistic revolution, rejecting the prioritizing of formal repetition and regularity in favor of maximum freedom of variation, a satirical playfulness, and a tendency to protract and defer ending. Hence Ferlinghetti's collaboration, for as Larry Smith notes, his "form is both loose and direct, like jazz improvisation" (Smith 132). The psychology of Ferlinghetti's addictive dynamic parallels bebop jazz in its Dionysian attitude and aspiration of liberation in the face of repression. As Rexroth notes, "at its best his poetry, more than anybody else's, captures the rhythms of modern jazz, perhaps because he shares so many of the deeper life attitudes of the best jazz musicians."²⁰

iv Biographical Conjunctions. It is worth noting that Ferlinghetti's life history can be related to his poetic through this dynamic I am discussing, in quite striking ways. In Anti-Oedipus terminology his early experience was not "foreclosed" by the nuclear family. From his early years as an orphan he was passed from guardian to guardian, country to country, from immigrant to emigrant. This detrterritorialization has been sustained by his multilingualism and extensive travel, a dynamic pointed up by the title of his collection European Poems and Transitions: Over all the Obscene Boundaries. Politics, travel and poetry are interdependent in Ferlinghetti's life. He sees this dynamic as having been in process from the start: "I was a wind up toy / someone had dropped wound up" (Open 47). In a poem about his divorce using the San Francisco waterfront as a metaphor for a positive opening in his life, he uses the term "divorce" tellingly when he speaks unrepentantly of his life "on San Francisco waterfront where I spent most of my divorce from civilization" (Who 34). These attitudes are significant in understanding a general striking aspect of the poetry; the fact that the subjects he encounters, real or imaginary, are hardly ever established in any particular relationship with the poet's past or present life in general. Even when not explicitly strangers, they could be anyone from his wife to the most casual encounter. It is not that these encounters are impersonal--far from it--but they are anonymous in the literal sense, detrterritorialized from any identity exterior to the immediacy of their desiring-production.

Conclusion. In conclusion, then, we see that an analysis of Ferlinghetti's writing in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desiring-production and Freud's understanding of forepleasure, and related to the biographical and intellectual context of the poetry's production, can explain the peculiar addictive dynamic of these poems. It is a critical strategy useful to the understanding of other genres and writers, especially the Beats.

NOTES

- 1 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Moscow in the Wilderness, Segovia in the Snow (San Francisco: Beach, 1967).
- 2 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (London: Athlone, 1984) 54.
- 3 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, European Poems and Transitions (New York: New Directions, 1988) 61.
- 4 Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (London: Hogarth, 1974) 2.
- 5 Sigmund Freud, Zeitschrift fur sozial Forschung IV (Leipzig 1935) 395.
- 6 Sigmund Freud, The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life, Collected Papers (London: Hogarth, 1950) IV, 213.
- 7 An Outline of Psychoanalysis (London: Hogarth, 1949) 68-69.
- 8 "Tentative Description of a Dinner Given to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower" and Other Poems (Berkeley: Fantasy Records, 1959) cover notes.
- 9 Michel Foucault, Preface to Deleuze, xiii.
- 10 The Street's Kiss, unpublished, quoted in Larry Smith, Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U P, 1983) 55.
- 11 "The Situation in the West, Followed by a Holy Proposal," Starting from San Francisco (New York: New Directions, 1961) 58.
- 12 "Jacques Prevert," The Poetry of Surrealism (Boston: Little, 1974) 315.
- 13 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, After the Cries of the Birds (n.p.: Dave Haselwood Books, 1967).
- 14 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Who are We Now in Endless Life (New York: New Directions, 1976) 156.
- 15 Murray Krieger, "An Apology for Poetics," in Critical Theory Since 1965, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State U P, 1986) 542.
- 16 Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Endless Life (New York: New Directions, 1981) 210.
- 17 Lawrence Ferlinghetti in The San Francisco Poets (New York: Ballantine, 1971) 146.
- 18 In Lawrence Ferlinghetti, To Fuck is to Love Again (New York: Fuck You Press, 1965).
- 19 Wallace Stevens, Souvenirs and Prophecies, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Knopf, 1977) 211.
- 20 Richard Gray, American Poetry in the Twentieth Century (London: Longman, 1990) 166.

HERO AND HEROIN: OPIATE USE AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

Stephen Perrin

The ambiguous sexual identity of the junky has been a subject of discussion since the first major junky novel, Nelson Algren's The Man With the Golden Arm (1949). For Algren the central question was whether a drug which is a pain killer could be the hardman's drug--the drug a man turns to when whiskey and beer no longer work--or whether there is something essentially feminine in the desire to escape from pain. His hero, Frankie Machine, has something of the hardman swagger about him, seeing his addiction as entry into an exclusive club--"Nobody knows, just junkies. Just junkies know how everythin' is"--but, in fact, his most striking feature is his weakness. His repeated efforts to "tough out" junk sickness are all doomed to failure and he only succeeds in kicking when forced into it by incarceration.

Algren sees a strong vein of homosexual masochism running through the addict personality. The fixing process is introduced with a highly sexually charged scene between Frankie and his pusher, Nifty Louie Fomorowski, with the former pleading "Hit me, Fixer. Hit me. . . . Warm. Make me warm," while the latter takes his time, delaying the orgasm of the fix until "Frankie's whole body lifted with that smashing surge, the very heart seemed to lift up-up-up-then rolled over and he slipped into a long warm bath with one long orgasmic sigh of relief" (57-58). Similar homosexual suggestions occur later in the book when Frankie gets his friend, Sparrow, to fix him, the scene ending with a long back scratching session (256-61), and the series is completed by Frankie's dream of a monkey wearing Louie's green fedora, which implies a homosexual impulse in carrying the monkey:

Bent in a sort of crouching cunning there on the other side of the pane, it gave Frankie the look which womanish men employ in sharing an obscenity with their own kind. Frankie felt himself struggling to waken, for the monkey was tucking the covers about his feet, still wearing that same lascivious yet somehow tender look. Felt the unclean touch of its paw and saw its lips shyly seeking his own with Sparrow's pointed face. To kiss and be kissed." (288)

Given this, one can only assume that Algren would agree with Leslie Fiedler who, when writing about William Burroughs, suggested that addiction might be a way for a male to usurp the female role: "What could be more womanly," Fiedler asks, "than permitting the penetration of the body by a foreign object which not only stirs delight but even (possibly) creates new life?" Psychological research has given some credence to this theory, Kaldegg reporting that male addicts measured on Kraut's "Personal Preference Scale" scored significantly lower on the "masculinity" and higher on the "femininity" scales than "normals," although femininity did not

exceed masculinity as with homosexuals.' While Algren sets this tendency in a negative light, others have seen it as an essential step for the hero to escape the castrating threat of women and, truly, the junky hero does seem to be moving towards a mythological solution.

Unlike more traditional heroic figures, who tend to just run away from women, the junky, by moving towards androgyny, attempts to deal with the female by combination rather than exclusion. The mythical androgyne is a symbol of perfection, reconciling masculine and feminine oppositions. Both the Dionysic and Orphic religions are presided over by "a god-man of androgynous character" and while Dionysian ritual was associated with wine and bisexual erotic fulfillment, junky ritual might be said to take things one step further, being auto, if not post, erotic. McLuhan has written on man's development of tools as a process of "outering" "some part of his being in material technology": the wheel as foot, hammer as fist and so on." If this is true then we must see the hypodermic as an "outered" penis which, by its detachability, has freed the junky hero from the bother of external relationships. Not only does the junky become his own lover (able to pleasure himself) but his own father (creating his life over again with each new injection) and his own mother (the outered penis becoming an outered nipple to suck upon in times of stress). Not only can this isolated hero survive without the consolation of a Queequeg, a Chingachgook, or even a Kurtz but also, when he decides to clean up, he can become his own damsel in distress and set about rescuing himself.

Understandably, then, androgyny is big business in junk-related literature. In Burroughs' The Wild Boys (1971) we find a homosexual creation myth with the rectum assuming the role of "the rose" more commonly undertaken by the vagina. For the young Jim Carroll a mother fixation and androgynous sexuality get all mixed up, the youth's predilection for older women--"Call me Oedipus"--leading him into a relationship in which his partner dresses him up as a woman and treats him as if he were her mother: "so after a while I don't know if I'm goddam male or female, mommy or daddy, sugar or spice or puppy dog tails" (Carroll 138).

Others have suggested a feminine nature for the opiates themselves. Joe Speaker, the junky hero of Seth Morgan's Homeboy (1990), has a face-off with a young black crack addict and considers his position:

How alike we are, Joe thought to keep himself distracted--yet how alien. Both addicts, but I to escape the life I was given and he to gain the one withheld. It's no coincidence that cocaine and heroin are called boy and girl on the street. This youngblood staring at me exalts the ego that I shun, surcharges the reality I dim, uses the violence that sickens me to get his dick hard."

A similar gendering of drugs may have influenced the lyrics of the Rolling Stones' song, Dead Flowers, in which the protagonist informs a scorned lover: "I'll be in my basement room with a needle and a spoon / And another girl can take my pain away."

At its peak, in the works of William Burroughs, this gender bending becomes a celebration of radical homosexuality. In Junky (1953), having rejected the "way of life . . . vocabulary, references . . . symbol system" of "the international queer set" and stated that his hatred of homosexuals stems from their effeminacy (72), William Lee attempts to make the move from outsider to outlaw. Throughout Burroughs' work the writer has shown an equal attraction towards drugs, guns and boys, possibly because within an all-encompassing criminal environment homosexuality becomes simply another aspect of the gangster persona. Far from Algren's equation of homosexuality with weakness, Burroughs turns sexual deviation into an overt rejection of bourgeois norms of behavior.

For Burroughs the junk world is a man's world. There are not female addicts and the only woman affiliated to junky society is the grotesque mother figure of Lola/Lupita the Mexican pusher. The first junkies that Lee meets--Joey and Herman--also happen to be gay and the guns-drugs-boys connection is further strengthened by the fact that Lee's first morphine syrettes are delivered along with a hot tommy gun, thus giving further credence to his adopted outlaw persona.

In his early work, however, Burroughs, is equally concerned to show how opiates can take the individual outside the sexual rattrace and, as in the scene from The Man With The Golden Arm, discussed above, in Junky we are shown how junk can come to replace sex. This time, though, Algren's values are inverted as we are taken through an entire seduction scene with junky and pusher taking on the roles of female and male lover respectively. The scene opens with anticipation:

When you are on the junk, the pusher is like the loved one to the lover. You wait for his special step in the hall, his special knock, you scan the approaching faces on a city street. You can hallucinate every detail of his appearance as though he were standing there in the doorway. (139)

Moves to connection: "I felt a touch of the old excitement like meeting someone you used to go to bed with and suddenly the excitement is there and you both know that you are going to go to bed again" (140). On to consummation:

My breath was short with excitement and my hands shook.
 "Hit me, will you, Ike?"
 Old Ike poked a gentle finger along the vein, holding the

dropper poised between thumb and fingers. Ike was good. I hardly felt the needle slide in the vein. Dark, red blood spurted into the dropper.

"O.K.," he said. "Let it go."

I loosened the tie, and the dropper emptied into my vein. Coke hit my head, a pleasant dizziness and tension, while the morphine spread through my body in relaxing waves. (140)

And, finally, to satiation: "'Was that all right?' asked Ike, smiling. 'If God made anything better, he kept it for Himself,' I said" (140-41). To complete the scene the couple even share a post-coital cigarette.

In contrast to the heroic self-containment of the addict, the danger of connection with others is stressed in Junky's sequel, Queer (1985), which is, basically, a book about the degrading power of sexuality. Lee's attraction to the young American, Eugene Allerton, causes him to repeatedly humiliate himself, a possibility from which he was protected while on opiates. As a junky Lee's sexual interest remains present in a vague sort of way but he is still able to retain his cool. Noticing a prospective sexual partner he calmly considers: "I could use that, if the family jewels weren't in pawn to Uncle Junk."¹⁰ This contrasts sharply with a similar incident later in the book when Lee is in the process of kicking:

As Lee stood aside to bow in his dignified old-world greeting, there emerged instead a leer of naked lust, wrenched in the pain and hate of his deprived body and, in simultaneous double exposure, a sweet child's smile of liking and trust, shockingly out of time and place, mutilated and hopeless. (34)

In Queer Lee is "a frantic and inept Lazarus" (12) looking to score sexually and constantly subject to "the aching pain of desire" (40). Requiring a substitute for his all-consuming need for opiates he forms a compulsive attachment to Allerton and is consumed by a "Gnawing emptiness and fear," analogous to narcotic withdrawal, when he is away from the object of his desires (80). Carrying other aspects of the drug world into the sexual situation, Lee feels a compulsion to pay for sex with Allerton, offering to get the boy's camera out of hock after their first shared experience and, thus, instigates what will become a seemingly endless stream of meals, drinks, bribes, and foreign travel which form the basis of their relationship. For their South American trip sex is arranged on a contractual basis; in exchange for living expenses and a round-trip ticket, Allerton agrees to "be nice to Papa . . . twice a week" (75).

By abandoning the junky persona, Lee, it would seem, has gone beyond incorporation of the female and become the female, transforming himself, despite the patriarchal epithet, into a devouring mother determined to tie Allerton down.

Mothers and wives, of course, have long been the nemesis of the male heroes of American literature, not only, as Fiedler would have it, because they represent domesticity and the end of adventure but also because the female arouses desire in the male and thus reminds him of the weakness of his body. As we have seen, opiates can help a man to overcome this desire but in doing so they merely channel desire in another direction and, ultimately, reveal another form of physical weakness. This seemingly overwhelming dual threat to the body from sex and drugs may well have influenced Burroughs' move towards descriptions of out-of-body experiences in his later works. Only by leaving his body behind can the hero be free from desire.

NOTES

- 1 Nelson Algren, The Man With the Golden Arm (London: Spearman, 1959) 261.
- 2 Leslie Fiedler, The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler (New York: Stein, 1971) 397.
- 3 A. Kaldegg, "Aspects of Personal Relationships in Heroin Dependent Young Men: An Experimental Study," British Journal of Addiction, 70 (1975): 277-286.
- 4 D. Henderson, in Jung, C. G., ed., Man and His Symbols (London: Picador, 1978) 134.
- 5 M. McLuhan, The Guttenberg Galaxy (New York: Signet, 1969) 314.
- 6 William Burroughs, The Wild Boys (London: Calder, 1972) 74-75.
- 7 Jim Carroll, The Basketball Diaries and The Book of Nods (London: Faber, 1987) 158.
- 8 Seth Morgan, Homeboy (London: Chatto, 1990) 18.
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WILLIAM BURROUGHS AND ALLEN GINSBERG: MAKING IT MORE "REAL,"
"REALITY EFFECTS," DOUBTS, AND POSTMODERNIST CONCERNS

Tom Roder

All mind-altering drugs (including alcohol) seem to have a curious and paradoxical double nature or manifestation and this is witnessed by all mature and extended writing produced under the influence, or more commonly, under the memory of the influence of drugs (perhaps, to misquote, the spontaneous overflow of powerful drugs recollected in sobriety). This double force makes the drug experience one of unreliability, confusion, indeterminacy, but at the same time can make things more "real" or, in fact, "real." The world, apparently is not only re-experienced, or fully experienced but really experienced--experienced as being "real." A psychology student having taken LSD for the first time:

I have just come back from seeing the world for the first time. A little over two hours ago by watch time I went out to eat dinner, and I'll be damned if life isn't beautiful. I sat in the restaurant just enjoying living. Everything seemed so clear and beautiful. It was like looking at the world for the very first time and thinking to yourself, how beautiful, how sensuous!¹

So here we have part of a "moving letter from an ordinary guy" (Cohen 20) and implicit in his account are the problems which engage and infuse so much writing produced under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The writer has "come back" (the etymology of "trip" here becomes obvious), and now has the problem of not only making sense of it, an epistemological problem, but of conveying its "reality." This, of course, is a concern of practically all writing: how is one to make verbal signs represent or convey felt experience? This is touched upon, from another direction, in Barthes' essay "The Reality Effect":

What the irreducible residues of functional analysis have in common is that they denote what is commonly called "concrete reality"; casual movements, transitory attitudes, insignificant objects, redundant words. Unvarnished representation of "reality," a naked account of "what is" or was, thus looks like a resistance to meaning, a resistance which confirms the great mythical opposition between the true-to-life (the living) and the intelligible.²

This "resistance to meaning" seems to be multiplied or inflamed by the experience of the "real" under drink and drugs and can be seen in many different relationships of antagonism and tension with the necessary structure and "function" (Barthes 15) of writing (particularly narrative). The "having been there of things" (Barthes 15) is not usually seen as being sufficient reason for writing about them.

To begin with I wish to consider "reality" in the sense of a felt authenticity of perception in relation to two works by William Burroughs, Junkie, and The Naked Lunch. (the latter often considered a re-working of many of the experiences represented in the earlier book).³

Variants of the word "real" are used twice in Junkie. firstly in a description of Bill Gains, a fellow heroin addict:

Gains was aware of his talent for invisibility, and at times he felt the need for holding himself together so he would at least have enough flesh to put the needle in. At these times he would assemble all his claims to reality. Now he brought out a worn manilla envelope. He showed me a discharge from Annapolis "for the good of the service," an old, dirty letter from my friend, the captain," a card to the Masons and a card to the Knights of Columbus (68).

Here "reality" is denoted by small material objects from the "real" world; this is, apparently, the world which has nothing to do with drugs or addicts, a place of authority, social distinctions, recommendations and credentials.

The second example is from an account of a two week drinking spree that William Lee (a pseudonym of Burroughs which recurs throughout his writing) spent in Mexico City:

"Esta cargardo,"--("It's loaded")--said the bartender, without looking up from the gun.

I intended to say, "Of course--what good is an unloaded gun?" but I did not say anything. The scene was unreal and flat and pointless, as though I had forced my way into someone else's dream, the drunk wandering out on to the stage. (133)

Here there is a unified mood of unreality, the feeling of not really being present. In Junkie, people are defined and reduced by their craving for junk, and when ever they are differentiated and individualized it is only in terms of their particular attitude to junk, its physical and mental effects on them, their particular habits and patterns as induced by junk and the practical minutiae of where they procure it, the amounts they need to take.

In the introduction to The Naked Lunch: "deposition: testimony concerning a sickness", the genesis and meaning of the title is explained:

The title was suggested by Jack Kerouac. I did not understand what the title meant until my recent discovery. The title means exactly what the words say: NAKED Lunch--a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork. (7)

Allen Ginsberg supports the efficacy of the "frozen moment" in his friend's work with a poem ("On Burrough's Work") that neatly delineates its vitality, purity and "reality":

The method must be purest meat
and no symbolic dressing,
actual visions & actual prisons
as seen then and now.

Prisons and visions presented
with rare descriptions
corresponding exactly to those
of Alcatraz and Rose

A naked lunch is natural to us,
we eat reality sandwiches.
But allegories are so much lettuce.
Don't hide the madness.'

As Burroughs explains, the "reality" for the addict is his/her relationship with "junk":

Junk yields a basic formula of "evil" virus: The Algebra of Need. The face of "evil" is always the face of total need. A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control. In the words of total need: "Wouldn't you?" Yes you would. (Naked Lunch 9)

There is no doubt or slippage here, the terms are exact and the calculation has an axiomatic quality which does not need justification but only satisfaction. However, after the rallying call ("Paragoric Babies of the World Unite," Naked Lunch 18) of the discursive introduction, the text of The Naked Lunch becomes what Jeff Nuttall in Bomb Culture: 1968 calls an

angry circus in which the sick joke is not only a weapon against society but against human physical existence itself. Its implication is that we have been conned into our nauseous vulnerable bodies. It sets out to dislocate the mental norm that keeps us there in the flesh by schizoid juxtaposition of humor, nausea and . . . an exquisite grace of prose.'

Another illumination of this awareness of the "nauseous, vulnerable body" is given a gentler exploration by Marshall Blonsky in his introduction to On Signs:

Barthes thought that as sense can go from our words, departing like soap bubbles from a child's blow-toy, so sense can depart a whole life. You feel a panic suspension of language as you write, talk to students, etc.; a blank by no means agreeable.

Language in its sense-making function is a veil of Maya. The fabrications of signs--symbols and reasoning, metaphors and syllogisms--carry us away from the sentiment of being a body. Producing vital meaning, we articulate not according to the body's beat but according to a civilized (rhetorical, linguistic) organization that removes any possibility of delirium. The body lives (in haste, desire, anxiety, mounting pleasure and so on) when language ceases, or ceases to make sense.

A close friend of Barthes told me that Roland hated his body as he lived. Dying, in the hospital, a respirator tube in his throat, Barthes said (I was told) that he felt decapitated, as if he were only a head. He told his semiotic followers in New York that he was feeling himself to be flesh, a body without vital spirit or breath, just meat. It was an unendurable condition.

Barthes turned the Lacanian instrument onto a teaching, writing life--his own. The time unfortunately has come to turn it onto the movement that is partially his--modern semiotics. At present this semiotic instrument, like that life, is doomed to repetition, because of failure of theory, because of abstracting, ahistorical discourse, because of a language with little responsibility towards the real.⁴

It is strange that Blonsky seems to oppose signs and the "real" body. The body might also be thought to be only traversable and knowable by signs.⁷

A further realization about the vulnerability of the body, accentuated by drug experience is given by Ginsberg: "Grass sometimes gives you the feeling of your body being mortal, the body dying, and the body being fragile." Here the repetition of "body" enacts a presence and solidity only to be undermined in each clause by the co-presence of the term of vulnerability or mortality and the intransitive "being"; a living while dying.

Under the paramount and governing rubric of drug dependency and release it seems that all other "realities" are fluid, open to multiple transformation (often of a startlingly visceral nature), and seen through a kaleidoscope, with the infinity of juxtapositions and indeterminacies that entails. But the achieved effect is not that this is how "reality" is appropriated and transformed but this is how "reality" really might be, to repeat, a "NAKED Lunch--a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork."

There are a number of foregrounded effects in The Naked Lunch which Burroughs uses to make us conscious of the disjoin of text and life, the "reality" of our experience as readers.

Compared to Junkie, where unfamiliar drug terminology, and slang terms, are explained in a glossary at the end of the book,

detached from the text, the explanations (in The Naked Lunch) are helpfully, playfully and obtrusively interpolated in the main text, the parentheses they appear within somehow only drawing more attention to them and the explanations vying, with their (often) sensational content for our attention in preference to the main text. For example:

He decided to visit a colleague, NG Joe, who got hooked during a Bang-utot attack in Honolulu.

(Note: Bang-utot, literally, "attempting to get up and groaning . . ." Death occurring in the course of a nightmare . . . The condition occurs in males of S.E. Asiatic extraction . . . In Manila about twelve cases of death by Bang-utot are recorded each year.

One man who recovered said that "a little man" was sitting on his chest and strangling him.

Victims often know that they are going to die, express the fear that their penis will enter the body and kill them. Sometimes they cling to the penis in a state of shrieking hysteria calling on others for help lest the penis escape and pierce the body. Erections, such as normally occur in sleep, are considered especially dangerous and liable to bring fatal attack . . . One man devised a Rube Goldberg contraption to prevent erection during sleep. But he died to Bang-utot.

Careful autopsies of Bang-utot victims have revealed no organic reason for death. There are often signs of strangulation [caused by what?]; sometimes slight hemorrhages of pancreas and lungs--not sufficient to cause death and also of unknown origin. It has occurred to the author that the cause of death is a misplacement of sexual energy resulting in a lung erection with consequent strangulation . . . [See article by Nils Larsen, M.D., The Men with Deadly Dream in the Saturday Evening Post, December 3, 1955. Also article by Earle Stanley Gardner for True Magazine.] (91)

This entertaining digression with pseudo-scientific conjectures and contraptions, references to further articles and even further embedded (and further removed) comment by author/editor/publisher (?), "[caused by what?]," gains a parallel in the extended footnote commentary by de Selby in The Third Policeman by Flan O'Brien and the overweight exegesis that takes the form of end-notes in Nabokov's Pale Fire (1962). Burroughs comments with self-parodying intent on the disruptive and comic effect of these digressions:

NG lived in constant fear of erection so his habit jumped and jumped. (Note: It is a well known tiresome fact, it is a notoriously dull and long winded fact, that anyone who gets hooked because of any disability whatever, will be presented, during the periods of shortage or deprivation [such a thing as too much fun you know] with an outrageously padded, geometrically progressing, proliferating account.) (92)

Other parenthetical interpolations, to catalogue but a few, concern the smell of "Catnip" (22), "lymphogranuloma, 'climatic buboes'" (60), and the literal silence of *Anopheles mosquitos* (65). These foregrounded interpolations move towards what Brian McHale denotes the "postmodernist split text, two or more texts arranged in parallel, to be read simultaneously--to the degree that that is possible" (190). McHale consigns the "split text" to the general rubric of "schizoid text[s]" (190) and in Burroughs' work it is possible to find many of these splittings most obviously in The Last Words of Dutch Schultz: a Fiction in the Form of a Film Script (1970) where the text is divided into photographic/graphic and written material (which is further split into directorial instruction and dialogue: "ACTION/SOUND").

Repetition of certain (usually particularly memorable) words and phrases is another foregrounded effect in The Naked Lunch which chimes through the text reminding the reader of a highly planned narrative structure, awakening him/her to the reality of textual engagement. Some examples of repeated words, phrases and sentences are: "The Mugwump has no liver, maintaining himself exclusively on sweets"; "Under silent wings of the anopheles mosquito"; "Liquefaction"; "Interzone"; "Insect's unseeing calm"; ". . . and now I will unlock my Word Hoard"; ". . . cold and intense, predatory and impersonal"; ". . . by the urine of a million fairies"; ". . . vulture wings husk in the dry air."

"Split text" mechanisms and the repetition of key phrases disrupt any desire for a smooth, unreflexive, reading of the narrative, one being a form of authorial interruption, the other being a foregrounded structural effect; both seem to be a feature of the post-modernist (and sometimes modernist) text as defined and discussed by Brian McHale (191-5) and both are simultaneously unreality/reality devices as they expose the narrative as artificial construct (de-naturalize it, make it less "real") but alert the reader to the "real" situation of textual production, which might be: "The literary object is a peculiar top which exists only in movement. To make it come into view a concrete act called reading is necessary, and it lasts only as this act can last."¹⁰

The parenthetical interpolations in The Naked Lunch are an obvious foregrounded effect representative of the formal pattern of the whole book. There are also much longer embedded texts which undermine our expectation of the function of secondary information. As Lodge writes "it would seem to be a general rule that where one kind of aesthetic presentation is embedded in another the 'reality' of the embedded form is weaker than that of the framing form."¹¹ However, in the film screened at a j.'s annual party:

the context in which the passage [. . .] is embedded is no more "realistic" than the passage itself: indeed it is in many ways less so. That is to say, although the events reported in this passage are "impossible," the style in which they are reported

is clear, lucid and for the most part of the kind appropriate to descriptions of actuality . . . when we come to the Orgasm Death Gimmick, no norms have been established by which its nauseating grotesquerie can be measured and interpreted in the way intended by Burroughs. (Lodge 37-38)

This could refer us back to Nuttal (above), "it sets out to dislocate the mental norm that keeps us there, in the flesh by schizoid juxtapositions. . . ." This dislocation or disorientation is, as McHale (117) points out, retrograde in terms of both satiric and pornographic effect (both of these demand some pandering to, warming of, identification on the part of the reader). Instead there is a confusion of levels, a merging of "flavors,"¹¹ which McHale sees as being paradigmatically post-modernist in "undermining the ontological status of the primary diegesis" (117).

This merging of flavors with its concomitant destabilizing of "reality" (or the necessity to re-see the real) is manifested in local, detailed and often lyrical passages of transformation and metamorphosis, as in the following grotesque Archimboldo-like conflation and liquefaction (note liquefaction as a "key" word, above) of animal, vegetable, insect, human, and manufactured matter:

the Old Man scream curses after him . . . his teeth fly from his mouth and whistle over the boy's head, he strain forward, his neck-cords tight as steel hoops, black blood spurt in one solid piece over the fence and he fall a fleshless mummy by the fever grass. Thorns grow through his ribs, the window break in his hut, dusty glass-slivers in black putty--rats run over the floor and boys jack off in the dark musty bedroom on summer afternoons and eat berries that grow from his body and bones, moths smeared with purple-red juices. (Naked Lunch 116)

These compound, amorphous transformations have the disconcertingly simultaneous double effect of reminding us of our happier perceptions of what it means to be a human being. They expose our real (here not "real") vulnerability to physical change and the inevitability of ultimate putrefaction. The extreme demonstration is in the descriptions of the "pure scientist" (Naked Lunch 153) Benway who recounts the effect of "un-D.T., Undifferentiated Tissue, which can grow into any kind of flesh on the human body" (Naked Lunch 155). This "Undifferentiated Tissue" perhaps a visceral, organic correlate of pan-significance (in the sense Todorov uses this concept in The Fantastic¹²) gives rise to an unexpected (mock) moral/political peroration by Benway which achieves a more characteristic surreal and gruesome genital and scatological grandeur or grandiosity:

That's the sex that passes the censor, squeezes through between bureaus, because there's always a space between. in

popular songs and Grade B movies, giving away the basic American rottenness, spurting out like breaking boils, throwing out globs of that un-D.T. to fall anywhere and grow into some degenerate cancerous life-form, reproducing a hideous random image. Some would be entirely made of penis-like erectile tissue, others viscera barely covered over with skin, clusters of 3 and 4 eyes together, criss-cross of mouth and assholes, human parts shaken around and poured out any way they fell. (Naked Lunch 155)

The reader becomes so engaged in the process of transformation here that he/she loses track of the exact stages. The "basic American rottenness" mutates and proliferates in a series of metaphors until with the sentence beginning "Some would be entirely made of penis-like erectile tissue, . . ." these metaphors are completely lost as metaphors and acquire a literal life.

A further example of a merging liquefaction, a losing of individual "flavor" (another wholly negative response to a felt pan-significance), occurs in Carl Peterson's interview with Dr. Benway:

Carl suddenly felt trapped in this silent underwater cave of a room, cut off from all sources of warmth and certainty. His picture of himself sitting there calm, alert with a trace of well mannered contempt went dim, as if vitality were draining out of him to mix with the milky grey medium of the room. (Naked Lunch 213)

In "Aether" (from the collection Kaddish And Related Poems, 1959-1960) (Ginsberg, 242) written under the influence of aether (understandably enough, perhaps), beginning "4 Sniffs and I'm High," it's possible to find neatly juxtaposed in Poundian fragments and floating in lines of variable length and various indentation three concerns of this chapter.

We are alerted to the first concern by Portugés in The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg, where Ginsberg is characterized in his "drug poems" as "poet-prophet as a seer, penetrating beneath the surface of reality" (71). This, incidentally, is a curious use of words by Portugés as it suggests that "reality" is a feature of the surface of things but does not explain what we find underneath this surface; further "realities"? more "reality"? "unreality"? However, Portugés' use of clichés is, after all, perhaps, not a misuse, for when we look at "Aether" we find, as in The Naked Lunch, a confusing equivalence of levels, an indeterminate embedding of data, where "Every possible combination of Being," (l.27), or at least as many as exist in this poem are thrown up (or down) to the same level for consideration, quickly to be released for the next jazzy, shard-image. There are sages sitting "crosslegged on / a female couch-," (l. 37-8), "a car passing in the 1960 street / beside the Governmental Palace / in Peru, this Lima / year I write," (l. 48-51), a "salute" (l. 52) to

Jack Kerouac, a misquotation and re-application of Pound ("Breake the Rhythm! (too much pentameter)", (l. 59), a bell that rings "in view of the Creation," (l. 65), "arched eyebrows & Jewish Smile," (l. 56), in the space of thirty lines.

The second concern is implied by the first; this is the proliferation and equivalence of represented worlds which short circuit any singular construction of "reality." This multiplication of worlds is explicit and gains force by re-iteration and re-statement:

. . . all the old Hindu
 Sabahadabadie-pluralic universes
 ringing in Grandiloquent
 Bearded Juxtaposition,
 with all their minarets and moonlit
 towers enlaced with iron
 or porcelain embroidery,
 all have existed- (28-35).

I know I am a poet--in this universe--but what good
 does that do
 -when in another, without these mechanical aids, I might be
 doomed to be
 a poor Disneyan Shoe Store Clerk--This consciousness an
accident of one
 of the Ether-possible worlds, not the Final World (172-75)

"Ignorant Judgments Create Mistaken Worlds-" (l. 245)

Stop conceiving worlds!
 says Philip Whalen
 (My Saviour!) (oh what snobbery!)
 (as if he cd save Anyone)- (271-74)

The last example which begins as a firm (and probably anxious) injunction is ironically undermined; first by being attributed to a specific speaker, and then by the mocking, and somewhat camp, tone of "My Saviour!", the (mock) indignation of "oh what snobbery!", and the curt dismissal, "as if he cd save Anyone." Further, the irony is compounded by these little detached universes/worlds of speech/discourse, the parentheses (and parentheses always suggest the whole circle/globe/world they potentially embrace) imply by separating them from the surrounding text. As if Philip Whalen hadn't already been comprehensibly dismissed (or more accurately bracketed into his own small world where "Stop conceiving worlds!" features) Ginsberg petulantly finishes him off by constructing another world:

At least, he won't understand.
 I lift my finger in the air to create

a universe he won't understand, full
of sadness. (275-78)

The third concern deals with the difficulty in re-presenting this "reality," making the writing "real" in relation to what is experienced, and/or "real" in its own terms. This is a particular preoccupation of Ginsberg. In "Aether" the notion of writing is comically deflated, "an owl with eyeglasses scribbling in the / cold darkness" (8-9), and,

To be a poet's a
serious occupation,
condemned to that
in universe-
to walk the city
ascribbling in
a book- (378-84)

It is also seen as something magical, but with a magic that can be impaired if one is foolish enough to try it while under the influence of drugs:

Yes! this is the one universe in which
there is threat to magic, by
writing while high.

A Universe in which I am condemned to write statements.
(241-44)

"Statement" here seems to stress a felt limitation of a symbolic language system; it implies a rhetorical position which is only (or merely) a re-presentation or overlay on something that is "real."

These three concerns teeter between the quotation by Dick Higgins in A Dialectic of Centuries, 1978, which McHale has appropriated for the beginning of his book: "The Cognitive Questions (asked by most artists of the 20th century, Platonic or Aristotelian, till around 1958): 'How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?'" "The Postcognitive Questions (asked by most artists since then): 'Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?'" (1).

One of the problems of writing under the influence of drugs (in this instance LSD) is explored by Ginsberg in answer to a question by Portugés:

Portugés: The Wales acid experience also helped you overcome other problems didn't it?"

Ginsberg: Yeah, that trip solved the big problem I had always had about writing on acid, a psychological problem. It had always seemed that observation impeded function--in the sense that the desire to write a tremendous visionary poem on acid

always plugged me into self-conscious hell. I felt that because I had a fixed idea, perhaps a totally passive, inert state of consciousness while in a state of acid vision, that it seemed contradictory to write. Or, that writing seemed to interrupt the compendium of multitudinous detail noticed in the acid visionary state. I always had trouble writing while on acid, as in my "Mescaline" and "Lysergic Acid" poems--which were records of bum trips. The bum trip seemed connected somewhat with the self-conscious stereotyping of myself as a poet writing. In other words, I was still looking for a vision, trying to superimpose the acid vision on the old memory of a cosmic-consciousness, or to superimpose an old memory on the acid vision--so that I was not living in the present time, not noticing so much of what was in front of me. You can pick up this dilemma in another poem, "Magic Psalm." (121)

Ginsberg has taken pains (at least interview pains) to define the word "hallucination" in a non-drug sense. The world(s) of "Aether" might be splintered, confused and indeterminate in their relations but this is how he saw it and "The world is as we see it," a complex and questing state:

Humbled & more knowledgeable, acknowledge
 the Vast mystery of our creation--
 without giving any sign that
 we have heard from the

GREAT CREATOR (181-85)

This can be juxtaposed with the truly hallucinatory state:

I remember Burroughs saying during one presidential campaign, I think when Truman was running for president, that if an elephant had walked up in front of all those candidates in the middle of a speech and shat on the ground and walked away, the candidate would have ignored it. Consciousness wasn't present there on the occasion when they were talking, consciousness was an abstract, theoretical state. A theoretical nation, the actual nation was not there. Which is basically the same thing that Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams and Sherwood Anderson had been saying all along. So we saw the difference between our own speech, our own company, and the national company full of Ionescoesque hallucinations of language.¹⁴

So, it would seem, in this formulation, that "reality" can be a "cosmic-consciousness," and it can be in the irreducible facts and objects of our world(s),¹⁵ but it is at furthest remove from the blind posturings and language games of American politicians who really reside in the realm of the hallucinatory. While Ginsberg states that true vision cannot be achieved by these delusive practices it is possible to have a positive "hallucination" where one sees/re-perceives by transporting the commonplace, quotidian

"reality" to a less familiar realm in an action which he calls catalyzing:

My intention was to catalyze the world, to catalyze my perceptions so that I would see trees--like in my poem "The Trembling of the Veil" [in Empty Mirror]--"as live organisms on the moon!" Live organisms on the moon seem to be otherworldly, as well as humorous. (Portugés 111)

Ginsberg also acknowledges the "reality" of negative hallucinations:

Some of those acid trips were like a touching of a reptilian consciousness which Burroughs has written about very well. I actually saw the universe as a vast serpent or dragon, a slow moving dragon. . . . Yeah, I remember being seated like a seraph king or something, surrounded by the "reptile Devas of my Karma," meaning Peter [Peter Orlovsky, Ginsberg's longtime friend and companion], who looked like a reptile. We were in the garden of Eden, and he was some kind of Eve reptile. It was hard to reassure him of my good intentions. He went through a lot of shit with me because I kept getting scared. (Portugés 119)

The difference between this sort of hallucination and the type manifested by the American politician is that Ginsberg is able to move out of this state and recognize it for what it is, whereas the politician is trapped in his manufactured "reality." The language used by Ginsberg explicitly registers the hallucination but it is not the (self)deluding politician's "hallucinations of language."

NOTES

1 Sidney Cohen, Drugs of Hallucination (St. Albans: Paladin, 1970; first published by Secker and Warburg, 1965) 19.

2 Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in French Literary Theory Today, ed. Tzvetan Todorov, trans. R. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1982) 14.

3 William Burroughs, Junkie, 1953 (London: New English, 1966); William Burroughs, The Naked Lunch, 1959 (London: Corgi, 1974).

4 Allen Ginsberg, Collected Poems: 1947-1980 (London: Penguin, 1987) 114.

5 Eric Mottram, William Burroughs (London: Marion Boyars, 1977) 44.

6 Marshall Blonsky, On Signs (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) xv.

7 This might be compared to Lacan's "real," the undifferentiated material realm we have no access to. "The 'real' emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary: it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its 'raw' state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic x .

This Lacanian concept of the 'real' is not to be confused with reality, which is perfectly knowable: the subject of desire knows no more than that, since for it reality is entirely phantasmatic." (Alan Sheridan, translator's note, Ecrits, by Jacques Lacan (Tavistock, England: Tavistock, 1977) ix-x.

8 Paul Portugés, The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erickson, 1978) 113.

9 Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction. 1987 (London: Routledge, 1989) 191.

10 Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature?, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Gloucester, Mass.: n.p., 1978) 34.

11 David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing (London: Arnold, 1977) 37.

12 Douglas Hofstadter, Gödel, Escher, Bach (London, Penguin, 1980) 128.

13 Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve U P, 1973) 112. (Cf also Lacan on Hieronymus Bosch and dismemberment in Ecrits. 4: "This fragmented body--which term I have also introduced into our system of theoretical references--usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions--the very same that the visionary Hieronymus Bosch has fixed, for all time, in painting, in their ascent from the fifteenth century to the imaginary zenith of modern man. But this form is even tangibly revealed at the organic level, in the lines of fragilization that define the anatomy of phantasy, as exhibited in the schizoid and spasmodic symptoms of hysteria." [A further reference to Bosch and dismemberment is found on 11-12,13]).

14 Allen Ginsberg, Composed on the Tongue. ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1980) 71.

15 This is given definition by Ginsberg in his interview with Portugés about drugs: "the 'Marijuana Notation' poem goes from the general, abstract space out through to sudden focus on particular detail." (Portugés, 110).

HALLUCINATORY REALITY IN DAVID CRONENBERG'S NAKED LUNCH

Sue Vice

The presence of hallucination in a film is unsettling; rather like a story about a novelist whose novel is represented in the novel, it is not only a frame-breaking device but an example of mis-en-abyme, in which a part of the work symbolizes the whole work. The hallucinating character is in a position similar to the spectator of the film who is also encouraged to believe in an illusory spectacle. To take this comparison further, in a film hallucination can be "about" the mode of the film's own production. The Lawnmower Man (1992) is a romance about virtual reality, and much of its running time is spent showing the spectator what Jobe, a contemporary Frankenstein's monster, sees through his virtual reality spectacles. It is a film about special effects (virtual reality) which uses special effects (computer-generated images) for a special effect on the audience. This film's subject is its own constituent elements.

David Cronenberg's film of Naked Lunch¹ uses both devices, hallucinations and special effects: drug-induced hallucination becomes an accounting device for the special effects used (giant talking roaches, oozing Mugwumps, hideously molten scenes of intercourse).² The hallucinations become a metaphor for the viewer's experience of these effects; for both drug-user and spectator, the visual image has no "real" embodiment. This is also a matter of practice in reading movies; viewers familiar with such devices, and with Cronenberg's previous films, such as Scanners (1980), Videodrome (1982) and The Fly (1986), obviously know when an image on screen is an image of something, or just an image. The signifieds for such signifiers as these special effects are not "real" horrors, but, as Cronenberg himself put it, "just advanced puppetry . . . It's just foam-latex creatures operated with little springs and levers."³ In a Time Out review of The Fly II (1989), audiences are represented as waiting for the effects to turn up, not the narrative to resolve itself: the heroine "resolves to help her loved one sort out his confused chromosomes--too late to avoid the onslaught of latex and squishy special effects for which we've all been waiting" (Kermode 12). The inseparability of the occurrence of the effects and the narrative trajectory, shown in the last sentence by the deliberate mix-up of levels, means that such films are often "about" their own devices, SCANNERS, for instance, notoriously featuring scenes of exploding heads, is cunningly structured to show one explosion at the beginning of the film, and one at the end; the story becomes just the delay between cranial combustions. And the monster in Alien is so reproductive and so flexible that it simply begs for a sequel or two.

The fact that special effects can be a kind of analogy for hallucination is even more clearly the case with the virtual reality sequences in The Lawnmower Man or the mercury episodes in

Terminator II: as the effects here are computer generated graphics, only the signifier exists. There isn't even any squishy latex around. Cronenberg calls the effects in Naked Lunch "pretty old-fashioned . . . There are no computer-generated morphs [and] . . . there was no post-production optical work." Hallucination, whether visual or aural, is equally an image without a signified at the level of the diegesis, even if some particular object or event underlies it for the hallucinating character.

It could be said that Naked Lunch consists entirely of such free-floating images, and that no attempt is made at realistic representation. Even scenes which are not apparently Bill Lee's hallucinations are represented in a hallucinatory manner: the apartment he shares with Joan is too brightly lit--this is not sunshine--and the 1950s decor and clothing have the self-conscious look of props, of a decontextualized postmodern recreation in the mind (or the film studio). The same is true of Bill's sojourn in Interzone: the scenes of minarets and white buildings visible from his window, and from the window of Yves Cloquet's house, are clearly one-dimensional.* This is consistent with the film's epigraph, from Hassan i Sabbah: "Nothing is true; everything is permitted." It suggests that Bill's state of mind is such that even when he is sober everything seems artificial; and also that, in a film where representation is the subject, there can be no clear hierarchy between fact and fiction.

In the novel, William Burroughs provides a literary equivalent to this deliberate confusion of epistemological levels in the chapter "a.j.'s annual party"; twelve pages of sado-masochistic sex, with elaborate swapping of roles among three people, culminating in death, ends: "(Mary, Johnny and Mark take a bow with the ropes around their necks. They are not as young as they appear in the Blue Movies . . . They look tired and petulant.)" (134). Again, everything is permitted partly because nothing is true.

However, if the scenario described in "a.j.'s annual party" had appeared in Cronenberg's film--it was notable by its absence, along with most of the book--it would have been even more difficult to adjust to an admission of its fictionality than it is in the novel. This is true of some of the "tricks"--the hallucinated special effects--in the film, such as, for example, the scene near the end where the rather authoritarian Fadela is revealed to be a cross-dressed Dr. Benway, who rips off her "skin," which, through a couple of cleverly spliced shots, is shown to be a rubber bodysuit. Obviously Fadela and Benway have been two different people for the audience until now, and despite this revelation scene it is hard to forget the truth underlying the special effects: that there really are two people here (as a quick glance at the credits confirms). This could be seen as analogous to the difficulty readers may have distancing themselves from the unframed description of sexual death-games even when it is retrospectively shown to be theater. The texts have their cake and eat it.

This indeterminacy, which persists even when hierarchies of fact and fiction have ostensibly been made clear, characterizes many of the film's episodes. The first obvious hallucination occurs in the police station when Bill is arrested by narcotics agents. The moment at which it actually starts to look like a hallucination is less clearly demarcated: is it when the agents place an enormous pile of "bug powder" in front of Bill, or not until the giant cockroach is brought out of its box? Later, at home with Joan, who is high on bug powder, Bill says, "I got busted--I started hallucinating--God knows what I really said to those flatfeet." So this scene in the apartment is reality; but in that case, why does Joan echo the bug's words--"Could you rub some of this powder on my lips?"--and why is she taking the powder in any case? Is even this explanatory, framing, scene a hallucination?

Realist recuperative explanations are certainly possible for many of the (apparently) hallucinated sequences in the film. Bill visits a "black meat" factory in Interzone, where workers are engaged in mincing, sieving and slicing unpleasantly skinless centipede carcasses; later on, Joan Frost refers to the local hash factory, which produces a resin so thick it can be spread on muffins. Presumably the black meat factory is Bill's consciousness-expanded impression of the hash factory.

Later on, Bill witnesses an extraordinary hallucinatory-special-effect scene of intercourse between Cloquet and Bill's own sometime lover Kiki, who he comes upon entwined in a giant parrot cage. They have become two oozing and creaking bodies, Cloquet a giant centipede feeding off Kiki, both welded together as if by the "un-D.T., Undifferentiated Tissue, which can grow into any kind of flesh on the human body" of the novel,⁶ the inside and outside of their bodies indistinct, looks of violent suffering on their faces. This scene could be explained as what gay sex looks like to Bill when he's on drugs (Rodley 165); the men are in a cage because Cloquet used his parrots as a seduction tool on Kiki (whose very name is rather psittacotic); they look horrifyingly undifferentiated because Bill connects intercourse between men with narcissistic identification and absorption, and they look traumatized to Bill because, as it does to small children who witness "primal scenes" of intercourse between their parents, sex to the innocent eye can look like the scene of violent attack.

The same phobias can be traced in the hallucinated utterances by the talking-roach-typewriters about Joan Lee; their commands to kill her may be conveniently projected justifications for Bill's own misogyny and responsibility for his wife's death: "you were programmed to kill your wife . . . women aren't human, Bill; they're a different species. Joan was an elite corps centipede." However, Bill himself offers a response to the temptation to read "centipede" as "aggressive sexuality," identified as it is with both Cloquet and Joan; he replies to the roach-writer's comments,

"Who the fuck asked you? Save the psychoanalysis for your grasshopper friends."

The presence of the Undifferentiated Image, to amend Burroughs' phrase, seems to suggest that the subject of Cronenberg's film is simply creativity. Cronenberg has said that the film is about "the act of writing and creating something dangerous to you . . . But the problem is always the same: the act of writing is not very interesting cinematically. It's a guy, sitting . . . It's an interior act . . . You have to turn it inside out and make it physical and exterior."

This is what all the metafictional pointers add up to, along with the fact that by the end, as Joan Lee's accidental death during a William Tell game is replayed for the second time in the person of Joan Frost, image and reality are indistinguishable, even in terms of Bill's own mental world. Unlike the novel, what happens throughout the film is an accounting for the writing of a novel with the same name as the film it appears in; the situation in which Bill finds himself in the film is rather similar to that of Gilbert Pinfold in Evelyn Waugh's The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, where novelist Gilbert is subject to auditory hallucinations which reverse the hierarchy of writer and character. Instead of ventriloquizing, he is ventriloquized (Burroughs 1); he is no longer in control of his material, but a character in someone else's. This sense of being played upon is one Burroughs has used, perhaps disingenuously, to account for his fictions: "I have no precise memory of writing the notes which have now been published under the title Naked Lunch," he says in the introduction to the book, a disclaimer which is repeated in the film. Lee denies all memory of having written the pages his Ginsberg-like friend Martin has been sending to appreciative publishers; "Play ball with this conspiracy," Martin advises.

The hallucinations Bill has of hybrid roach-typewriters, who instruct him what to type and occasionally type things themselves, are particularly interesting; the scene of writing becomes heavily and often erotically charged, as do the instruments of composition. At the Frosts', the keyboard of Tom's mujaheddin, his Arabic typewriter, becomes soft and a phallic growth extends itself out of the back, as Bill and Joan take a drug together. Different kinds of typewriter are spoken of as if they had personalities and genders: Bill tells Tom his Clark Nova is too demanding, so Tom says, "Try my Martinelli; her inventiveness will surprise you." Bill's characteristic response is timidity, as it is in the face of the overtly sexual; "I'm not good with machines, they intimidate me," he tells Joan Frost before apparently feeling drugged enough to make love with her. Conversely, when Kiki and Bill are shown in a morning-after scene together, the pleasure Bill takes in his typewriter suggests that sex is not now so threatening: "This is a good machine, I have you to thank for it," he tells Kiki of the Mugwump head in whose mouth he types.

The similarities between Burroughs' and Cronenberg's visions have often been noted. Both produce work in which a central male figure is important; and in which there is evidence of "sci-fi paranoia, the fascination with control and addiction, the definition of subjectivity as unstable, biochemical and hallucinatory, the connection between sex and vampires, sex and disease, sex and mutation, sex and death" (Kermode 12). Cronenberg has pointed out how different he and Burroughs are personally, yet through a "kind of fusion" between them both, "as if we'd gotten into the telepod from The Fly together" (Rodley 161), a cinematic version of Burroughs' literary text has been made possible. A literal version would, Cronenberg claims, have been "a very nasty kind of soft, satirical, social satire of the Britannia Hospital variety, with no emotional content and without the beauty, grace and potency of Burroughs' literary style . . . It would cost \$400-500 million if you were to film it literally, and of course it would be banned in every country in the world" (Taubin 10). What we see--the amalgamation of small episodes and imagery from the book, with bits from others of Burroughs' works such as Queer and Exterminator!, and elements from his life--is Cronenberg's cinematic version of Burroughs' novel, a sort of hallucinated version. As Amy Taubin puts it in Sight and Sound, the substitution of bug-powder and black centipede meat for hash and heroin is particularly apt: "The drugs are not merely agents of hallucination, they are hallucinatory in and of themselves." This is the paradox of the film of Naked Lunch.

NOTES

1. Naked Lunch, dir. David Cronenberg, based on a novel by William Burroughs, 20th Century Fox, 1991 (115 min.).
2. See Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve U P, 1973) for a discussion of "pure" fantastic, where the reader cannot tell whether an event is supernatural or not, and no accounting device--madness, drugs--is present.
3. Mark Kermode, "David Cronenberg: Interview by Mark Kermode," Sight and Sound (March 1992) 12.
4. David Cronenberg, Cronenberg on Cronenberg ed. Chris Rodley (London: Faber, 1992). Cronenberg points out that the original intention was to go to Tangiers to shoot the Interzone scenes of the film, but the Gulf War made this impossible; appropriately so, since "Interzone is a state of mind. That concept would have been damaged by splitting it between a real place that Bill Lee flees to and his strange state of mind" (168).
5. William S. Burroughs, Naked Lunch (London: Calder, 1982) 106.
6. The issue of Cronenberg's substitution of a female body for a male one in the film of Naked Lunch is discussed in Kermode, and the exchange of a homosexual for a heterosexual vision in "Back to the Future: Making Naked Lunch," in Rodley.
7. I am grateful to Tom Roder for this insight.
8. Amy Taubin, "The Wrong Body," Sight and Sound (March 1992) 8.

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