

I. Introduction

William Seward Burroughs

The qualities and works of William Seward Burroughs have brought forth a large body of criticism, and one may reasonably say that no generation will let him alone. Born in February 5, 1914 in St Louis, Missouri, he is well-known for his exploration of language, stylistic innovation, and experimentation with “cut-up technique”. Burroughs, a leading figure in the emergence of the Beat Generation, is associated with this approach because of his experimental method of “cut-up” and “fold-in” and his use of hallucinatory images and indeed of drugs themselves to write his books. His transgressive experimentalism emphasizes the provisional, improvisatory side of modern experiment and its pursuit of more open forms.

Son of a successful businessman, Burroughs studied English literature at Harvard in the 1930s. At Harvard he was introduced to the gay subculture of New York. He visited lesbian dives, piano bars, and the Harlem Greenwich Village homosexual underground. A drop-out thereafter, he lived in Mexico, Tangier and the UK, and for many years was a heroin addict. He began writing in the 1930s and he wrote two confessional books, *Junky* (1953) and *Queer* (written in 1950s but not published until 1985).

Although his works remained largely unpublished for many years, Burroughs was immensely influential among the Beat writers of the 1950s—notably Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. He already had an underground reputation before the appearance of his first important book, *Naked Lunch*. First published by Olympia Press in France in 1959, it aroused great controversy on publication and was not available in the US until 1962 and in the UK until 1964.

Burroughs’s other important books include the famous cut-up trilogy of *The Soft*

Machine, The Ticket That Exploded, and Nova Express, as well as his later, more conventionally readable masterpieces *Cities of the Red Night* and *The Place of Dead Roads*. In 1983 Burroughs was elected a Member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and named Commandeur de l'Orde des Arts et Letters in France in 1984. He died in 1997 of a heart attack, in Lawrence, Kansas.

Non-conformity and Resistance in Beats

The Beat Generation refers to the American literary and cultural movement that took root in the post-war America of the 1940s and grew through the fifties and into the sixties. Beat writers shared a set of attitudes—“antiestablishment, anti political, anti-intellectual, opposed to reigning cultural and moral values, and in favor of unfettered self-realization, and self-expression” (14) as M.H Abrahms characterizes. “Beat” was used to signify both “beaten-down” by oppressive culture of the time and “beatific”. Beatific relates to the Beat writers’ cultivating ecstatic states by way of Buddhism, Jewish and Christian mysticism, and/or drugs that included visionary experiences.

The principal writers of the period were Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs. The poetry and prose of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were characterized by a raw, rhythmic and improvisational quality. The Beat movement revolutionized American literature, bringing a spontaneity, stark nakedness and particular spiritual humanness to poetry and prose. It was about non-conformity, the artist working alone on the outer edge of society, all the while confessing to one another the secrets of their souls, and living freely from moment to moment. Ginsberg, Kerouac and Burroughs came to be known as the “holy trinity” of the Beat Generation, though others disliked the term and accused Ginsberg, who also coined the term “Beat” in about 1952, for marketing the concept.

For many European readers, the Beat Generation wrote the most representative

American poetry of the post-war years. The label had been coined to suggest not only the beaten alienation of the socially disaffected and the rhythmic celebrations of the marginal music of jazz but also the beatitude awaiting the rootless wandering pilgrim who sought it at the fringe of conventional society. Likewise, the representative works of the movement portray the social outcasts, deviants and marginalized because of their rejection of, or failure to measure up to, the social, religious, and sexual values of American capitalism. Some bear the idea that the very term “beat generation” is imprecise. David Sterritt says for some “beat generation” refers to “the entire youth culture of the post-war decades” for others “a handful of authors, poets, dreamers and dropouts” who consciously rebelled against a “highly oppressive socio-cultural atmosphere” (107). Sterritt provides a historical/cultural context for the Beat social and aesthetic rebellion and links the Beat movement to a wide range of mainstream and avant-garde arts. The question of Beat legacy, now that seminal figures are dead, crops up repeatedly.

The origins of the word “beat” are obscure, but the meaning is only too clear to many. John Clellon Holmes puts down, “more than mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself. A man is beat whenever he goes for broke and wagers the sum of his resources on a single member”. (10) Its members have an instinctive individuality needing no bohemianism or imposed eccentricity to express it. “Brought up during the collective bad circumstances of a dreary depression, weaned during the collective uprooting of a global war, they distrust collectivity. But they have never been able to keep the world out of their dreams,” (10) Holmes adds. Their own lust for freedom, and the ability to live at peace that kills, led to black markets, bebop, narcotics, sexual promiscuity and hucksterism.

Burroughs is associated with postmodernist approach because of his experimental method of cut-up and fold-in and his use of hallucinatory images and indeed of drugs themselves to write his books—the novel of homosexuality and drug addiction *Junky* (1953), the sequence *The Naked Lunch* (1959), *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962) and *Nova Express*. Burroughs uses “junk” in two senses—“junk as drugs and junk as cultural rubbish, the floating detritus and loose images of contemporary life” (Ruland and Bradbury, 387). Through loose and surreal associations the capitalistic reification of the world and the images of science fiction merge with the author’s “mind blowing trips and homo-erotic dreams to create violent fantasies of endlessly warring powers”. Burroughs sees a world of oppressive and authoritarian forces struggling with the free play of consciousness.

His books are unstable, violent and often obscure texts which attempt to penetrate a public world far gone in barbarity, technological systematization and violence which accurately reflect his inner life. His transgressive experimentalism emphasizes the provisional, improvisatory side of modern experiment and its pursuit of more open forms. Burroughs during the early contacts among the Beats stimulated unconventional intellectual exploration. In his writings, in William Lawlor’s words, “the descriptions of fantasies and bizarre taste that characterizes some passages are pleasingly wacky and humorous for some, distressingly vulgar and abhorrent for others” (232). Though Burroughs’s style is often direct and standard in presentation, in many cases an experimental mode predominates, and in this mode, the lack of conventional narratives and character development makes the writing too remote for undedicated readers.

Naked Lunch joined Kerouac’s *On the Road* and Ginsberg’s *Howl*, the strongest voices of the Beat Generation. Besides *Naked Lunch* other works by Burroughs include *The Wild Boys*, *Exterminator*, *Port of Saints*, *The Adding Machine*, *The Place of Dead*

Souls, and *The Western Lands*.

Burroughs often inter-mingles fact and fiction. Will Self notes “*Junky* is not a novel at all, it is a memoir; ‘William Lee’ and William Burroughs are one and the same person” (Preface to *Junky*). William Lee in *Naked Lunch* also corresponds to the life of the author himself. Burroughs’s own conception of himself was essentially fictional; it is not superfluous to observe that before he began to write with any fixity he had already become a character in other writers’ works, most notably Kerouac’s *On the Road*. In addition to this, he has also acted in the movie *Naked Lunch* (1991) directed by David Cronenberg.

Junky is a true analysis of the nature of addiction itself. In Burroughs’s words, Will self cites, “you become narcotics addict because you do not have strong motivations in any other direction. Junk wins by default” (Preface to *Junky*). We can read the entire text, assuming the hypothesis of addiction as a latent pathology, present in the individual prior to his having any direct experience of chemical dependency.

Junky has been identified as a key existentialist text. It is Burroughs’s own denial of the nature of his addiction that makes his book capable of being read as a “fiendish parable of modern alienation” (Will Self, Preface to *Junky*). For in describing addiction as ‘a way of life’, Burroughs makes use of the hypodermic microscope, through which he can examine the soul of man under late twentieth century capitalism. His descriptions of the ‘junk territories’ his alter ego inhabits are, in fact, descriptions of alienation itself. And just as in these areas junk is ‘a ghost in daylight on a crowded street’, so his junkie characters—who are invariably described as ‘invisible’, ‘dematerialized’ and ‘boneless’—are like the pseudonymous ‘William Lee’ himself, “the sentiment residue left behind when the soul has been cooked up and injected into space”. (Will Self, Preface to *Junky*)

The Nova Trilogy constitutes Burroughs's most extensive and radical experiment with narrative form. The Nova trilogy comprised of *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded* and *Nova Express*. These novels were composed using the cut-up method in which existing texts including Burroughs's own writings and/or writings by other authors were physically cut into pieces of variable length and reassembled in random order to generate unexpected juxtapositions and new syntactic relationships. Burroughs developed cut-up method in collaboration with the Anglo-Canadian painter and novelist Brion Gysin, who derived it from Dadaist and surrealist techniques of visual collage and filmic montage.

In the Nova trilogy this technique constitutes not only the formal method of composition but also an important element in the novel's contents. As a result of these cut-up procedures, the novels that make up the trilogy are even more radically discontinuous in plot and structure than Burroughs's previous work *Naked Lunch*. Burroughs himself spoke of the trilogy as a "sequel" or rather "mathematical extension", to the themes and techniques of *Naked Lunch*. The trilogy's characters and events emerge from large scale patterns of linguistic recurrence, akin to the motif and refrain structure of music, rather than from realistic description or logical causality. This radical indeterminacy makes any interpretation of these books necessarily selective and thus only statistically reliable.

The overall narrative of the trilogy focuses on the uncovering of an ancient, secret invasion of earth by parasitic aliens who now control human mind and body through language. Burroughs calls the language "a virus from outer space", and on the struggle of the partisan groups to throw off the alien yoke "by cutting the word lines" of linguistic control through the cut-up method. Thus the generic conventions governing the underlying structure of the trilogy are drawn from science fiction, and because the aliens

are described in terms of organized crime as the “Nova Mob”, from the “hard boiled detective novel”.

The first volume, *The Soft Machine*, focuses on the description of the setting for the invasion and various manifestations of the aliens’ control strategy. The second volume, *The Ticket That Exploded*, continues this description of the setting but also offers an initial account of the conflict between the Nova Mob and the partisans. The intense conflict between police and criminals allows them, paradoxically, to turn into one another according to the reversible logic of the traitor. On the one hand, the police try to infiltrate the mob with covert agents who can tip them off to criminal activity and provide reliable testimony in court, or alternately they offer incentives to individual mobsters to “rat” on their colleagues, while on the other hand, the mobsters bribe the underpaid cops to alert them to raids and more generally to give them room to operate. In short, cops readily turn into mobsters and vice-versa. At the conclusion of *Ticket*, the struggle between the Nova Mob, the Nova Police and the human partisans dissolves into nonlinguistic chaos as the antagonistic characters are each dismantled in turn by the partisans’ cut-ups.

The third volume, *Nova Express*, recapitulates much of this struggle from alternate perspectives, and as Burroughs notes, it provides the clearest and most accessible statement of the trilogy’s overall intent. The narrator relievedly confesses in the conclusion that “My writing arm is paralyzed—No more junk scripts, no more word scripts, no more flesh scripts”. At the end of the *Ticket* the struggle dissolves into what Allen Ginsberg called “a vibrating soundless hum” that signifies the partisans’ final escape from the language virus.

The Nova trilogy is unquestionably one of the most challenging examples of literary experimentation in the twentieth century, on a par with James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* and Samuel Beckett’s later prose. As such it is

much less widely read than Burroughs's other major works, although it has remained consistently in print since its original publication and it has inspired numerous imitations around the world. The Rolling Stones used cut-ups to create song lyrics, Tom Philips used them to generate paintings and Ginsberg incorporated the technique in his most ambitious poetic sequence, *The Fall of America* (1965-1971). The trilogy represents Burroughs's most intensive effort to "rub out the world". In his subsequent writing, he abandoned the syntactic cut-up technique and returned to the episodic or "routine" form that he used to such powerful effect in *Naked Lunch*. Despite its difficulty, the Nova trilogy remains a sufficient achievement of literary postmodernism in its paradoxical struggle to break free of the prison-house of language by means of language itself.

Burroughs's cut-up or fold-in technique rearranges the words of the text by cutting or folding the pages into sections to create new passages which reveal subliminal, non-Aristotelian, interrelated realities. For *The Wild Boys* (1971), Burroughs added film techniques, particularly the montage theory of film editing. Point of view is established by camera angle, each episode appears as a script or a scene, and each character is an actor able to slip across time and space to change identity. Humorous and imaginative, it chronicles the rise of a violent and isolated cult of young boys who wage guerilla warfare against that entire stand in their path and who ultimately destroy what remains of the existing western power structures.

In *The Wild Boys*, likewise, Burroughs draws from science fiction, pulp detective and adventure stories, cowboy novels, Western films, and an even more eclectic use of the world mythologies to continue his search for means to overthrow the clerical, political, and military powers that overwhelm and subjugate the individual. His depictions of the surreal subcultures unbound by space or time have influenced the more recent generation of cyberpunk writers, notably William Gibson. While his works have

left many mainstream readers bewildered and offended, Burroughs's writings continue to attract many critics and contemporary audiences. His collaboration with rock artists, his appearances in independent films and documentaries, and the production of the movie *Naked Lunch* in 1991 attest to his popularity and influence.

Queer, Burroughs's second novel, "recounts the hallucinatory life of William Lee, an American who journeys to Ecuador with his reluctant lover, Eugene Allerton; in search of the drug Yage" (qtd. in Burroughs's, *Naked Lunch*, P.S. 14, Ed. James Grauerholz and Barry Miles). However, the book is just as important for its introduction, written in 1985, in which Burroughs directly addresses the psychological impact of shooting his wife, Joan Vollmer, in 1951—a tragedy which both haunted Burroughs for the rest of his life, and provided a key impetus for his work.

Burroughs's interviews with French journalist David Odier have been collected in *The Job*, in which Burroughs

gives full rein to his abrasive views on sex, censorship, misogyny, addiction and the merits of apomorphine treatment which briefly helped him to kick his junk habit. The book bristles with fierce invectives against what he saw as the police state we live in—'Learn your maze and stay on screen'—and how to combat these imposed methods of control....The Job is a powerful, immediate portrait of the abrasive, often paranoid, razor sharp intelligence behind the fiction. (15)

Cities of the Red Night occupies its place as a modernist satire of cultural aspirations, homosexual eroticism and political power. It is often cited as Burroughs's most approachable work and certainly the most readable by conventional standards. An apocalyptic vision of a people afflicted by a radioactive virus and an evil empire of zealous mutants, it uses the genres of science fiction, the detective story and the pirate

yarn to give it shape. Ken Kesey comments it as “Not only Burroughs’s best work, but a logical and ripening extension of all of Burroughs’s great work” (*Naked Lunch*, P.S. 16). Will Self, likewise, has termed it as ‘a fiendish parable of modern alienation’.

Among the various perspectives of looking at *Naked Lunch*, Marxist critics have enriched the literature with their true assessment of it. Since its first publication in Paris in 1959, it has received both praise and censure. While noted authors and critics such as John Ciardi, Norman Mailer, and Mary McCarthy have applauded *Naked Lunch* as a novel of genius and terrible beauty, its publication in the United States in 1962 was met with seizure by the US Customs on the grounds it was pornographic. *Naked Lunch* was found to be obscene by Massachusetts Superior Court in 1965, a decision that was later overturned by the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

Naked Lunch was Burroughs's first venture into a non-linear style which led him to slicing words, phrases to create new sentences. Ted Morgan notes: Scenes there were slid together with little care for narrative. Perhaps thinking of his crazed physician, Dr Benway, he described *Naked Lunch* as a book that could be cut into any point. Although not science fiction, the book does seem to forecast--with eerie prescience--such later phenomena as AIDS, liposuction, autoerotic fatalities and the crack pandemic. (355)

Robin Lyndenberg's emphasis is on the binary opposition of the novel. He remarks that *Naked Lunch* is "a history of voice and body, of language and materiality. ...Burroughs postulates these stories with concrete embodiments of every possible imbalance of his dual system: from paralyzed bodies numbed by the abstractions of religion and romance, to paralyzed minds imposed by the body's physical cravings". (22)

An experimental novelist, Burroughs plays with words and images. "The word", Burroughs tells us, "cannot be expressed direct.... It can perhaps be indicated by a mosaic

of juxtaposition like articles abandoned in a hotel drawer, defined by negatives and absence."(105:1990)

Timothy S Murphy takes this to mean that the power of language as:

an instrument of control, one of the central themes of the novel, cannot be simply asserted in a direct statement, since such a statement would itself be another example of that control; it must instead be insinuated, implied in such a way that the reader can see through not only the forms of verbal control that the novel depicts but also the powerful verbal control gesture that the novel itself is. (84)

This is also the central conundrum of the *Naked Lunch* reading experience. The novel's paradoxically enabling gesture is to create readers capable of rejecting its most seductive overtones.

Interzone is the symbolic and significant place where most of the novel is set. William Lee flees, in course of the events, to Interzone, an anarchic Middle Eastern region modeled on Tangiers's international zone. Ron Loewinsohn writes, "Interzone reflects or represents a composite of the cities where Burroughs lived, and also transitional areas of any modern city where straight world and the underworld come into contact. It also represents the transitional state between being addicted and being drug free" (566). Control of the city of Interzone is, like everything else in this world, unstable. It is constantly being struggled over by three factions or gangs of Bad Guys--the Liquefactionists, the Divisionists, and the Senders.

The novel moves round the theme of addiction and control. Addiction, Burroughs repeatedly tells us, is a disruption of metabolic functioning that must be restored by physical/chemical means in order to return the patient to health. In *Naked Lunch* "Burroughs was", Frederick Whiting explores, "simultaneously the voice of addiction and

of its condemnation" (155).

In a letter to Allen Ginsberg, Burroughs remarked, "*Naked Lunch* is written to reveal the junk virus, the manner in which it operates, and the manner in which it can be under control. This is no act. I mean it all the way. Get off that junk wagon boys; it's going down a three mile grade for the junk heap." (429)

Some critics have also viewed *Naked Lunch* as having mythological theme of quest. William L. Stull observes that *Naked Lunch* "is structured as a quest, first for the 'final fix' and later for what Campbell calls 'the freedom to live' and 'the ultimate boon' that can revive the dying world". (277)

Burroughs has created three parties as agents of control: the Liquefactionists, the Divisionists, and the Senders. All three parties attempt to eliminate difference and impose absolute uniformity upon society by scientifically manipulating the human body.

Naked Lunch, similarly, is a representative of the Beat Movement. Barry Miles defines, "the tone of Beat literature oscillated between reproach and celebration, self-imposed alienation and the desire to assume representative status" (iii). Beat celebrations of homo-sociality were a response to the increasing alienation males felt at the mid-century. The escape of William Lee in the novel corresponds to Burroughs's own escape after his reportedly killing his own wife. Burroughs later in *Queer* said that shooting Joan Vollmer was a pivotal event in his life, and one which he instigated in his writing: "I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would have never become a writer but for Joan's death.... I live with a constant threat of possession for control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and maneuvered me into a life-long struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out." (xxiii)

Reification and Control

It is necessary that the meaning of 'worker' be used in a wider perspective. In the

modern context anyone becomes victim of the crushing and vicious capitalism. Market centered economy influences the every aspect of a human being. The very human consciousness is shaped and channeled by advertisement and media. Having lost the real essence man finds himself deviantly dislocated. He seeks new but marginalized identity. In the course of unsuccessful attempts to return to some original stance, he becomes eccentric, non-conformist and addictively day dreaming and more and more rebelliously experimental in behavior, art and literature.

The worldwide expansion of multinational companies carries the power to influence the day to day life of an individual as a worker and individual. By the use of media and technology, we are so frequently told some lies that we fall prey to believe them. The very individual freedom and power of reasoning and judgment are paralyzed. From an Adorno-esque perspective it might be thought to be an industry that serves the interests of capitalists extremely well not merely by making so much of money but by distracting people convincing them to put their energies into dancing all night or taking drugs rather than getting interested in trying to change the manifest injustices in our world.

Reification belittles the relationship of men in the society. The emotional attachment among them is reduced to mere objects. Moreover, reification triumphs and channels the life of people. It is a process that affects our cognitive relationship with the social totality. It is a disease of that mapping function whereby the individual subject projects and models his or her insertion into the collectivity. The reification of late capitalism renders society opaque; it is loved source of mystifications on which ideology is based and exploitation and domination are legitimized.

Jameson thinks that reification is more important to an understanding of the world today with the triumph of global late capitalism than it was in the past. For the

failure of communism and the spread of capitalism all over the world, capitalism involves a more comprehensive objectification and commodification than ever before. This turning of everything into a commodity which is something particularly evident in the worlds of art and culture is precisely reification, the objectification of all human creative and rational abilities. It is not just that art gets reified: that a piece of music is turned into millions of CDs, that a film is petrified as merchandising, videos, and so on; it is that actual human interaction is metamorphosed into commodities. The society moves towards the position that, for example, the only way one human being can express love for another human being is by entering into the whole world of commodities, by buying things from small gifts all the way up to the houses. Here what we can see is the reification of the love itself. So we look at society and we can only see things, or only see the medium of things, which is to say money.

In the process of domination and control, economic and political power sources attempt to dissolve all the individual differences. Adorno tended to use the terms “standardization” and “identity” in place of the term “reification.” “Identity” for Adorno means “things being identical with one another” and the circumstance of capitalism where a single faceless thing--for instance money--supersedes all the variety and difference of humanity (*Late Marxism* 16). In spite of all these challenges, man must attain his essential attributes, his power of self-mediation and self-development against the various agents of control.

II. Objectification of Individual in Capitalism

Alienation through Objectification and Reification

Alienation bears the constant notion of having the feeling of being a stranger or an outsider. It refers to the state of having been in exile—exile from the milieu one lives, from one's products and even from oneself. Similar in sense, objectification and reification are the processes of alienation. Reification means the transformation of a person, process or abstract concept into a thing or object. Hegel, Marx, George Lukacs, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Fredric Jameson are the remarkable thinkers who have contributed for the development of these concepts and ideas.

The idea of alienation through reification and objectification has emerged as an outcome of market centered economy. Marx views alienation of human being as rooted in human labor and material world. Other writers consider alienation to have a more social-psychological interpretation, with interpretations such as of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement and social isolation (Krahn and Lowe 358). Most of them refer to alienation as loss of control over work, lack of meaning in work and the difficulty of self expression in work. However, alienation is likely to be lowest in organizational setting where members have control, meaning, and opportunities for self-fulfillment in their roles.

Objectification and reification are the means and methods that bring about alienation of human beings. Objectification of individual hinders and paralyzes the human potential which was considered by Enlightenment thinkers and early socialists. It seems man has lost his propensity and vocation to free thinking and spirit of the rational appreciation of his own worth and thinking for himself. But modern capitalism, Tucker notes, "crushes our particularly human experience. It destroys the pleasure associated

with labor, the distinctively human capacity to make and remake the world, and the major distinguishing characteristics of humans from animals”. (98)

Critique of capitalistic reification of the social relations is the central idea of Marx’s system. Reification works with different aspects of human relations and his existence: worker as a commodity, abstract labor, one-sided machine-like labor, earth estranged from man. The capitalistic human actions and behavior are more influenced by his subjection to increasingly more powerful instruments of his own making than his natural abilities and potentials. Similarly, industry is the cause of the growing complexity of human society by the production of new needs. In other words, the real human person does not actually exist in a capitalistic society except in an alienated and reified form in which we encounter him as labor and capital.

Marx emphasizes the idealization of abstract “Man” is nothing but an alienated, speculative expression of the private property and labor. Private property and labor relationship “externalizes” or “objectifies” man in the form of alienated labor and reified private property. Nevertheless, man’s power of self-mediation and self-development must be preserved by arbitrarily reducing the complexity of human actions to the crude simplicity of mechanical determinations.

Features of human society such as culture and values, human creativity, and language are often considered to be what distinguish humans from non-human animals.

Opposed to this idea, in capitalism the state of the worker:

Sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his reputation; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form....

(Manuscript, 106)

The contemporary economic fact is that the worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces and the more his production increases in power and extent. Consequently, the worker gradually becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more he produces. This devaluation of human world and actions increases in relation to the increase in value of the world of things. Labor produces not only goods but also itself and the worker as a commodity. And indeed in the same proportion it produces goods.

This fact simply implies that the object produced by the labor, its product, now stands opposed to as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor becomes labor which embodies as an object and turns into a physical thing; this product is an objectification of labor. So much does the performance of the work appear as devaluation that the worker is devalued of the most essential things in not only of life but also of work. Labor itself becomes an object which he can acquire only with the greatest effort and with unpredictable interruptions. The more objects the worker produces, the fewer can he possess and the more he falls under domination of his product, of capital. In fact, the performance of work is its reification; objectification is the loss of object.

Work at a job becomes only a means of earning enough money to buy food and other necessities. Instead of work being an exercise of human creativity, the workers feel free only in their animal functions, eating, sleeping etc. and not in their human function – creative work. The potentially creative nature of human labor which distinguishes humans from non-humans is denied to workers. Individuals perform and act less and less like human beings and more and more like machines. Marx's following views further clarify man's self-alienation:

Since alienated labor: (1) alienates nature from man; and (2) alienates man

from himself, from his own active function, his life activity; so it alienates him from species....For labor, life activity, productive life, now appear to mean only as means for the satisfaction of a need, the need to maintain physical existence....In the type of life activity resides the whole character of a species, its species character; and free, conscious activity is the species—character of human beings....Conscious life activity distinguishes man from the life activity of animals. (*Manuscripts* 16)

The effects of mode of production based on commodity production influence all the spheres and levels of life and society. Such a mode of production gives rise to reification that spreads throughout the totality of the society.

Lukacs appropriates Hegel's concept of estrangement—the objectification of spirit, the fragmentation of subjectivity into objectivity—into his own concept of reification as a process of fragmentation of social totality. Through the process of reification, human beings are alienated from their true nature as social producers, their own labor itself becoming a commodity, a thing to be sold in the market like any other commodity. George Hartley in his essay “Realism and Reification” analyses that

Reification is no accident but part of an overall historical process.

Reification for Lukacs is the historically determined moment when the subject of history—the proletariat—becomes wholly objectified. What follows, then, is the proletariat's recognition of himself as history's subject, as the end of the material process of dialectical contradiction.

(313)

Objectification of Human Language and Creativity

Along with other changes in capitalistic mode of production the nature and effect of language change as well. With a motive to influence the consciousness of the people

and consumers, language is modified and manipulated with new vocabulary and their foregrounding. If the mode of production of a given society determines the language of that society, then the stage of historical development determines the underlying structure of poetry. And if that language determines the consciousness of the members of that society then "poetry, as a language practice, plays a role in ideological production and is an indicator of the social assumptions about language" (Hartley, 320). Lukacs's definition, in the context of reification of language and relationship, can now be read as follows: "its basis is that a relationship between people [language] takes on the character of a thing [the transparent, self-sufficient word] and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to cancel every trace [gesture] of its fundamental nature, the relation between people." (*Reification and Consciousness* 83)

Reification undermines the sense of totality in society. According to Jameson, it fragments our perception of the whole world in which we live, so that we can only see the frozen discrete objects that make up our existence. In this circumstance, Jameson thinks that "art" has an important role to play. It is vital that art is able to resist the power of reification in consumer society and to reinvent that category of totality which [is] systematically undermined by existential fragmentation on all levels of life and social organization today." (*Of Islands and Trenches* 2)

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their essay "The Culture Industry" attack the popular American culture of the 1930s and 1940s as designedly dull and repetitive, feeding the populace minimal variations of the same oppressive stories of love and adventure in order to stupefy, to turn them into sheep and so effectively to defuse their revolutionary potential. Such schematically designed culture only tries to engage and blind the people within and among themselves struggling to satisfy their created and

insatiable needs.

One crucial aspect of contemporary writing is that the emphasis is on form rather than content. For an instance, Samuel Beckett's novels are about very 'little': a bedridden man contemplating his life as he dies; a tramp wandering about Paris and ending up sleeping in an unused carriage. But his language is deliberately clotted, broken; he can be difficult to read. In this sense Beckett and Burroughs are similar in their forms and innovative methods. Like them, the writers after the Second World War are more obsessed with form rather than content. Jameson observes that “the content of a work of art stands judged by its form, and that it is the realized form of the work that offers the surest key to the vital possibilities of that determinate social moment from which it springs” (*Marxism and Form* 55). The resistance of the traditional forms is a signification of will to freedom from the power to channel and control the human potential and creativity.

Jameson's point is that the form of a work of art reflects the society it emerges from. A fragmented, reified society produces fragmented, reified art. The novel is the dominant form of literature in the nineteenth-century precisely because it embodies – formally--the qualities of fragmented sprawl, of ironic disintegration of vision and reified existence that are present in nineteenth-century lived experience. This feature of the novel as a mode is more important than the content of these novels, which is often conventional and escapist, with an emphasis on happy marriages and resolutions tying up all loose ends. And cinema and TV are dominant forms of art today because it is in visual media that the conditions of postmodern society are most thoroughly expressed.

In “Ideology of Modernism” Lukacs portrays modernism as a most destructive form of capitalistic aesthetic, which means not the achievement but the negation of art in the face of socio-economic forces. Likewise, modernist and capitalistic systems have

devastating effects on traditional aesthetic literature. Lukacs adds, "modernism leads not only to the destruction of traditional literary forms; it leads to the destruction as such."

(222)

Modernism is destructive to the traditional aesthetic literature. Modern literature has denied man in its own particular way. Man is a solitary, a-historical being--a disjointed being in a disordered world--which is ill with a deeply devastating sense of angst at the worthlessness of both his own existence and human existence in general. Rather fragmentary and plot less writings reflect the social reality and likewise produce similar effect and perception in readers. Rather than the sense of historical process, readers of modernist literature find themselves engaged with the disintegration of personality which is matched by the disintegration of the outer world.

Modern technology and capitalism disintegrate the reality into several fragments making it difficult to apprehend the coherent totality. A representation of this might be found in the recent SF blockbuster film *The Matrix* (1999). In that film, a character called Neo (Keanu Reeves) discovers that the life he thought he was living in 1990 America is actually an elaborate computer generated virtual reality (the 'Matrix' of the title), designed by evil machine intelligence to hide from people the truth that their existence has been reduced to lying helpless in mechanized pods whilst machines siphon off the biological electricity and energy their bodies produce. The Matrix exists; Neo is told, to obscure the truth—"the truth that you are a slave". Neo is disabused of the false appearance of the reality, and wakes up in the distinctly unpleasant pod, in order to join a resistance movement fighting this evil. In other words, if we ask what the 'Matrix' is then answer is that it *is* ideology in the Marxist sense of fiction obscuring the truth of exploitation. In fact this film articulates a more thorough-going Althusarian or Jamesonian sense of what ideology is: 'the Matrix' is more than a set of false beliefs

about reality (or false consciousness)--it is reality, it conditions and defines how people caught in themselves think and act. In the world of the Matrix it would do no good to address this piecemeal issue or that one; the only answer is the total vision, a full comprehension of how the entire system works to blot out the consciousness of oppression.

Literature determined by the relationships of commodity production becomes an arena for class struggle. "When commodity production affects all levels of society, the truth of that society is reification itself" (George Hartley 316). The modernism of Joyce and Kafka contributes to the reifying effects of commodity production. Such art is 'anti-real.' The world view implied by these authors takes the appearance of fragmented reality as truth. The individual for these writers, Lukacs claims in *Realism in Our Time*, "is by nature solitary, unable to enter into the relationships with other human beings" (20). These authors fail to recognize that such thrownness-into-being is only the historically determined state of modern society, not a universal condition of life. Reality changes with the modes of production and the oppressors do not work in the same way in every epoch.

Another aspect of increasing reification of modern art is that visual art is stripped of its aura by means of photographic reproduction. The revolutionary new techniques in the production and reception of work of art to its innermost core, render obsolete the originality and uniqueness of the work. Because of the loss of aura, and rapid proliferation, Pandey analyses, "works of art cease to be objects of religious veneration, forfeit their cult value, and instead take on a new function: an exhibition value"(178). The work of art loses its uniqueness but at the same time is available to everyone raising their critical potential.

Reification, as it involves the fragmentation and destruction of the totality of

existence, must be resisted. Art and literature are vital in that they can provide means of refreshing our sense of this totality, and perhaps more importantly can actively resist the fragmentation of existence. Such resistance is the dialectical process.

III. Agents and Objects of Manipulation and Control at Work in *Naked Lunch*

Language and the Body

Burroughs in an interview has said that our body and name only have verbal labels. We are nothing else more than the word “self” and so we must be prepared to prove all the times that we are what we are not (*The Job*, pp. 200-1). In this theoretical polemic, *Naked Lunch* questions the relationship, between mind and body, and of the role of language in that relationship: the arbitrary violence of language as a system of naming and representation; and the possibility of ontology and an aesthetics based on negativity and absence. Burroughs’s goal may be to escape both the body and language to travel in bodiless space and violence.

Naked Lunch is a history of voice and body, of language and materiality. He argues that it is only by making the word material, tangible, and visible, by revealing the direct intersection of body and language that we can “see the enemy direct”. Therefore, his fiction is relentlessly literal, its narrative not just a voice but a body.

Dr. Benway, one of the funniest characters, manipulator and a control agent, narrates a story about a man who taught his asshole to talk. The man would go in without anything prepared as his ass would ad-lib and toss the gags at him every time—it started talking on its own. The asshole would talk all the time, showing out it wanted equal rights; it would get drunk and want to be kissed as any other mouth. It did not end there, his mouth itself closed with overgrown tissue and sealed over. The connections of the eyes with mind went out.

Beneath this joke of a talking anus lies an ominous tale of control and domination, tale of struggle between body and mind. The central struggle of that however is identified as language itself. Dr. Benway and Dr. Schafer discuss the possibilities for surgical

improvement of the body: “We could seal up nose and mouth, fill in the stomach, make an air hole direct to the lungs where it should have been in the first place” (*Naked Lunch* 110). This misuse of the scientific mind to dominate and control physical nature is intellectual rather than physical, for in acquiring language the anus is raised to the superior rational sphere of the mind. But in teaching his anus to imitate mouth, man produces a kind of humiliation of nature, like the degrading performances of monkeys or dogs dressed in human clothing. The surgical operation proposed by Benway, the circus performance of trained animals, and the carny man’s routine are all symptomatic of the mind’s need to dominate nature and the body. The manipulation of mind and body, amputation and reduction of them is precisely the reduction of human essence.

The anus dominates language function by “talking all the time, day and night” reducing the mind to brute physical response. The body has invaded the mind’s superior territory, language. The hierarchy of power is ultimately reversed in this episode when the anus appropriates the language entirely; the mouth grows closed, the brain is sealed off and trapped inside the skull so it can give no orders. The power of mind or language is snatched away. All that remains is the anus’s grotesque parody of human identity—greedy, selfish, aggressive, destructive, mawkishly sentimental, and armed with a diarrheic flow of words. The carny man’s this experience clearly has three implications: the violence and domination inherent in dualism of body/mind; the use of language as a basic weapon in that struggle of language for supremacy; and the inevitable outcome of the struggle in silence and death.

In the “Talking Asshole” sequence, the anus at first totally subservient, a true puppet, able to speak only what its master dictates, eventually develops as an independent personality and rebels, “shouting out it wanted equal rights”. It takes over control of the whole body before it shouts proclaiming, “It’s you who will shut up in the end. Not me”

(111).

Burroughs populates these stories in the novel with concrete embodiments of every possible imbalance of this dual system: from paralyzed bodies numbed by abstractions of religion and romance, to paralyzed minds imprisoned by the body's physical cravings. The rhetoric of morality and religion, and the sentimentality of romance have been presented among the weapons that serve the tyranny of mind over body. What Burroughs actually wants to show is the kind of domination that prevails the present society. Moreover, Burroughs lays bare the alienation of body and mind in the experiments of mad scientists who dominate *Naked Lunch*.

Religion, drugs, and sex in the novel either amputate the body or consider it to one insatiable organ of need, one orifice through which life can be observed. Similarly, the scientific experiments aim at a reduction or simplification of the human condition. In the routine "Ordinary Men and Women" Dr. Benway tells Dr. Schafer "The human body is scandalously inefficient. Instead of a mouth and an anus to get out of order why not have one all purpose hole to eat *and* eliminate?...Why not one all purpose blob?" (182). Such improvement is always in the direction of amputation and reduction. He later adds "The human body is filled up vit unnecessitated parts. You can get it by vit one kidney. Vy have two?" (152). In the novel all surgery is a power play, an oppressive regulation of the body or mind, and its purpose is clearly to control rather than to liberate the individual.

In *Naked Lunch* a basic contempt for human life always initiates the impulse to improve on nature, on the body. This contempt shared by the medical experimenters and the carny man, rejects difference, complexity, and change and moves instead toward reduction, simplification, and the stasis of death. The human life has been dehumanized into insects, automatons, or body parts, they have been cut off from human evolution,

from the “independent spontaneous action” (112) of individual will. In this body politic Burroughs exposes the hidden violence of domination, paralysis, and damage to individual life.

Images of amputation and death like “trailing the colorless death smell, /afterbirth of a withered grey monkey/ phantom twinges of amputation” (234, 1966) abound the novel. Such poetic echoes are given more concrete and dramatic form in the final stages of the carny man’s struggle. He only escapes the amputation of his head because the anus needs his eyes; nevertheless, his brain is “sealed off”, virtually cut off from the body. This corresponds to slash of the scalpel as he frantically performs lobotomies and amputations. All of these mutilations of mind and body reflect the structure of binary opposition of body and mind.

Burroughs traces the violence of domination and control to its insidious origin in the binary pattern of Western discourse. He warns the reader somewhat blatantly at the end of the novel, “Gentle Reader, the Word will leap on you with leopard man iron claws, it will cut off fingers and toes like an opportunist land crab, it will hang you and catch your jissom like a scrutible dog, it will coil round your thighs like a bushmaster...” (192). In the context of language as in the context of the body, all the binary structures—all the relationships—lead to dismemberment, amputation, death of the organism.

Burroughs sees a power of domination and control inherent in language. Our language, as Burroughs sees it, is a system of word locks and mind locks which “can tie up a civilization for a thousand years”. He locates one of the most pervasive and powerful weapons of language in the “EITHER/OR” of antithesis: “Right or wrong, physical or mental, true or false” (*Junky*, 200). The conflict formulated by this pattern sets up the conditions for what he calls the “war game”.

We can see this “conflict formula” at work on a literal level in the episodes of

Naked Lunch: doctor and patient, colonialist and nationalist, wise man and convert, dealer and junky, hustler and mark, and the ubiquitous pair—parasite and host. All conflict and parasitism germinates first in language. He uses word images to mean virus as an allegorical comparison. To survive is the purpose of a virus, at any expense to the host invaded. The virus tries to be an animal, to be a body. Such a parasitic invasion—whether biological or verbal—spells danger to individual life.

Burroughs's own invention of names for the characters reflects the tendency in Burroughs's fiction for characters to be dominated not just by body or mind, but more specifically by a single organ or orifice. Such organs orifice are: Willy the Disk, the terminal junky whose entire body has rotted away except for the "round disk mouth" through which he feeds his habit; "the old gash", a mother whose son rapes her in his attempt to "stem her worde horde", or the elusive private eye known as Clem Snide Private Asshole. In these names, as in the episodes in which they appear, body replaces the eye or face. To name for Burroughs is virtually to obliterate humanity, to reduce individuality to a hungry orifice, an empty sucking hole.

The blind sucking orifice to which carny man is reduced dramatizes the dead end to which domination through language brings all individual life. The site of language—sending, representing, naming—is always blind and empty. It is language that robs us of individual life and of the world itself, creating a grey veil. Words subject us to a continual barrage of images, making haze over everything, like walking around in smog. In order to control language at will, the word must be made visible and tangible. Once we are able to see, and touch and even to smell the word, its invisible power is undermined. Once the word is thus given body, it can be expelled or cut loose from body.

Burroughs attempts to liberate from word ties. He extended the cut-up experiments done in painting by Brion Gysin to his own writing, using cinematic images

to break through the limits of language and the printed page. He envisioned a total communication that would allow several voices to be transmitted simultaneously. As the language can be used to mean for the ones in power, Burroughs encourages us to go beyond the limitation and manipulation of language. Burroughs claims that by the random violence of metonymy and the cut-up technique, he will liberate the reader from the mechanical fixity and stasis of conventional language.

One of the dominant themes of *Naked Lunch* is the manipulation of language and other means of control of the individual by the industrialized power complexes of the world. The idea becomes the basis for the innovative technique and style of *Naked Lunch*. In “routines”, episodic sketches of a variety of characters and voices that sometimes depict graphic, almost hallucinogenic homosexual relations, Burroughs proves the power of language to shock and, therefore, to control. It also features his use of mythology of other cultures, particularly Mayan, to develop his own private symbols for the struggle of the individual against the agents of control. Burroughs opened the way for the supporters of freedom of expression. Burroughs proves the power of language to shock, and, therefore, to control.

Burroughs presents our lack of control over language and the language itself grappling us sometimes. Expressing oneself fully by using language is an uphill task. “The word,” Burroughs tells us, “cannot be expressed direct....It can perhaps be indicated by a mosaic of juxtaposition like articles abandoned in a hotel drawer, defined by negatives and absence...” (97). It shows the power of language as an instrument of control. . It is language that robs us of individual life and of the world itself, creating a grey veil. Words subject us to a “continual barrage of images, making haze over everything, like walking around in smog. In order to control language at will, the word must be made visible and tangible. Once we are able to see, and touch and even to smell

the word, its invisible power is undermined. Once the word is thus given body, it can be expelled or cut loose from body. Moreover, he demonstrates considerable skepticism toward grand narratives: he ridicules not only Christianity but also Buddhism and Islam as campaigns of manipulation. (94-96)

State and Bureaucracy

State and bureaucracy are as active agents of control as others. They spread the replicas of the same kind, eliminate differences and favor stability. At the conclusion of the Talking Asshole “routine”, Dr Benway suggests that

The end of complete cellular representation is cancer. Democracy is cancerous, and bureaus are its cancer. A bureau takes route anywhere in the state, turns malignant like the Narcotics Bureau, and grows and grows, always reproducing more of its kind, and until it chokes that host if not controlled or excised....Bureaucracy is wrong as a cancer, a turning away from the human evolutionary direction of infinite potentials and differentiation and independent spontaneous action, to the complete parasitism of a virus. (112)

The bureaucracy denies the non-conformists. Any matter that is not clearly defined by the bureaucratic mechanism and criteria is ruled out. All the differences and novelties are eliminated. But social rules and values have never been so inclusive to provide enough identity and recognition to genuinely spontaneous and personal ideas and actions.

The power sources try to reduce the ordinary people to mere stupid hogs. As the German doctor reveals in a telephone conversation, the people, “all stupid peasants are the so called educated. These people should not only be prevented from learning to read, but from learning to talk as well. No need to prevent them from thinking; nature has done

that” (40). Bureaucracy denies the education and awareness of people, for it may bring about change in power.

The modern world is shaped by many hidden forms of manipulation, from police surveillance to the mass media. The people are indirectly forced to internalize procedures of control, repression and conformity that make them docile objects for manipulation by others and by themselves.

The state and bureaucracy try to tame the individual to assure the power and control over them often in a covert form. The will to power is addictive; likewise, to make people fall in trap of addiction is a way of controlling. The domination is far from the realization of the victim. The bureaucracy evaluates, “The naked need of the control addicts must be decently covered by an arbitrary and intricate bureaucracy so that the subject cannot contact his enemy direct” (19). For the fulfillment of the naked needs the addict is easily ready to surrender.

In “Benway” routine Burroughs writes about the condition of the citizens of Annexia. Every citizen of Annexia was required to apply for and carry on his person at all times a whole portfolio of documents. The Examiner disguised in various clothes may stop them anywhere and anytime. Anyone whose cards were not properly stamped was arrested. On the other hand, the official hardly ever came to his office and the “explainers spent weeks and months waiting around in unheated offices with no chairs and no toilet facilities.... [Likewise], documents issued in vanishing ink faded....New documents were constantly required. The citizens rushed from one bureau to another in a frenzied attempt to meet impossible deadlines” (20). The bureaucratic system and procedure are fixed in such a way that people would engage their minds and body in rushing for catching the deadlines. This is the way bureaucracy entangles the individual and displays its presence of power to the public.

The power of police and bureaucracy gets the individual deprived of his right to privacy. Any citizen of the modern world can be kept under strict surveillance and an excess of the police as shown in *Interzone*. In *Interzone* “the cameras were fixed in the town all night (no one was permitted to use shades, curtains, shutters or blinds)....No one was permitted to bolt his door and the police had pass keys to every room in the city”. The citizens, because of these reasons, “cowered in corners like neurotic cats”. (20-21)

Taking advantage of scientific methods the individual is physically and mentally mechanized. A citizen in *Annexia* was known as the Switchboard. Electric drills were clamped against the subject’s teeth, and were instructed to operate an arbitrary switchboard, to put certain connections in certain sockets in response to bells and lights. With every mistake the drills were turned on for twenty seconds. After half an hour the Switchboard and subject break down like an overloaded thinking machine. The use of thinking machines indicates that we can learn more about the brain by the use of thinking machines than we can by introspective methods. “Western man is externalizing himself in the form of gadgets” (22) which is precisely the reification of the individual. Man sees his internal power and essence only in the reflection of his inventions and gadgets which guide him.

Drug

Burroughs uses drugs and junk synonymously in the novel. He says, “Junk is a pain killer, it also kills the pain and pleasure implicit in awareness”. In *Naked Lunch* addiction to drug serves as the master metaphor for addiction in general—to sex, to power, and to security. Burroughs says that because there are many forms of addiction, they all obey same basic laws. “Drug addiction is perhaps a basic formula for pleasure and for life itself” (*Interzone* 110). The cost of these addictions is always the loss of individual will and subjecthood. Burroughs images the takeover of the body by addictive

drugs in a number of ways—as space aliens invading and conquering a planet, as a parasitic invading and feeding on its host, eventually becoming the host, and as a virus that uses the very cells of the host to reproduce more of it, until it destroys the host. These images imply the reification, control and exploitation of individual from power sources. But in most of the cases the victim is passive.

In the sci-fi comic book cosmos of *Naked Lunch* the only “Good Guys” around to oppose these evil forces are the group that Burroughs calls “Factualists”, who almost always work “under cover”, disguised as “Bad Guys” in order to infiltrate their operations and destroy the systems by which they maintain control. Burroughs uses “Good Guys” in parallel to apomorphine.

Apomorphine enabled Burroughs to kick his addiction: the junk dependent cells accept the apomorphine as if it were junk, like an enemy command center being infiltrated by undercover agents. Once inside, the apomorphine kills the junk dependent cells, alleviating the agonies of withdrawal while the “addicted” cells are replaced by healthy ones. Once the apomorphine has replaced these cells, it simply leaves, without establishing a dependency on itself. Burroughs says it behaves exactly like junk—except that it doesn’t addict. “Like a good policeman, apomorphine does its work and goes” (*Job* 153). The central character Lee is an undercover agent in *Naked Lunch*. He tells us that his friend A. J. (who at times seems more like an alter ego of Lee’s than a separate character) is an agent like himself. A. J. is rumored to represent “a trust of giant insects from another galaxy”, yet he insists, “I believe he is on the Factualist side (which I also represent)” (*Job* 133). Lee and A. J. behave exactly like the Bad Guys—except that they don’t work to maintain control. On the contrary, as Factualists they work to expose “the facts” as they are, especially the scams and control systems of the Bad Guys who prey on marks. Like good cops they do their work and go.

Reconditioning Center, where Dr. Benway has been called to direct, is clearly a version of the federal drug rehabilitation centre at Lexington, Kentucky. Burroughs spent there some ten days in 1948 trying to kick his first habit. At Lexington, when an attendant calls out “Shot to me!” the addicts are required to line up and put their arms through a window so an orderly can inject a measured dose into their veins without encountering them as persons (*Junky* 61). The utter dehumanization of this protocol, its total denial of any subjecthood to the addicts, is caricatured in the Reconditioning Centre, where “an attendant throws up an iron shutter and lets out the hog call. The junkies rush up grunting and squealing” (31). Ultimately, the Reconditioning Centre for Burroughs represents all those institutions that dehumanize their members, objectifying them through a kind of thought control.

Interzone reflects or represents a composite of cities where Burroughs lived, and also those transitional areas of any modern city where the straight and the under-world come into contact. It also represents the transitional state between being addicted and being drug-free, that is, between being controlled from within by an invader and being self determining.

Drug and addiction become ultimately a means of control. In “Deposition” Burroughs describes the political and economic dynamic producing addiction as the “Algebra of Need”:

I have seen the exact manner in which the junk virus operates through fifteen years of addiction. The pyramid of junk, one level eating the level below (it is no accident that junk higher-ups are always fat and the addict in the street is always thin) right up to the top or tops since there are many junk pyramids feeding on the peoples of the world and all built on basic principles of monopoly:

1. Never give anything away for nothing.
2. Never give more than you have to give (always catch the buyer hungry and always make him wait).
3. Always take everything back if you possibly can. (200)

The monopoly of drug business depends on these basic principles. The Pusher, the seller, always gets it all back. The one who loses is only the addict. The addict needs more and more junk to maintain a human form.

Burroughs traces the junk monopoly since the ancient time. He mentions about his knowledge of a beneficent non-habit forming junk called *soma* in India. He is sure that “If *soma* ever existed the Pusher was there to bottle it and monopolize and sell it and it turned into a plain old-time JUNK”. (201)

Junk is definitely ideal merchandise which needs no sales talk. Junk is a big industry. The corrupt use it as a weapon for possession of power and money. It is such an easy business that “The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy....The junk merchant does not sell his product to the customer, he sells the customer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk” (201). The addict does no bargain about the quality of the product. He loses himself as he is sold out to the junk.

There is no limit to the need. The addict would cheat, lie, steal and do *anything* to satisfy total need because the addict would be in total possession. This proves to be a good chance for the police to perform its power to dominate and control and also to benefit economically. As junk is an ultimate merchandise and good source of income for government, it would latently be unwilling to curb it.

The junk business produces the structure of a pyramid. Burroughs proposes how we can annihilate the pyramid in serial relation. We must start with the bottom of the

pyramid: the Addict in the street and stop tilting quixotically for the “higher-ups” so called, all of whom are immediately replaceable. The addict in the street who must have junk to live is the one irreplaceable factor in the junk equation. When there are no more addicts to buy junk there will be no junk traffic. As long as junk need exists, someone serves it. Thus Burroughs suggests us to start from the bottom. He has got an experience that the apomorphine treatment really works. He is dissatisfied in that this method of treatment has been largely neglected. No research has been done with variations of the apomorphine formula.

He anticipates a scream of protest from interested or unbalanced individuals as the junk virus is shot out from under them. Junk is a big business; therefore, there are always cranks and operators. They must not be allowed to interfere the inoculation. “*The junk virus is public health problem number one of the world today... Since Naked Lunch treats this health problem, it is necessarily brutal, obscene and disgusting*”. (205)

Burroughs sees the problem of drug addiction too severe. He presents the drug inflicted USA as follows: “Get on that boat, junky, get out from under. The USA is burned down dust bowl, cattle and junkies low for relief as they nuzzle the dry opium pipes and empty caps...”(257). The people of the new generation have forgotten their duties, the “dream” and ideals. Burroughs describes condition of the addict, the Buyer as pathetic. The Buyer loses his human citizenship and, in consequence, becomes a creature without species and a menace to the narcotic industry on all levels. As the addiction changes the metabolism of the body and the addict loses the capacity of doing usual daily works, he is away from basic humanness. He is not under his control, body controls the mind. The host is eaten up.

Men become hooked on power, pleasure, illusions, and so on as much as a junkie does on heroin, and “The Algebra of Need”, states simply that when an addict is forced

with absolute need he will do anything to satisfy it. With the addiction comes the strong desire to fulfill it. The desire for drug also implies the desire for power and more power. The central appeal of drugs in the novel is that if infinite power comes together with infinite desire.

Burroughs extends the sex and junk equation even further. In “The Black Meat” Burroughs shows the logical extension of the compulsion for junk after a tainted food which is “overwhelmingly delicious and nauseating so that the eaters eat and vomit and eat again until they fall exhausted” (47). Capital punishment on stage in “Hassan’s Rumpus Room” and the image of the wasted orgasm of a hanged man symbolize the death and infertility brought on by the all encompassing junk equation.

Sex workers take the position and function of soldiers in a sense. They engage the potentials of the body and mind making them passive just with physical and deceptive pleasure. Lee tells the Girls: “If your tits won’t stop them, bring up your cunts and confound these faggots”. This is just enough “to turn a body to stone” (126).

Addiction takes someone away from oneself. “The addict can spend eight hours looking at a wall. He is conscious of his surroundings but they have no connotation and in consequence no interest” (30). They cannot be vigilant of the situation and circumstances and act accordingly. They in this way come easily under control.

Junk affords relief not only from tension but also from the whole life process “in disconnecting the hypothalamus, which is the centre of psychic energy and libido”. The whole cycle of tension, discharge and rest are suspended. Orgasm has no function in the junkie. Boredom never troubles the addict: “He can look at his shoe for eight hours”. He is only roused to action when the hourglass of junk runs out. Junkies are easy to control as hogs. There is no respect for human dignity. (30-31)

The influence and effect of drug is clear by the way Burroughs tells us about his

own sufferings or experience: “Look down at my filthy trousers, haven’t been changed in months...The days glide by strung on a syringe with a long thread of blood...I am forgetting sex and all sharp pleasures of the body—a grey, junk bound ghost. The Spanish boys call me *El Hombre Invisible*—the Invisible Man...” (56). Drug addicted person fails to show his presence to himself and to others. He forgets sex, recreation and reproduction.

Dr. Benway and Characters

Dr. Benway, who runs the Reconditioning Center, is introduced as a manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control. In fact it is hard to tell villains from victims. Most of the characters are often disguised or undercover which deliberately confuses us the distinctions and the allegories of the characters and even the narrators. “It is difficult to know what side anyone is working on” (*Letters*, 88). In the first titled routine, “Benway”, Agent Lee is working for Islam Inc., which is later revealed to be an umbrella corporation that serves as a “front” or cover for most of the Bad Guys. Has Lee infiltrated the Evil Empire on behalf of the Factualists? Or has he gone over to the other side? If we look closely at the evil acts committed by the three parties of villains, we will find that Lee-A. J.-Burroughs has also committed or longs to commit every one of them.

Like the Liquefactionists he has subsumed others into his own being. Like the Divisionists, he has cut off his scalpel, at least one part of himself, and metaphorically has broadest copies of himself out into the world. Like the Senders, he too tries to transmit his thoughts, feelings and fantasies directly into his readers’ minds. We must remember that Burroughs had himself embarked on the quest for Yage because he was convinced of its telepathic powers. It is useful to look at Burroughs and his many avatars in *Naked Lunch* (including Agent Lee, A. J., and The Sailor) to see how he matches up to

his own villains.

The Senders are so dangerous that even Burroughs uses the word in plural only temporarily. Each Sender will want to eliminate all others, since the existence of all other Senders threatens him with becoming a receiver, the object of someone else's telepathic control. In the novel the Sending is imaged as bio-control. What it all shows is that, Ron Loewinsohn writes:

Burroughs—a gay man, an intellectual, an artist, and a drug addict in the paranoid, cold war world of the conformist world of 1950s—was painfully aware of the seriousness of the threat to individuality posed by social pressure, advertising, political maneuvering, public relations, and the many forms of manipulations, public and private, that Sending obviously represents. (560)

Ironically, as Burroughs makes clear, Senders also include artists who are more than capable of confusing, “sending” with “creation”. Just like the Ancient Mariner in S. T. Coleridge's poem *The Ancient Mariner* conveys a saddening wisdom to the Wedding Guest by compelling him to listen to his tale, that is, by reducing him to an object, so does the artist to the reader, viewer and listener. In a bit more extended level, the compulsion to express felt by the Mariner and Burroughs, both the artists, is the direct result of the guilt that follows the gratuitous act of violence. The Ancient Mariner is compelled to tell his tale to strangers because he shot an albatross; Burroughs is compelled to tell his tale to us because he shot his wife.

Burroughs likewise presents the underworld and the upper world in direct opposition to each other. The dishonesty and moral squalor of the underworld are distinguished from straight, middle class values and institutions of the world of the readers. But in fact Burroughs shows us that the police officers, judges, doctors, lawyers,

businessmen, and politicians who run the straight world are every bit as venal and hypocritical as the junkies and dealers.

Some characters like Dr. “Fingers” Schafer are consistently associated with certain dominant themes like economic and scientific control of individuals while others like A. J. develop more ambiguous identities that cut across the book’s already unstable epistemic-ethical categories. Likewise, Benway’s behavior can stand for the ambiguous status of all Burroughs’s doctor characters that fight disease (like addiction) but also earn their livings from it and thus have some interest in preserving disease. The police are in a parallel situation with regard to the crime of drug addiction.

A. J. is the most important example in *Naked Lunch*, of the ubiquitous double agent, whose allegiance, like that of the doctors and police, cannot be determined with certainty. “A. J. is an agent like me”, says the narrator, “but for whom or for what no one has ever been able to discover....I believe he is on the Factualist side (which I also represent)” but “of course he could be a Liquefactionist Agent....You can never be sure of anyone in the industry. (122-123)

By the methods of control the human capacity to react and resist is paralyzed. When you look at the man’s eyes “Nobody, nothing looks back.” The human power is unable to reveal as he suffers “Irreversible Neural Damage”. Benway’s method of control is explicit in the following:

Benway takes a chocolate bar from his pocket, removes the wrapper and holds it in front of the man’s nose. The man sniffs. His jaws begin to work. He makes snatching motions with his hands. Saliva drips from his mouth and off his chin in long streamers. His stomach rumbles. His whole body writhes in peristalsis. Benway steps back and holds up the chocolate. The man drops to his knees, throws back his head and barks. Benway tosses the chocolate. The man snaps at it, misses, scrambles around on the floor

making slobbering noises. He crawls under the bed, finds the chocolate and crams it into his mouth with both hands (28-29). This shows the total submission and surrender of an addict for the fulfillment of his need. He degrades from human to the status of an animal, totally under control.

Interzone and Political Factions

Control of the city of Interzone is, like anything else in this world, unstable. It is constantly being struggled over by three factions or gangs of Bad Guys—the Liquefactionists, the Divisionists, and the Senders—all of them contending also with the lone band of Good Guys, the Factualists. The common goal of political parties, whether by proliferation or reduction, is to replace all individuality with total conformity.

Interzone, the chief setting of the novel, is a composite of all places that were the scenes of Burroughs's drug quest: the southern South America, Tangier, and the junk neighborhoods. It also refers to Tangier, which was an international zone governed until 1956 by a group of European powers called the Board of Control. It represents the modern city as waste land in which all the cities, peoples, and governments of the world are combined into one huge beehive of commerce, sex, addiction, political manipulation and rivalry. Burroughs describes Interzone as "The Composite City, where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market" (89). The inhabitants of the city spend their time copulating, shooting up, and making deals in parody of Western capitalist-consumer societies. Sexuality is on the level of pornography, particularly the "blue movie"; all inhabitants are addicted to drugs, sex, or power; and all commerce is on the level of vice and confidence tricks.

In *Naked Lunch* imaginary feuding powers are everywhere. They form the basis of intangible storyline throughout the novel. All of the characters belong in some way or another to a special institution/corporation with its set of rules and ideals. Many of the

characters are secret agents for these groups, sometimes with missions and goals, sometimes not. There is a constant confusion as to purpose, hinting at the futility if these Institutions, but they carry on nonetheless. The goals of these Institutions and individuals are not stated, exactly, but the various groups are working against each other to maintain dominance and defame others.

The world of Interzone, a place in constant confusion, with ever-changing rules and regulations, was modeled on Tangiers after the World War II. According to Burroughs, there was a continual flux of different stake-holders trying to dominate the country in the wake of the war's destructive results. This is where the images of warring internal factions come from in *Naked Lunch*.

Liquefactionists, one of the political factions of Interzone, seek to control by the "eventual merging of everyone into One Man by a process of protoplasmic absorption" (133). The Divisionists seek to control the world by flooding it with clones of themselves: they "cut-off tiny bits of their flesh and grow exact replicas of themselves in embryo jelly. They want to spread their replicas all over the world so that they do not feel lonely when they travel. They strictly control the division of the Undesirables" (137-38). The process may go on until there will be "only the replica of one sex on the planet: that is, one person in the world with millions of separate bodies" (137). The Senders, the worst of these villains, control from within, transmitting telepathic messages which the receiver acts on as if they were his own thoughts. The Sender "has to send all the time. He never receive, because...that means someone else has feelings of his own...Sooner or later he's got no feelings to send...Finally the screen goes dead...The Sender has turned into a huge centipede" (137). The workers after burning the centipede elect a new Sender. This shows that control can never be a means to any practical end; rather it brings more control like junk.

Senders can not put up with any difference and intervention in their system. Nevertheless, Factualists sometimes intervene and infiltrate into that system. “It was only the intervention of the Factualists that prevented Senders from putting Einstein in an institution and destroying his theory. It may be said that only very few Senders know what they are doing and these top Senders are the most dangerous and evil men in the world” (136). Here Burroughs equals the Senders with the fascists.

All attempts to control involve denying the subjectivity of the other. By absorbing, subsuming or assimilating the other, by broadcasting their own clones, or by telepathic invasion, the world is turned into an image of the controller, who remains the only subject, everyone reduced to the status of an object. Ironically, these efforts at control all end up with the controller losing his own subjecthood in the bargain, “turned into a huge centipede”.

Burroughs calls these groups political “parties” and often discusses in political terms. A critic of the book, Jennie Skerl, identifies the Liquefactionists as Fascists, the Senders as “the totalitarian party of the left”, the Divisionists as “moderates” and the Factualists as anarchists (40-41). We can also see the parties of evil as allegorical figures that dramatize modes of international domination. The Liquefactionists represent fascist states that absorb or assimilate other nations into themselves. The Divisionists are clearly figures of colonial powers that send out “samples” of themselves which grow and proliferate in those remote areas, until eventually the sun never sets on these empires. The Senders, the most evil and dangerous of all, according to Burroughs, represent those states that dominate others much more subtly but more pervasively by insinuating their own values, definitions, and assumptions into the fabric of their victim’s culture. Here it has some hegemonic relationship. A modern example of this sort of state is the post-World War United States, which dominates others by manipulating language and

iconography until the locals act on these imported values as if they were their own. The presence of U. S. is marked by the presence of Coke, Levi's and McDonald.

Addiction as theme plays itself out in two primary registers: the organization of human body and political organizations. Politics articulates and inscribes the body as object, while the range of the bodies constitutes the range of political subjects or agents at the same time. The best example of this dialectic can be seen in the exposition of political parties of Interzone, all of which are based on incompatible totalitarian projects for the human body. All these parties attempt to eliminate difference and impose uniformity upon society by scientifically manipulating the human body. Society itself is, in fact, presented as a diseased body. The common goal of all political parties, whether by proliferation or reduction, is to replace all individuality with total uniformity.

City of Interzone is the Composite City, where all human potential is spread out in a vast market place, where everything has been reduced to a commodity, including people and especially people. In "The Market", "City of Interzone" or "International Zone" "everyone looks at you for your price tag, appraising you like a merchandise" (*Interzone 47*). Man himself has been a commodity for someone to be used, consumed or exploited. Man is treated as a thing on which can be put a price tag. In short, Burroughs envisions the world as a commercial center where everything is on sale.

IV. Conclusion: Attempts to Liberation

Burroughs is associated with postmodernist approach because of his experimental method of “cut-up” and “fold-in” and his use of hallucinatory images and indeed of drugs themselves to write his books. He uses junk both in a literal sense and as a symbol: junk as drugs and junk as cultural rubbish, the floating detritus and loose images of contemporary life. Through loose and surreal associations the capitalistic reification of the world and images of science fiction merge with author’s mind-blowing trips and homoerotic dreams to create violent fantasies of endlessly warring powers. Burroughs sees a world of oppressive and authoritarian forces struggling with the free play of consciousness.

Faced also with obscenity trials, his books are unstable, violent and often obscene texts which attempt to penetrate a public world far gone in barbarity, technological systematization and violence which accurately reflects his inner life. His transgressive experimentalism emphasizes the provisional, improvisatory side of modern experiment and its pursuit of more open forms.

Unlike the conventional pattern of novels, *Naked Lunch* lacks the linear story. If we have to weave the story, we need to track down William Lee’s travels in search of drug across United States to Texas, to New Orleans, to Mexico and to Interzone, an imaginary and modern metropolitan city. In course of his travel he comes across other characters like Jane, Dr. Benway, A. J., Carl Peterson and others.

Naked Lunch is Burroughs’s portrayal of the state of reified individual in technologically advanced, capitalistic modern society. He brings together explicitly the agents of control working overtly and covertly for the control of individual. Their chief motive is to hold on social, economic and political power by any means. The chief agents

and objects of control Burroughs presents are language and body; drugs and sex; state and bureaucracy; political parties of Interzone; Dr. Benway and science; and commercial bureaucracy.

The powerful rulers in a society apply diverse ways to keep on controlling the individual under them as long as they can. Any agent or institution that once acquires power tries at any cost to continue remaining in the dominant position ever after. They possess the power to influence any aspect of human life and society, create the language, use science, technology and media to manipulate and control the human beings. The agents may keep the people under threat to assure that they do not express and revolt, or engage them in the maze of entertainment or get addicted to sex, drugs and alcoholism so that they do not become any hurdle for their performance of power. With the aim to terrorize the people, to show power to the public also such agents of control sponsor some mafia groups for their purpose in a latent way. They obviously apply double standard covertly. *Naked Lunch* is, thus, a portrayal of the agents of control at work over the reified human beings, their relationships and their essence and humanness.

In the guise of medical progress toward simplification, in the promises of democratic representation and unity, even in the apparently innocent form of carnival joke Burroughs sees through the same deadly pattern of domination and control. Science, politics, personal relations between individuals, and an individual's relation to himself, to his own body—all of these are variations of what Burroughs calls the “Basic Algebra of Need”. The desire to control and dominate creates a virus parasite: the devouring monkey in the form of a junkie's need, Replica imitations of Divisionists, the One Man amoeba of the Liquefactionists, or the aggressive and tyrannical anus of the carnival man. These degenerate life forms can only survive, in turn, by devouring their hosts, enacting the renunciation of life itself, a falling towards inorganic, inflexible machine, towards dead

matter. What it implies is the continual effort of the power sources of capitalistic state and economic and political institutions to send their own replicas to the public through media, advertisement, knowledge, laws, bureaucracy, medical science, and technology.

The agents of control—state, bureaucracy, economic and political organizations—use different means and methods to maintain uniformity and stability. They fear change which might overthrow them from power and position. The change and development of society creates new perspectives, needs, definitions and identities but the dominant groups disregard and suppress them. In this regard, *Naked Lunch* marks the steady disaffection of youth, the movement toward greater sexual freedom, the emergence of a more oppositional gay consciousness, the increased visibility of an American drug culture, and the revaluation of the concept of mental illness. The novel is a creation as a result of a will to freedom. It is structured as a quest for “the final fix” and later for what Campbell calls “the freedom to live” and the “ultimate boon” that can revive the dying world.

Drug is the symbolic representation of an ideal product of modern consumerism and market centered economy. It is ultimate merchandise for which no sales talk is necessary. The client will crawl himself through a sewer and beg to buy it. Burroughs says the junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer; he sells the consumer to his product. The producers of the goods hit the very consciousness of the human beings through media, advertisement and knowledge so that the desire to consume the goods is as strong as the desire for drug.

For a free and conscious mind bears the potential to bring about the upheavals and subversion in society and power structure in society, the stake holders practice to engage and stupefy the individual through addiction to drug, sex and consumerism. Burroughs sees addiction as part of global conspiracy by presiding powers of our world—the media

conglomerates, the vast political and commercial bureaucracies, and a profit ridden medical science—which are determined to reduce us to the total dependency of addicts, while teasing us with the mirage of transgressive sex. But the primary mechanism, by which this conditioning and control is exercised, according to Burroughs, is language.

Burroughs's use of "anti-form" manifests itself not only the rejection of the controlling role of the artist over his material but also the dominating power of language and the rejection of such power using the same weapon, i.e. the power of language. It is language that robs us of individual life and of the world itself, creating a grey veil. Words subject us to a "continual barrage of images, making haze over everything, like walking around in smog. In order to control language at will, the word must be made visible and tangible. Once we are able to see, and touch and even to smell the word, its invisible power is undermined. Once the word is thus given body, it can be expelled or cut loose from body.

Burroughs initiates defying the so-called forms, rules, norms, and values of language, literature and society. The anti-form of the novel becomes the form for him. The novel presents its critique as addiction in both its content and form: the narrator Lee entices readers to act as voyeurs touring his seedy world in order to entrap them in an elaborate narrative con game that reveals the disturbing parallels between junkie's subculture and society as a whole. Like the other types of addiction, social conformity is a con we play on ourselves, but *Naked Lunch* shows how to escape from addiction and control just as Lee escapes from his own internalization of police repression by murdering the stereotypical New York narcotics officers Hauser and O'Brien in the final routine.

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