Beating the Dead Horse: Deconstructing the Junk Genius of *Naked Lunch*

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ABSTRACT

William S. Burroughs challenges each reader of *Naked Lunch* to make meaning of its convoluted pages. This project explores the two crucial keys to fuller understanding of his groundbreaking literary work: Logic and Ethics.

In "Beating the Dead Horse: Deconstructing the Junk Genius of *Naked Lunch*," I illustrate Burroughs' means of exposing the flawed binaries that undergird the Aristotelian Logic of language. In *Naked Lunch*, the author bares the slippery nature of any such Logical language, whereby each word comes with a range of denotations and connotations, all of which shift constantly according to a concomitantly shifting context. This project primarily explores Burroughs' means of subverting traditional logic by exposing the flaws that riddle the foundations of language, essentially undermining the syllogistic system via the system (essentially fashioning a word virus/vaccine chain).

I also analyze the Ethical grounding of *Naked Lunch*, which grows directly from Burroughs' logical/linguistic subversions. Namely, Burroughs sought to expose the problems with the common Utilitarian Ethic that ultimately pushes the individual to the margins while subsuming the individual within the group (a symptom of the binary logical/linguistic systems that pervade thought and encourages othering). This article provides substantial evidence that links Burroughs' ethical equations directly from his Algebra of Need to Jeremy Bentham's Hedonistic Calculus.

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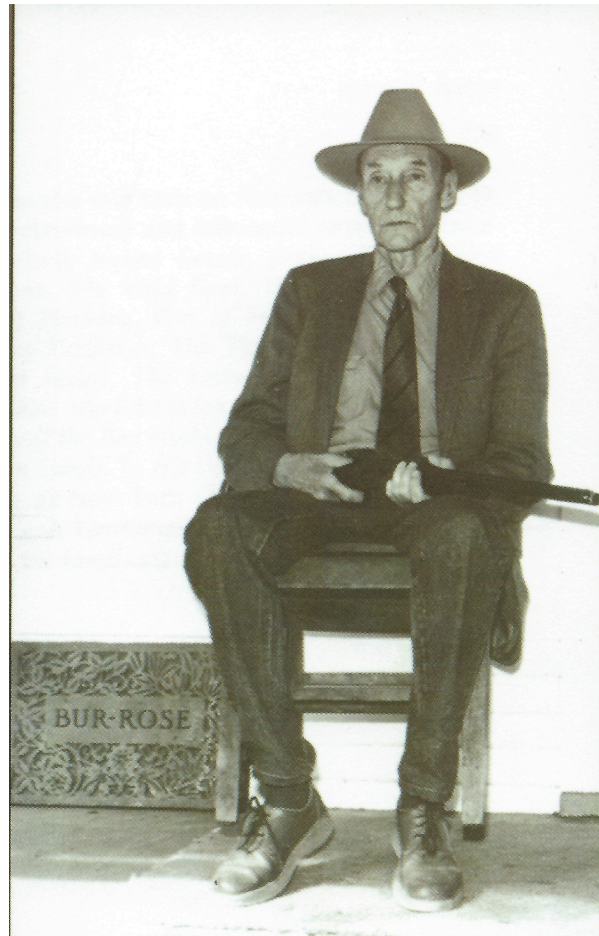Deconstructing the Junk Genius of *Naked Lunch*

Fig. 1. Cover Photograph—*The Job*, a collection of interviews with William S. Burroughs and

Daniel Odier. Burroughs, William S. and Daniel Odier. *The Job: Interviews with William S.*

Burroughs. 1974. New York: Penguin, 1989. Print.

I. "The way OUT is the way IN…[1]" is the Way Forward

Before performing an incisive post-mortem on William S. Burroughs' greatest literary excess and success, an examination of the common analytical exhumations proves useful, if only to map out the already emptied intellectual treasure-chambers of his most (in)famous work. Marginalized early on as a mere vulgarist, Burroughs lived to see occasional smatterings of critical attention (if not always praise, at least serious scholarly attention) in America. Previous to this project, Burroughs scholarship has largely focused on *Naked Lunch* in terms of the overt drug use and sexuality, though a few exceptional pieces have been produced that examine the maddeningly slippery ambiguity of the language; the former, more common foci are often examined via cultural/historical and psychological heuristics, while the latter, less frequently attempted approach often ends up more descriptive than demonstrative or interpretive. My ultimate hope is that this project may open the last two doors—Logic and Ethics—which are hidden out in the open and represent the utmost importance to an understanding of *Naked Lunch* on Burroughs' terms—and that current and subsequent scholars will gain a new whiff of old air from their opening.

The best examples of the more common Burroughs scholarship beneficially contextualize the drug use and scatology/sexuality in *Naked Lunch*, while other criticisms further marginalize the writer's work as the lowest sort of genre fiction. Richard Kostelanetz's article "From Nightmare to Seredipity [sic]: A Retrospective Look at William Burroughs," is an exemplary early case of critical attention paid to the Beat emeritus, though the piece focuses on the literary legitimacy of drug use; herein, Kostelanetz crystallizes the bipolar reaction to Burroughs, as he boldly proclaims that

> Probably the most universally controversial book since Joyce's two masterpieces—indeed, perhaps the sole contemporary work capable of inspiring arguments that dissolve friendships—*Naked Lunch* is a great work precisely because it transcends a concern with narcotics as such to realize a drug experience in an achieved and appropriate literary style. […] Burroughs takes narcotics out of the realm of reportage and scientific treatise (its prime domain so far) and appropriates it as a viable subject for literature. (123)

The tone of Kostelanetz's article is positive overall—however—the fact that he chooses to explore the surface features of the novel, combined with a title that proclaims itself a "retrospective" (in 1968) signifies that (at least in Kostelanetz's thinking) the matter of Burroughs' talent was already said and done long ago. Wayne Pounds, in his 1987 article, "The Postmodern Anus: Parody and Utopia in Two Recent Novels by William Burroughs," psychoanalytically compares Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, prime example "of a postmodern asshole," to three examples of its "predecessor, a modern asshole": the usurers' "arse-holes" from Pound's "first of the Hell Cantos, Canto XIV," Bloom's "morning elimination" (611) in Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Bataille's *The Story of the Eye*, which "permits the reader to see the equation of the eye/I, the anus, and the Father" (612). While Pounds' penetrating psychoanalytical analysis is fascinating Freudian fodder, Burroughs' tongue is eschewed in favor of other concerns (which should be obvious from the title of the article).

The more linguistic/structural (in the narrative sense) and moral/ethical approaches to the controversial novel invite deep navigations into the work, but seem to balk at undertaking the daunting task of cartography. Douglas G. Baldwin, in his essay, "'Word Begets Image and

Image is Virus': Undermining Language and Film in the Works of William S. Burroughs," in describing the author's style, argues that

> while Burroughs's aleatory fiction conflates the techniques of the initially
> disparate media of visual imagery and prose, it also simultaneously seeks to
> challenge the traditional narrative common to both and to offer in a rebellious
> stance an alternative narrative style that promises to free readers from social,
> aesthetic, and political forms of "control" represented by society's "normal" visual
> and verbal storytelling. (65)

Baldwin focuses on Burroughs' tendency to strongly connect image to word (or signified to signifier), which implies structuralist tendencies (in the theoretical sense); while it is true that the language in *Naked Lunch* is quite vivid and even cinematic, I argue that Burroughs' writing is potently post-structural, as the author consistently challenges binary relationships, particularly word and image. Ron Loewinsohn, in "Gentle Reader, I fain would spare you this, but my pen hath its will like the Ancient Mariner," describes Burroughs' means of obfuscation, as a collection of "[p]ages—more than a thousand of them, according to the myth—put together by sifting and selecting, shuffling and reshuffling, over some nine years in at least a half-dozen cities on three continents [...] further dispersed by its many narrators and many voices, styles and formats that shift kaleidoscopically" (1). Furthermore, Loewinsohn claims that Burroughs has a strong ethical center:

> Over the years Burroughs made it clear, both privately and publicly, that his
> concern for his audience wasn't just personal or literary but deeply moral and
> spiritual: Burroughs is concerned to preserve his reader's soul as well as his own.
> (2)

Burroughs, according to Loewinsohn, has the rhetorical intention of "wising up the mark" (2), using "addiction to drugs [...] as the master metaphor for addiction in general [...] [t]he cost of [which] is always the loss of individual will and subjecthood" (3). Loewinsohn describes both the structural (in the narrative sense) and ethical goals employed in *Naked Lunch* without naming or reverse engineering them in detail. Michael Sean Bolton, in "Getting Off the Point: Deconstructing Context in the Novels of William S. Burroughs," argues that "Burroughs's novel destabilizes and diffuses all correspondence to real world locations, both temporal and physical, creating a simulation without origin" (54). This article describes Burroughs' tendency to disjoint time and place in the interest of ambiguity. While the title suggests a deconstruction, it is more accurately a description of Burroughs' methods of obscuring setting and skewing linear chronology.

James E. Tanner, in "Experimental Styles Compared: E.E. Cummings and William S. Burroughs," extolls a particularly grim misunderstanding of *Naked Lunch*: "Few changes would be necessary to transform a kernel of thought into a pattern of language similar to the patterns found in Burroughs' novel; the power of the book resides in its *content* far more than in its style" (12). After working complex deep structure equations of Cummings' poetry (as adapted from James P. Thorne, author of "Stylistics and Generative Grammars"), Tanner has reduced Burroughs' technique to the paltry shocks of the content, and has therefore ignored or misunderstood the intrinsic connections that exist between form, content, and function in *Naked Lunch*. Tanner further claims that

> *Naked Lunch* is the product of a very different kind of awareness from that
> traditionally ascribed to Cummings. There is a vast difference between Walt
> Whitman's solitary singer, incanting "I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and

all so luscious," and Burroughs' naked Mr. America, screaming "My asshole confounds the Louvre! I fart ambrosia and shit pure gold turds!" (17). Burroughs' oft-reiterated point is that logically and ethically, the above-mentioned proclamations are the very same. Though Tanner attempts to place Cummings and Burroughs as equivalent binaries of linguistic subversion, which simply occupy different points on a scale, his judgments are obviously based upon surface features and an obsolete high-art, low-art aesthetic, which allows for his ultimately unbalanced comparisons of Burroughs with Cummings and Whitman. Tanner's criticisms actually speak to Burroughs' successes, as I will argue that part of his purpose in *Naked Lunch* is to set up a red herring comprised of content, which obfuscates his revolutionary deconstruction of the form and function of the word and its emanations: the sentence, the story, the novel, and the truth.

Robin Lydenberg, in "Negative Poetics in William Burroughs and Roland Barthes," links Burroughs to what she views as a new tradition of subversive art and literature:

> Recent fiction and critical examinations of narrative theory have mobilized the spirit of contemporary literary expression against the most basic assumptions about written language and thought. The rules of logic and sequence, the legality of authorial ownership of the text, the hierarchical domination of Western thought by meaning and mimesis, and the immovable philosophical frame of dualism are laid bare, disrupted and reversed in the radical contemporary text. Its poetics is essentially negative, aggressively distrustful of language and form, its effects destructive and deconstructive. The myths and metaphors created by the new aesthetic proclaim an anti-art which asserts random disorder, incoherence, impersonality and a longing for the purity of silence. (414)

Lydenberg thus begins her insightful analysis of Burroughs' means of subverting exactly the sort

of binary high-art, low-art aesthetic that Tanner posits as a challenge to *Naked Lunch*'s

credibility as a truly revolutionary achievement of style. Furthermore, Lydenberg countermands

the common dismissal (exemplified by Tanner's aforementioned article) by pointing out the fact

that "[t]he strange and terrifying universe of Burroughs' fiction, which has been dismissed by

some as paranoid distortion or drug induced delusion, expresses the same urgency that pervades

Barthes' early criticism" (417) and "[m]any readers of *Naked Lunch* fail to understand that

Burroughs' overexposure of sexuality [and scatology] is intended as a kind of cure by infection,

meant to immunize his readers against the control mechanisms of sexual shame, fabricated desire

and arbitrary taboo" (418-19). Lydenberg also clearly recognizes the metaphorical parallel

Burroughs draws between junk and language, as she claims that the author "is painfully aware

that he is forced to fight the word virus on its own terms—with more words" (420).

Lydenberg's article provides an early precedent for taking Burroughs' masterpiece seriously—

both theoretically and philosophically—and most importantly, she understands the fact that

Burroughs' "strange and terrifying universe" is driven by the interaction of sign, signifier, and

signified. As such, my project owes a great deal to the path she blazed.

~I. An Atrophied Introduction[2]: "A Man Within[3]" Wrung Out

William S. Burroughs—accidental wife-killer and lifelong gun aficionado—mentor of the Beat Generation—high priest of junk—prolific spoken-word anti-hero—pop culture term-coiner—and the stellar sort of Postmodernist/Post-Structuralist author that can pop one's eyes and blow one's mind with a single paragraph; certainly, the croaking voice and cringe-worthy reputation precedes, and sometimes, supersedes, his body of work. *Naked Lunch* presents a particularly guarded portal into explication, analysis, and comprehension. A rite of passage for any self-respecting "hipster" of any age, Burroughs' ultimate work of genius defies all the pejoratives one could conjure—because *Naked Lunch* breaks its own bones with sticks and stones (in terms of ad baculum, ad hominem, red herring, and every other fallacy possible [and many chapters of the book could be considered phallus-y as well, to an extent that would make any self-respecting patriarch blush]). As I will detail, *Naked Lunch* is best tasted with a pallet trained on Logic and Ethics: I believe this project will reveal a masterful Burroughs behind the dark curtain of his reputation, who reveled in an infectious knowledge of both philosophical systems, which he utilized to undercut the language, form, and morality of the novel and the truth (as they were commonly known previous to *Naked Lunch*).

Though many critics have deemed Burroughs' writing a failure, the lack was all his audience's; the readership (including many of the scholars) often lack a tacit knowledge of the philosophical systems that Burroughs attempted to undermine from within, and thus he managed to hide his didactic mission right out in the open, on the pages. Burroughs disseminated the concepts found in Friedrich Nietzsche's influential article, "On Truth and Lie in the Extra Moral Sense" and more directly, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In so doing, Burroughs also exemplified Derrida's concepts of freeplay, *différance,* and supplement before the

theorist had the opportunity to codify them (which is not at all surprising, since these theories are descriptive, rather than prescriptive). Besides the conceptual links to both Nietzschean Logic and Ethics in *Naked Lunch*, which I will detail, Burroughs obviously shared the German philosopher's notorious zeal for potentially destructive truths. In fact, as the annals of any self-respecting Wiki article can tell the self-respecting hipster, Burroughs checked the slack in the guts of the 50s and 60s readership so hard that *Naked Lunch* became a landmark pariah of censorship, and many interests of power had a stake in disallowing the public from digesting the author's re-nude sense of honesty; they failed, and he won. Critics have striven and driven for decades now to understand what that means. Now—more than half a century after Burroughs so thoroughly bared his truths—what more can the reader hope to glean from his masterpiece?

Burroughs puts his metaphorical body and mind into *Naked Lunch*...what he has experienced and what he has learned; his role is ultimate binary—the unreliable narrator/author whom the "Gentle Reader" (34, 191-2) should nonetheless trust, at the cost of being an unwise mark:

> I can feel the heat closing in, feel them out there making their moves, setting up their devil doll stool pigeons, crooning over my spoon and dropper I throw away at Washington Square Station, vault a turnstile and two flights down the iron stairs, catch an uptown A train ... Young, good looking, crew cut, Ivy League, advertising exec type fruit holds the door back for me. I am evidently his idea of a character (3).

From the first words of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs is both the "I" and the "Young, good looking, crew cut, Ivy League, advertising exec type fruit [who] holds the door back for [the I]." Burroughs had to open the doors for himself before he could (im)politely open them for the

reader. Educated at Harvard and in various nefarious drug-dens in multiple countries, the irony

of *Naked Lunch* is, in large part, the irony of the "Man Within" (15, 30). The mere fact that

Burroughs was a well-educated married man from a good family, but also a *Junkie Queer* (the

names of his first two published novels, chronologically) considered to be the lowest

denominator of society, makes his life performative of his enigmatic art (and/or vices versus), the

purpose of which was primarily to cut the Gordian Knots of binary Logic and Ethics that bind

Western society. The trick is figuring out HOW he set about untying. Here again, Burroughs'

life bares a substantial detail that shows up in *Naked Lunch*: His grandfather and namesake,

William Seward Burroughs I, invented a mechanical adding machine, patent number 388116

(U.S.P.O). Burroughs, the author, continued his grandfather's line of work, in a sense—though

his anti-novel is a Logical/Ethical subtracting machine, designed to bring some balance to the

books.

While I have no intention of crunching every ambiguous logical equation and ethical

wind- and/or pit-fall to be found in *Naked Lunch*—I do intend to diagram some of the most

pivotal Logical and Ethical elements in great detail, as they are crucial to accurately totaling the

work. My methodology of analysis consists of viewing selected passages in the light of relevant

philosophical heuristics; I will primarily test Burroughs' logic syllogistically for both validity and

truth-value (to demonstrate the means by which he derives such ambiguity) and measure his

ethics according to the felicific[4] (or hedonistic) calculus (which Burroughs rechristened the

"Algebra of Need"). These Logical and Ethical concepts were initiated by Aristotle and Epicurus,

and later, were further developed and enumerated by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, both

of whom laid the foundations for Utilitarianism, the Ethical system which champions the greatest

good for the greatest number. Burroughs, in *Naked Lunch*, creates a system of anti-Logic and

anti-Ethic, both of which illustrate the Postmodern condition, which is decidedly anti-Utilitarian; these conceptual foundations of the author's work are unified under the master metaphor of Junk, which also unifies my Logical and Ethical analyses. Secondarily, I will posit Friedrich Nietzsche's Nihilism, as well as Derrida's subsequent linguistic observations, as frameworks for better understanding Burroughs' reasoning behind his linguistic/logical and moral/ethical manipulations. Tertiarily, I will engage in freeplay and supplement in copious portions, because "Wouldn't you?[5]" (*Naked Lunch* 171). Though I realize that the task of capturing such a slippery meal will be challenging, I feel confident that the two-pronged analytical approach of Logic and Ethics will accurately capture "that frozen moment when everyone sees what's on the end of every fork" (199), and that this project will represent a new (classical) way of digesting *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs' other writings, and other literatures.

II. "The Mark Inside[6]": A Linguistic Antidote to Logic

Burroughs, the near doctor[7], fought virus with virus. Many of Burroughs' constructions in *Naked Lunch* follow the classic structure of the categorical syllogism; though his language sometimes follows the correct (or more correctly, valid) patterns, his premises often expose the slippery nature of language, creating a valid argument that is nevertheless antithetical to commonly accepted truth-value or a true argument that is considered invalid by Aristotelian standards. Burroughs also often posits conclusions and leaves the reader to fill in the premises, for good or ill; the author signals his tendency to omit the premises in several ways, including the frequent use of ellipses, which Tanner, for instance, dismisses as being used "idiosyncratically for emphasis" (11). The author's purpose and methods, in exposing and thus destroying logic and language as means of control from within, aligns him philosophically with Friedrich Nietzsche[8], whose maxims were often similarly conclusive and sans premise. As Nietzsche envisions the matter of linguistic truth in "On Truth and Lie in the Extra Moral Sense," "The legislature of language also provides the first laws of truth: for it is here that the contrast between truth and lie first comes into being. The liar uses the valid terms, the words, to make the unreal seem real" (453). Burroughs' manipulation of language and logic attempts to subvert the legislature of truth and the machinations of control inherent to binary conceptions of language and thought, which are always thought to end in tautology, "an expression of logical equivalence" (Copi and Cohen 680) or contradiction, "a statement that is necessarily false; a statement form that cannot have any true substitution instances" (659); Burroughs' conclusions, like Nietzsche's, often prove to be both tautological and contradictory, simultaneously.

The word virus is an oft-discussed and seldom (fully) understood element of Burroughs writing; though he never explicitly mentions the concept in *Naked Lunch*, the pages are saturated

with its effluvium. Burroughs best codifies the structure of the virus in *The Ticket That*

Exploded:

> Word is an organism. The presence of the "Other Half" a separate organism
>
> attached to your nervous system on an air line of words can now be demonstrated
>
> experimentally. One of the most common "hallucinations" of subjects during
>
> sense withdrawal is the feeling of another body sprawled through the subject's
>
> body at an angle . . . yes quite an angle it is the "Other Half" worked quite some
>
> years on a symbiotic basis. From symbiosis to parasitism is a short step. The word
>
> is now a virus. The flu virus may once have been a healthy lung cell. It is now a
>
> parasitic organism that invades and damages the lungs. The word may once have
>
> been a healthy neural cell. It is now a parasitic organism that invades and
>
> damages the central nervous system. Modern man has lost the option of silence.
>
> Try halting your sub-vocal speech. Try to achieve even ten seconds of inner
>
> silence. You will encounter a resisting organism that forces you to talk. That
>
> organism is the word. (49-50)

The word virus, then, is the parasitic syllogism, the basic unit of logic, which reproduces itself

each time a conclusion is judged either tautological or contradictory and becomes a new premise

in a new syllogism. The infection continues in virtually infinite regress/progress in either

direction through the timeline of human expression, and generally accepted syllogistic truths are

therefore based upon a long chain of interdependent tautologies and contradictions. The linear

chain implied by the binary, tautological truth of each syllogistic conclusion is more accurately

like chain mail, both in terms of a vast net of interlinking circular arguments and in the sense of

letters that are passed along (usually out of superstitious fear or mere habit): Burroughs, in

Naked Lunch, seeks to expose the ubiquitous chinks in the Aristotelian armor, and thus disrupt the infinite regress/progress of binary fear of a dominant other and inoculate the reader from the word's most virulent symptoms. Each circular link in the chain is thought of as two-sided, since the existence of contradiction is considered a necessary foil for the existence of tautology; the problem is that this interdependency means that every tautology necessarily contains the contradiction, and therefore self-negates in order to self-define. The strength of any language's interlinking tautologies is therefore simultaneously it's weakness, as the web of truth and falsity becomes evermore entangled and indiscernible, as inherently flawed conclusions are disseminated. Essentially, if every concept constitutes a circular link in the web, all the links are cleaved in half before they are ever connected. These virulent, parasitic word viruses become a form of Junk, since infected chains of logic, reliant upon a tautological contradiction, have been strained through the syllogistic machine of language and halved, with one half gaining dominance and the other losing any sense of identity or worth. The reality we create from words is therefore at risk, if we are unable to diagnose the problems.

Burroughs explains his logical/linguistic purpose and process in his "Atrophied Preface," if somewhat abstrusely:

> Naked Lunch is a blueprint, a How-To Book ... Black insect lusts open into vast other-planet landscapes ... Abstract concepts, bare as algebra, narrow down to a black turd or a pair of aging cojones ... How-To extend levels of experience by opening the door at the end of a long hall ... Doors that only open in Silence ... Naked Lunch demands Silence from The Reader. Otherwise he is taking his own pulse ... (187).

The longest hall possible is circular, like a tautology. As Nietzsche explains the problem of

Western logic and the potential solution, "Only through forgetfulness can man ever reach the

point of fancying he possesses a 'truth' to the degree just described [that is, logical certainty]. If

he does not want to make do with truth in the form of tautology, that is, with empty husks, then

he will forever trade illusions for truths" (454). Burroughs throws the reader the most concrete

clue in *Naked Lunch*'s "Post Script…Wouldn't You?:"

> So that's the World Health Problem I was talking about back in The Article. The
>
> Prospect Before Us Friends of MINE. Do I hear muttering about a personal razor
>
> and some bush league short con artist who is known to have invented The Bill?
>
> Wouldn't you? The razor belonged to a man named Ockham and he was not a scar
>
> collector. Ludwig Wittgenstein Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: "If a proposition
>
> is NOT NECESSARY it is MEANINGLESS and approaching MEANING
>
> ZERO." (208)

The logical end of the tautological hallway is zero, and zero is thus the only way out of the

circle; this is due to the fact that every truth, or plus one, is dependent upon a corresponding

contradiction, which is a negative one. Ockham's razor is, of course, a well-known concept of

simplification, which is a helpful hint toward Burroughs' reduction of his syllogisms to their

ends, but the blade is ultimately of secondary importance to Burroughs' point; Wittgenstein's

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, on the other hand, is the handle, which offers a firm grip on

Burroughs' techniques of Logical subversion.

As Wittgenstein describes his philosophical work,

> the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to
>
> the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we

should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be

able to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that

the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be

nonsense. I do not wish to judge how far my efforts coincide with those of other

philosophers. Indeed, what I have written here makes no claim to novelty in

detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to

me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone

else. (3)

Wittgenstein has explained his overarching purpose in short order, while simultaneously opening

and closing the question of his influences, though many parallels with Nietzsche call attention to

themselves; notably, the former echoes the latter regarding the lack of utility found in

tautologies: "A tautology leaves open to reality the whole—the infinite whole—of logical space:

a contradiction fills the whole of logical space leaving no point of it for reality. Thus neither of

them can determine reality in any way" (3). The philosopher explicates (in painstaking detail)

the problems of binary logic systems with seven overarching propositions, with their

undergirding and interlocking propositions filling another near one hundred pages; Burroughs

similarly allows the reader to decide whether they wish only to attend to the terminal premises,

or whether they wish to delve into the complexity of what comes between the lines.

Wittgenstein's overarching premises are:

"1. The world is all that is the case" (4).

"2. What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs" (4).

"3. A logical picture of facts is a thought" (14).

"4. A thought is a proposition with a sense" (25).

"5. A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself" (48).

"6. The general form of a truth-function is […][9]"

"7. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (96).

Wittgenstein's terminal proposition (or ultimate conclusion), unlike the other six (which have seemingly exponential divisions that expand his seemingly simple argument like an accordion), is singular; the conclusion also elucidates Burroughs' aforementioned assertion that *Naked Lunch* "demands Silence from The Reader" (187); Wittgenstein's stated intent of "draw[ing] a limit to thought" (3) can therefore be taken as Burroughs' partial exigency in *Naked Lunch*, along with coloring in some of the so-called nonsense outside the lines (which ultimately, can only be said to lie outside universal understanding [which subjectively, can be said of everything]), in order to demonstrate the warp in a reality constructed of words and thoughts, which always overreach in both directions. The challenge of every writer, then, is to constantly play the game of aiming for the right mark on the right side of every potential reader's subjective view of every given binary concept—when the challenge should be (according to Burroughs, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein) to express reality more fully and honestly and shoot straight, with the recognition of language's limitations and inherent consquences firmly in mind. Entire cultures balance on this social seesaw of power, whereby one concept is disseminated preferentially as truth, while its contradiction is denounced as falsity (sans thorough consideration). This practice of binary marginalization is quite beneficial to anyone who recognizes any given macro-level concept holistically, rather than the micro-level view of one half that always defines and undermines the other, since the mere recognition affords the power to keep the majority citizenry, who are taught to look for half-truths, distracted with the fight

against the illusory other half. After all, logic has long been the territory of the elite: thinkers, lawyers (Sophists, in Aristotle's day), and politicians.

Wittgenstein further explains the linguistic implications of his criticism of the tautologies and contradictions that comprise Western logic, in a sub-premise of proposition 4:

> 4.461. Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing. […] A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true: and a contradiction is true on no condition. […] Tautologies and contradictions lack sense. […] (Like a point from which two arrows go out in opposite directions to one another.) […] (For example, I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining.) (45-6)

In a linguistic world of ones and minus-ones, the moderate middle, or net result of summing binaries, is a net zero, as Burroughs, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein assert; the irony, of course, lies in the fact that the zero contains both nothing and everything (or tautology and contradiction), simultaneously. Where ideas meet the word… there is an inherent disconnect, where yet another whole has been halved. Many of Burroughs' efforts in *Naked Lunch* and many of his other works, then, represent a method of curing word-infected readers via induced amnesia or silence on the matters beyond our limits of thought, which are many; again, as Lydenberg points out, the author "is painfully aware that he is forced to fight the word virus on its own terms—with more words" (420), and so we the readers are bombarded with words that are meant to dislocate us and separate us from linguistic and logical norms, which include the binary divisions of ideas. The Junk metaphor, then, for Burroughs' Logical lesson, is a way to demonstrate the way the binaries of language become both tautologies and contradictions, the ultimate contradiction, and assert

the only absolute truth, which is sensation; the author reveals the syllogistic machine he makes of

Naked Lunch and suggests the alternative, which is centered around sensation:

> The study of thinking machines teaches us more about the brain than we can learn
> by introspective methods. Western man is externalizing himself in the form of
> gadgets. "Ever pop coke in the mainline? It hits you right in the brain, activating
> connections of pure pleasure. The pleasure of morphine is in the viscera. You
> listen down into yourself after a shot." (*Naked Lunch* 22)

Morphine, or Junk, then, is the metaphor for both silence and language—and is thus, both

problem and solution.

If a novel can be considered a system of words, or binary thoughts, which subtly sum

meaning, Burroughs has designed a system of words that instead subtracts meaning, to represent

for the reader the net zero at the center of linguistic reality. The author leaves the reader plenty

of clues regarding his technique and exigency, though these hints are heavily obscured by

metaphor and metonymy:

> This is Revelation and Prophecy of what I can pick up without FM on my 1920
> crystal set with antennae of jissom ... Gentle reader, we see God through our
> assholes in the flash bulb of orgasm ... Through these orifices transmute your
> body ... The way OUT is the way IN ... (191).

Here, the author again plays with double entendre, as he describes both the intellectual and

instinctual processes as one. From an existential point of view, our orifices are literally our only

means of discerning reality, so our way out of the mess of language and logic is the way in,

through eyes and ears that ingest and mouths that defecate words and their iterations.

Figuratively, each time we relocate a syllogistic conclusion as premise in another syllogism, we

are ingesting the logical waste matter of another digestive end. So when Burroughs compares

the "coprophage [that] calls for a plate, shits on it and eats the shit, exclaiming, 'Mmmm, that's

my rich substance,'" (33) and "[a]n intellectual avant-gardist-" who considers the language

"found in scientific reports and periodicals" to be "the only writing worth considering," the

author is describing the cycle of the binary word virus infection (via Western syllogistic logic)

metaphorically—and at least as potently as Walt Whitman[10].

Jean Jacques Derrida, in "*Différance*," explains the paradoxical predicament of language

quite clearly:

> The verb "to differ" [*différer*] seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it
>
> indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernability; on the other, it
>
> expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of *spacing* and *temporalizing* that
>
> puts off until "later" what is presently denied, the possible that is presently
>
> impossible. Sometimes the *different* and sometimes the *deferred* correspond [in
>
> French] to the verb "to differ." This correlation, however, is not simply one
>
> between act and object, cause and effect, or primordial and derived. (932)

Derrida's conception of *différance* certainly illustrates the way in which tautologies can quite

easily become contradictions (which Wittgenstein describes essentially as a continuum of

opposing directions), since one word has been shown to self-contradict, by acting with both the

immediacy and permanence of separation and the delay that means indeterminate, temporary

acceptance as whole. For Derrida, then, *différance* is a convenient metaphor for the tendency of

every word to mean both itself and its opposite.

While Derrida's *différance* is a particularly potent example of the way in which one

word can mean both its equivalent and its opposite, due to the fact that it wears the characteristic

paradox on its sleeve, so to speak—the bare truth—as Burroughs asserts, is that every word (and all iterations of words) shares this characteristic flaw of self-contradiction, thereby causing every tautology (made up of incomplete representations and half-truths, namely words) to likewise self-contradict. In order to beat this circular, self-defeatist, self-sycophancying, zero-sum logical system from within, Burroughs had to know it, just as knowing how to tie a knot allows one greater power over untying it. Burroughs refers to his logical (or more correctly, anti-logical) training during an interview with Kathy Acker, when he states that his work's mission is to

> loosen up this automatic association of word and what the word refers to. Well, you've got these vague words like communism and capitalism, and you have as many definitions as there are people who use them. There's total confusion, and that confusion is largely verbal. I studied with Korzybski, the founder of general semantics and anti-Aristotelian logic, and he says that one of the basic errors of Western thought is either/or. Something is either instinctive or intellectual, either hereditary or environment. This split, of course, does not exist, in fact. It's both/and.

The author unabashedly uses a further remove from what is commonly accepted as literal truth by explaining himself with another layer of his master metaphor, namely Junk, in *Naked Lunch*:

> The vaccine that can relegate the junk virus to a landlocked past is in existence. This vaccine is the Apomorphine Treatment discovered by an English doctor whose name I must withhold pending his permission to use it and to quote from his book covering thirty years of apomorphine treatment of addicts and alcoholics. The compound apomorphine is formed by boiling morphine with hydrochloric acid. It was discovered years before it was used to treat addicts. For many years

the only use for apomorphine, which has no narcotic or pain-killing properties, was as an emetic to induce vomiting in cases of poisoning. It acts directly on the vomiting center in the back brain. (202)

The syllogistic chains that humankind link up places a numbing distance between us and reality—just like Junk—and the only cure is to boil the network of chains down to their naked essence, which ideally causes a reverse peristaltic reaction in the subjects' (or readers') minds that will cause them to reject the entrapment of dualities, which comprise the Junk that has built up. The author creates metaphorical vaccines from dead word viruses. As Nietzsche describes the only knowledge the word can ever produce,

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphism; in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem fixed, canonical, and binding to a people. Truths are illusions that we have forgotten are just that; metaphors that have become worn out and sensuously powerless; coins that have lost their image and are now being considered only as metal, no longer as coins. (455)

Burroughs attempts to boil down the worn out linguistic currency in *Naked Lunch* and restrike the words without flipsides, by demonstrating that any given tautological truth is also a contradictory lie. Because so many of humankind's linguistic links are missing, an understanding of the logical gene code is also utterly absent; Burroughs both hides the commonly seen links and displays the commonly hidden ones.

Burroughs bemoans the condition of Western thought control in *Naked Lunch*'s "Post Script…Wouldn't You," as he writes, "I Don't Want To Hear Any More Tired Old Junk Talk

And Junk Con.... The same things said a million times and more and there is no point in saying anything because NOTHING Ever Happens in the junk world" (207). Burroughs' emphasis of "NOTHING" stresses the links to both Wittgenstein and Nietzsche's parallel conclusions regarding the value of normative Western Logical ends. As Wittgenstein warns,

> 4.002. Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is—just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced. […] Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. […] It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is. […] Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes. […] The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated. (25)

As Wittgenstein argues, thought is obscured by language, which is ever shifting and modular, too complicated a creature for its common creator to fathom. Without a working knowledge of the logic that undergirds the language, the speaker and writer is shooting in the dark. Burroughs, in *Naked Lunch*, attempts to pull back "the outward form of the clothing" to reveal the "thought beneath it" (Wittgenstein, 25), but how much the given reader sees is dependent upon her or his ability to intuit the logical supports; perhaps in answer to the complications inherent to language and the subsequent and frequent misfires of its users, Burroughs wonders misanthropically in *Naked Lunch*, "Who can say [with any accuracy, at least]. They are all stupid peasants, and the

worst of all 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). All that being said, logic is crucial to a full reveal of Burroughs' linguistic

technique and exigency, whereby he undresses the indeterminate and interdependent chain of

word viruses represented in *Naked Lunch*: Burroughs makes his argument via his master

metaphor, Junk, and its progeny, addiction. The following tables, which I have adapted from

Introduction to Logic, by Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, provide a simple overview of

Aristotelian logic, which should be useful when reverse engineering and fleshing out Burroughs'

word viruses/vaccines:

Table 1

Valid Syllogisms: Mood and Figure[11]

Every standard-form categorical syllogism has exactly three terms, to wit: The *major term* is the predicate term of the conclusion (P).   The *minor term* is the subject term of the conclusion (S).   The *middle term* is the term appearing in both premises but not in the conclusion (M).
The premise in which the major term appears is the *major premise*.   The premise in which the minor term appears is the *minor premise*.   A syllogism is in *standard form* when its three propositions are in exactly this order: major premise, minor premise, conclusion.
A proposition—*universal affirmative,* e.g. All _____ are _____   E proposition—*universal negative*, e.g. No _____ are _____   I proposition—*particular affirmative*, e.g. Some _____ are _____   O proposition—*particular negative,* e.g. Some _____ are not _____
The *mood* of a syllogism is determined by the types of its three propositions, AAA, EIO, etc.   The *figure* of a standard-form syllogism is determined by the position of its middle term.

Rules governing every valid Aristotelian categorical syllogism:
   1. The syllogism must contain exactly three terms, used consistently.
   2. The middle term of the syllogism must be distributed in at least one premise.
   3. If either term is distributed in the conclusion, it must be distributed in the premises.
   4. A valid syllogism cannot have two negative premises.
   5. If either premise of the syllogism is negative, the conclusion must be negative.
   6. If the conclusion of the syllogism is negative, at least one premise must be negative.

1st Figure Syllogism	2nd Figure Syllogism	3rd Figure Syllogism	4th Figure Syllogism
M P S M ∴ S—P	P M S M ∴ S—P	M P M S ∴ S—P	P M M S ∴ S—P
AAA	AEE	AII	AEE
EAE	EAE	IAI	IAI
AII	AOO	EIO	EIO
EIO	EIO	OAO	

Table 2

Truth Value

Given any two statements, p and q, where T represents True and F represents False, and · represents the conjunctive.		
p	q	p · q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

A few important details should be emphasized before examining the logical/linguistic knots that Burroughs both tied and untied: Of all the possible combinations of propositions (A, E, I, and O in Table 1), only fifteen are considered valid, out of approximately two hundred total. Also, as explained in Table 1, it is important to note that the three required terms that comprise a syllogism must be used consistently. Additionally, as represented in Table 2, the truth of the conclusion is dependent upon the truth of both premises. "'Well it's still an easy score'''(*Naked Lunch* 14-15), right? Now, all that is left is to work some of Burroughs' word problems.

However, the reader must proceed with the understanding that the truth or falsity of the syllogistic chain depends heavily upon the consistent definition of the given terms, which are always vaguely malleable, as Burroughs frequently proclaimed[12]. Particularly, the definition of Junk and subsequent addiction are often at the decentered center that encircles the (Old) Bull's eye of Burroughs' truth. Burroughs offers a powerful clue to the ever-slippery act of such a definition, in the "Letter from a Master Addict to Dangerous Drugs," one of the multiple "atrophied prefaces" after the text of *Naked Lunch*:

> The use of opium and opium derivatives leads to a state that defines limits and describes "addiction." (The term is loosely used to indicate anything one is used to or wants. We speak of addiction to candy, coffee, tobacco, warm weather, television, detective stories, crossword puzzles.) So misapplied the term loses any useful precision of meaning. (214)

Here, Burroughs has defined his terms, and described the way in which "addiction" can mean both the specific and general idea, which undermines any illusion of consistency. Take, for instance, the following passage: "'Selling is more of a habit than using,' Lupita says. 'Non-using pushers have a contact habit, and that's one you can't kick'" (14). For the sake of Ockham's razor-thin simplicity, Burroughs has only given us fragmented pieces of his argument, so I will consolidate the synonyms, make implicit terms explicit, and reproduce the premises between the author's sparse lines syllogistically. For the unenlightened reader, reproducing Burroughs' thought chain and aiming for the target he has set up (which lies within the reader's mind, ultimately) might be best compared to a game of roulette; on the other hand, the student of logic has a better bead on which linguistic chambers hold the bullets of invalidity or falsity. First, the reader might logically fill in the general definition of addiction:

I.

All people who have habits are addicts.

All sellers are people who have habits.

∴ All sellers are addicts.

Or, in variable format:

(A) M—P

(A) S—M

(A) ∴ S—P

The logically uneducated reader might breathe a sigh of relief, because Syllogism I is valid (an

AAA mood with the middle term in the 1ˢᵗ figure, as indicated in Table 1), and as long as the

major and minor premises are true, the conclusion is true as well. The first premise is difficult to

defeat, since addicts do have habits, within the bounds of the general definition; the second

premise is also strong, since sellers obviously have a clear impetus (or habit) that drives them to

continue their role in the junk chain, namely money. The next logical chain that must be

exposed, to clearly see the path of the thought that ends in Burroughs' conclusion regarding

sellers, might be syllogized as follows:

II.

All people who have habits are addicts.

All drug users are people who have habits.

∴ All drug users are addicts.

Again, the reader has escaped the mind-blow of cognitive dissonance, since truth and validity

pass the test. Syllogism II follows the same AAA form and truth-value standards as Syllogism I.

This step requires a shift from the more general meaning of addiction to the more specific, but

since the latter is contained within the former, consistency is maintained. However, Burroughs

packs even more clothed thought into two scant sentences; the virus reproduces when the

conclusion from Syllogism I becomes the minor premise in another syllogism:

III.

Some sellers are not drug users.

All sellers are addicts.

∴ Some addicts are not drug users.

Or

(O) M—P

(A) M—S

(O) ∴ S—P

Once again, this is a valid syllogism (an OAO mood in the 3rd figure, as indicated in Table 1),

and again, the truth-value depends upon the truth of the major and minor premises. This step is

particularly helpful, since it reconciles the fact that addiction is a larger problem than mere drug

use, and in truth, also extends to the sellers. Certainly, there are sellers who abstain from

imbibing their wares, so the major premise is sound; the truth of the minor premise has already

been established in Syllogism 1. Thus far, all between-the-line conclusions are shown to be true,

according to Table 2, if p and q are substituted for the major and minor premises that comprise

the word virus chain. The last syllogism in the chain, which begins with a major premise that

contradicts the conclusion of Syllogism III, is the crucial link in Burroughs' vaccine for the

linguistic addiction virus, produced and reproduced by the interdependent, invisible syllogisms

that comprise his brief declarative about the selling addiction:

IV.

All addicts are drug users.

All non-using sellers are addicts.

∴ All non-using sellers are drug users.

Or

(A) M—P

(A) S—M

(A) ∴ S—P

This step gives us a valid syllogistic equation (an AAA mood in the 1st figure, as indicated in Table 1), which produces Burroughs' conclusion regarding the sellers' inherent addiction; however, when measured by even the loosest standards of truth (e.g. Nietzsche's), Burroughs seems to be lying to his reader, the mark, by using "the valid terms, the words, to make the unreal seem real" (453). If drug is narrowly defined, according to traditional connections between the signifier and signified, Syllogism IV is utterly false, and the first premise contradicts the conclusion of Syllogism III, i.e. if a drug is defined as a foreign substance that alters the mind (though this definition is known to be troublesome, as the author often points out). Burroughs' contradictory definition of a drug, however, follows the same broad path of the more general definition of addiction, and so a drug is also any object of intense desire. Though the conclusion seems to self-contradict (since all non-using sellers are a subset of all non-users, and it seems paradoxical to assert that any non-users are users), Burroughs uses the conflicting general and specific definitions to undermine the syllogistic means of making meaning, and decimates the assumed truth that those who abstain from illicit substances are non-users. Seller/user is thus shown to be both/and, rather than either/or—a true and valid conclusion likely to blow even the most logically aware mind.

Burroughs is not quite satisfied stopping with "the Seller," however, and extends the same (dis)courtesy to the (seeming) third corner of the Junk pyramid, the

> Agents [,who] get it too. Take Bradley the Buyer. Best narcotics agent in the industry. Anyone would make him for junk. (Note: Make in the sense of dig or size up.) I mean he can walk up to a pusher and score direct. He is so anonymous, grey and spectral the pusher don't remember him afterwards. So he twists one after the other ... (14)

I will not belabor the logic by cooking up another lunch from scratch, but suffice to say that replacing the word seller with buyer yields the same result:

> V.

> All addicts are drug users.

> All non-using buyers are addicts.

> ∴ All non-using buyers are drug users.

Or

> (A) M—P

> (A) S—M

> (A) ∴ S—P

> Still, Burroughs can go further:

>> The President is a junky but can't take it direct because of his position. So he gets fixed through me ... From time to time we make contact, and I recharge him. These contacts look to the casual observer like homosexual practices, but the actual excitement is not primarily sexual, and the climax is the separation when the recharge is completed. (57)

This time, Burroughs really lets the word virus reproduce; he not only invites the reader to insert the non-using President in place of the minor term, thus illustrating the very difference (or binary opposition) that can undermine the power inherent to the office and thus calling the leader of the free world a vicarious junkie, but the author also replaces the middle term (addict) with "homosexual," thus creating another branch of interlinked propositions/conclusions and tautologies/contradictions. There is a further layer of confusion in the fact that Burroughs has given us a singular term instead of plurals; in other words, he has gone from generalization to personal accusation.

In the interest of brevity, I will simply replace the minor term as explained above for Syllogism VI, Burroughs' first ad hominem:

VI.

All addicts are drug users.

The President is an addict.

∴ The President is a drug user.

Or

(A) M—P

(A) S—M

(A) ∴ S—P

In the interest of clarity, on the other hand, I will work through the additional implicit syllogism. First, it is important to note the fact that Burroughs claims that the "contacts look to the casual observer like homosexual practices." While this vague phrasing adds another layer of obscurity to the premise—that is exactly Burroughs' point: The common empiricist deals in seeing-is-believing, so such an observation would be taken as "is."

∴ VII.

All people who appear to perform homosexual acts are homosexual.

The President is a person who appears to perform a homosexual act.

∴ The President IS homosexual.

Or

(A) M—P

(A) S—M

(A) ∴ S—P

Syllogism VII is valid. While the truth-value of both premises is highly arguable, they represent the common binary assumption that undergirds bigotry against homosexuals as the dominated (or othered) binary. As aforementioned, the author has placed the President in the position of minor premises represented in both Syllogism VI and VII (which are late in an established chain, in a separate chapter, as though an afterthought) and has also therefore placed the most powerful person in the world in the two lowest positions in society. Burroughs' math almost seems too easy this time, and, of course, that is because he has further complicated the matter by explaining that the "recharges" that appear to be "homosexual practices" are truly metaphorical of power.

∴ VIII.

All President are powerful.

No homosexuals (and/or addicts) are powerful.

∴ No homosexuals (and/or addicts) are Presidents.

Or

(A) P—M

(E) S—M

(E) ∴ S—P

If power is the self-love required to place oneself in a leadership position and homosexuality is the love of the same gender, self-love is homosexuality, of a sort; this realization also means that the President gains power indirectly, from the self he loves. Syllogism VIII is valid, but yet again, Burroughs has contradicted previous conclusions (Syllogisms VI and VII). The minor premise of Syllogism VIII is also contradicted, since the President is being recharged (with power) by an apparent homosexual (himself), who as established, lacks power[13]. However, in light of the realization that he could just as well be homosexual, in terms of the self-love inherent to power, Burroughs has shown that power is simultaneously weakness, since it is ultimately an addiction.

∴ IX.

No homosexuals (and/or addicts) are powerful.

Some homosexuals (and/or addicts) are the President. (see S VII)

∴ Some Presidents are not powerful.

Or

(E) M—P

(I) M—S

(O) ∴ S—P

Syllogism IX is valid, though truth-value is certainly muddy, to say the least. Now that the syllogistic chain is so thoroughly infected with tautological contradiction (the condition in which both everything and nothing is true), the word virus pervades the conclusive logical end (which, of course, is really just another beginning):

X.

All Presidents are powerful.

Some Presidents are (not-powerful) homosexuals (and/or addicts).

∴ Some (not-powerful) homosexuals (and/or addicts) are powerful.

Or

(A) M—P

(I) M—S

(I) ∴ S—P

Syllogism X is valid, but truth value has become a matter of discerning which contradictory premise to side with, to which Burroughs would likely answer, "Only way to protect yourself against this horrid peril is come over HERE and shack up with Charybdis.... Treat you right kid.... Candy and cigarettes" (209). Binary logic is a rock and a hard place: two choices (tautology/contradiction) that are, in reality, one choice, cleaved in half by the ambiguities of language and the logic that undergirds it.

Derrida is once again beneficial to a greater understanding of the inherent contradiction of language, as he describes the phenomena in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences":

> It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word "structure" itself are as old as the *epistemé*—that is to say, as old as western science and western philosophy—and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the *epistemé* plunges to gather them together once more, making them part of itself in a metaphorical displacement. Nevertheless, up until the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure—or rather the structurality of structure—although it has always

been involved, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of

giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. (915)

The "fixed origin" or "center" always becomes zero, where the binaries of tautology and

contradiction meet, and thus simultaneously "closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes

possible." The structure of each word is built from all other words, which means that each word

means all others while simultaneously excluding all others, so each light contains all others,

along with an equally bright conception of all darkness.

Burroughs frustrates conventional logic, often leaving the reader to think that wisdom has

been imparted, but at the cost of the binaries, with which so many speakers and writers have

become so familiar (and even blindly addicted); however uncomfortable a rock and hard place

might be to lay one's head, a softer (let)down of zeroes seems more frightening for many. *Naked*

Lunch gives the reader a glimpse of the zero where everything and nothing meet: "Panorama of

the City of Interzone. Opening bars of 'East St. Louis Toodle-oo' ... at times loud and clear then

faint and intermittent like music down a windy street ... The Composite City where all human

potentials are spread out in a vast silent market" (89). The cacophony of overfull tautological

truths and empty contradictory lies ultimately cancel one another out. Truth-value has thus been

undermined. Burroughs' own reliability/unreliability fits into his trick syllogism, since he

creates a truth contradiction of himself:

> And some of us are on Different Kicks and that's a thing out in the open the way I
>
> like to see what I eat and vice versa mutatis mutandis as the case may be. Bill's
>
> Naked Lunch Room.... Step right up.... Good for young and old, man and bestial.
>
> Nothing like a little snake oil to grease the wheels and get a show on the track

> Jack. Which side are you on? Fro-Zen Hydraulic? Or you want to take a look
>
> around with Honest Bill? (208)

Of course, snake-oil salesmen are renowned for their Nietzschean Ethics and abilities to lie using the valid terms, but Burroughs places himself in the both/and position again, since he also coaxes the reader's trust. If Burroughs "uses the valid terms, the words, to make the unreal seem real" (Nietzsche 453), then the author is a liar, or a snake-oil salesmen interested solely in "greas[ing] the wheels" (*Naked Lunch* 208). If Burroughs, on the other hand, is manipulating the valid words to show the reader that the reality described by binary language is unreal, then he is being realistic, or "Honest Bill." As soon as the reader decides and sides with Scylla or Charybdis, the only possible logical end of silence (if we are to believe Wittgenstein and/or Burroughs) is violated, Dr. Benway loses patients, sick with the word virus, and it spreads onward. Either way, whether the reader believes the ruses or sees the truth in *Naked Lunch*, he/she is Burroughs' Rube. "Well when that record starts around for the billionth light year and never the tape shall change us non-junkies take drastic action and the men separate out from the Junk boys" (209). The "men" know the linguistic score (which is always a net zero of self-frustrating concepts halved during their transference to word), but the "Junk boys" are unaware of the inherent infection that riddles their every written word. Logically, you must be an addict to ever be cured.

III. "Total Demoralization[14]": The Zero-Sum Junk Ethic

Naked Lunch, in addition to subverting linguistic/logical norms, practically eviscerates common moral/ethical standards, which are naively and coldly Utilitarian; in both cases, Burroughs uses the system against the system (like a virus/vaccine chain), by illustrating the self-contradictory nature of the binary bases, upon which common morality rests. Common Ethics follow from common Logic, whether arriving at philosophical or religious truth; binary systems of Ethics therefore share the flaws of self-contradiction with binary Logic, as demonstrated in Chapter II of this project. Jeremy Bentham, the father of Utilitarianism, in "From *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*," argues that

> Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other hand the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The *principle of utility* recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light. But enough of metaphor and declamation: it is not by such means that moral science is to be improved (65).

Bentham therefore created a means of calculating the pleasures and pains of these community members; this method, known as the felicific calculus (or hedonistic calculus), measures the net pleasure or pain according to Bentham's enumerated vectors: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent (86). Once the vectors are set to common standards (for the sake of simplicity and common ethical calculations, pleasurable acts will be taken as a +1 and painful acts as a -1 for each step in the ethical chains), the net benefit of an act or set of acts may be calculated. Disturbingly, Bentham admits that "subjection" is recognized as fundamental to the system of greatest utility, and thus an intrinsic part of the greatest good. In the Utilitarian sense, one must often harm the individual for the greater good, but since that greater good is also directly proportional to the met interests of each individual, the notion that such a greater good would be served by destroying some or all of the constituent individuals is counterintuitive.

However, Bentham further complicates the matter by admitting that he has twice divided a complete concept into binaries:

> Pains and pleasures may be called by one general word, interesting perceptions. Interesting perceptions are either simple or complex. The simple ones are those which cannot any one of them be resolved into more: complex are those which are resolvable into diverse simple ones. A complex interesting perception may accordingly be composed either, 1. Of pleasures alone: 2. Of pains alone: or, 3. Of a pleasure or pleasures, and a pain or pains together. What determines a lot of pleasure, for example, to be regarded as one complex pleasure, rather than as diverse simple ones, is the nature of the exciting cause. Whatever pleasures are

excited all at once by the action of the same cause, are apt to be looked upon as
constituting all together but one pleasure. (89-90)

Bentham has thus admitted to, but dismissed, the problems inherent to his calculus: The concept of sensation has been divided into pleasure and pain, while admitting that many sensations are mixtures of both, which might produce differing mixtures in any given person in the chain of sensation. Each action a given individual undertakes therefore has indeterminate effects, as Bentham admits. The Utilitarian philosopher also admits that the calculator is prone to count group pleasures as singular, on the level of individual pleasure; this, in effect, means that groups might be marginalized or subverted for a larger group's interest, just as easily as an individual might be subjected to the greater good. The displacement of each action is obviously as complex as the Logical systems that such Ethics are based upon—and because the calculus relies on the vague binary terminology (pain and pleasure, both of which are highly subjective)—the latter is utterly infected with the word virus, which reproduces exponentially throughout language.

Alan Ryan, in the Introduction to *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, adds some clarity to the most glaring problem with Bentham's calculus:

> There are several ways of putting this point; one way is to appeal to our intuition that making such a calculation is a way of sacrificing innocent individuals for the sake of others; another is to claim that counting the views of the prejudiced is a form of 'double-counting', because their utilities are dependent on the utilities of others. Without considering the merits of these suggestions, we can at least acknowledge that Bentham's disregard of the content of people's aspirations and his interest only in the effects of behaviour on overall utility is decidedly two-edged in its implications. (33)

Unsurprisingly, Bentham's Ethical ends, which are based solely on Logical ends, are all self-serving, self-defeating tautologies and contradictions, simultaneously; the act of double-counting, whereby individual interests are subsumed by group interests, create the same shifting center between two slippery, indeterminate sides of an ethical spectrum that is based upon the fuzzy binaries of pleasure and pain. The calculus is further frustrated by the fact that the net effect of a given action is impossible to view accurately, across the vast numbers, which are both numbers in terms of people and in terms of distances that numb the representative group to the needs of the individuals and sub-groups that comprise it.

As Burroughs describes the ethical dimension of his Junk metaphor, he also (re)envisions the felicific calculus:

> Junk is the mold of monopoly and possession. […] Junk yields a basic formula of "evil" virus: The Algebra of Need. The face of "evil" is always the face of total need. A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control. In the words of total need: "Wouldn't you?" Yes you would. You would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do anything to satisfy total need. Because you would be in a state of total sickness, total possession, and not in a position to act in any other way. Dope fiends are sick people who cannot act other than they do. A rabid dog cannot choose but bite. Assuming a self-righteous position is nothing to the purpose unless your purpose be to keep the junk virus in operation. And junk is a big industry. (201)

As described in Chapter II, Burroughs has used Junk as a metaphor for the word, but he has also used it as a metaphor for a total desire, which eclipses all others, thus simplifying the equation somewhat (in a sense, using Ockham's razor to cut away all other desires to leave the simple

core desire): The Junk Virus is The Word Virus is The Moral Virus. The more shockingly

scatological/sexual/illicit/violent chapters of *Naked Lunch* are therefore meant to be read like

hedonistic equations that, like categorical syllogisms, are based on binary foundations that

ultimately self-reduce to net zero. Junkies therefore occupy the lowest denominator of moral

society, where Pushers ("the industry") are the highest. However, Burroughs offers the

contradictory claim that "Junk is a pain killer, it also kills the pain and pleasure implicit in

awareness" (211), thus fulfilling dual roles as ultimate habit and ultimate cure, just like the word

virus—a tautological contradiction—a potential virus or a potential vaccine. As established in

Chapter II, paradoxes such as these are par for the course in Burroughs' "How-to" lesson-plan,

which is descriptive of a reality based upon binary logic and ethics. The ultimate end is that

Burroughs' Ethical binaries follow his Logical binaries into the tautological contradiction at

center—at the middle where nothing and everything meet. Burroughs' "Algebra of Need"

therefore ends up in the same location as Bentham's felicific calculus, but the former navigated

there and drew his readers an honest map that tells them how to get to GetLost, while the latter

got lost.

As John Stuart Mill, Bentham's student and the prodigal son of Utilitarianism, wrote in

his treatise titled after the ethical system,

> I must again repeat what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to
>
> acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is
>
> right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As
>
> between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as
>
> strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of

Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. "To do as you would be done by," and "to love your neighbor as yourself" (17).

Mill's comparison of Utilitarianism to the ideals extolled by the Christian prophet is telling; indeed, the philosophy is simply an Age-of-Reason substitution for the binary variables of the Christian religion, which is based on a good/evil spectrum, instead of pleasure/pain.

As seen in the syllogistic equations Burroughs is working throughout *Naked Lunch*[15], the author's hedonistic equations seem simple (and simply immoral) to the casual observer, but are designed so as to be too complex and self-contradictory to follow to the end, which again reflects the relatively small corner of the sum occupied by each subjective reality (which vary according to the number of variables and vectors considered within the equation by each judge). "The center is at the center of the totality," as Derrida declares in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," "and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center" (915). As Burroughs conceives each center-that-is-not-center in his anti-Utilitarian Ethic,

If you wish to alter or annihilate a pyramid of numbers in a serial relation, you alter or remove the bottom number. If we wish to annihilate the junk pyramid, 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 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 will service it. (202)

The center is the replaceable, decentered individual at the top/bottom of any Utilitarian pyramid schemata. As Burroughs both encourages and forewarns,

> Paregoric Babies of the World Unite. We have nothing to lose but Our Pushers. And THEY are NOT NECESSARY. […] Look down LOOK DOWN along that junk road before you travel there and get in with the Wrong Mob.... A word to the wise guy. (209-10)

And so a fraction of a look down from subjectivity, before proceeding, will prove helpful…

Table 3[16]

20 Rows of Pascal's Triangle

										1										
									1		1									
								1		2		1								
							1		3		3		1							
						1		4		6		4		1						
					1		5		10		10		5		1					
				1		6		15		20		15		6		1				
			1		7		21		35		35		21		7		1			
		1		8		28		56		70		56		28		8		1		
	1		9		36		84		126		126		84		36		9		1	
1		10		45		120		210		252		210		120		45		10		1
1	11	55	165	330	462	462	330	165	55	11	1									
1	12	66	220	495	792	924	792	495	220	66	12	1								
1	13	78	286	715	1287	1716	1716	1287	715	286	78	13	1							
1	14	91	364	1001	2002	3003	3432	3003	2002	1001	364	91	14	1						
1	15	105	455	1365	3003	5005	6435	6435	5005	3003	1365	455	105	15	1					
1	16	120	560	1820	4368	8008	11440	12870	11440	8008	4368	1820	560	120	16	1				

…however, for the purposes of looking at Burroughs' Ethical equations in this process, a more limited corner of reality should be used:

Table 4

6 Rows of Pascal's Triangle

```
                1
              1   1
            1   2   1
          1   3   3   1
        1   4   6   4   1
      1   5   10   10   5   1
```

Table 5

6 Rows, Inverse of Pascal's Triangle

```
      1   5   10   10   5   1
        1   4   6   4   1
          1   3   3   1
            1   2   1
              1   1
                1
```

Pascal's triangle is particularly useful in describing the way desire, action, sensation, and judgment are exponentially disseminated within a group, and in illustrating the way individuals (even those at the perceived top of a social pyramid) are pushed to the margins while the group is considered as a separate set of numbers, rather than a collective of individuals (or ones). Any attempt to measure the net pain/pleasure of a given individual act that includes Bentham's additional vectors, would never get further than the next row in a given individual's ethical

consideration of the value of a given action; the human mind is simply unable to calculate the determiners and variables quickly enough to act outside of those narrow interests, and so we would spend our lives dumbfounded into silence, regardless of whether or not *Naked Lunch* or Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* demands (or argues for) it. Because of the subjective nature of sensation, upon which Bentham's calculus is based, we can certainly never achieve objectivity as a group—and in fact cannot even reach any real intersubjectivity—as long as the illusion of group wholeness has the potential to subsume the needs and desires of every individual. As Bentham claimed, "What determines a lot of pleasure, for example, to be regarded as one complex pleasure, rather than as diverse simple ones, is the nature of the exciting cause. Whatever pleasures are excited all at once by the action of the same cause, are apt to be looked upon as constituting all together but one pleasure" (90), and so even Junk collectives are simultaneously considered as a single collective interest and a grouping of individual interests, which are exponentially reproducing as a particular behavior produces a majority of pleasure; this is, of course, conversely true of pain.

The hierarchical contradiction makes some level of sense, if one superimposes Table 5 overtop of Table 4; the Pushers at the top of their own pleasure pyramids are also at the bottoms of the individual Junkie's pyramid of interests. The Pushers' motivation is money, which is just another brand of Junk, while the Junkies' motivation is pure, in the felicific sense, since it is singular (while the Pushers' interest are actually further divided by the things money can buy, for which money is the singular metaphor). The Buyers (or Narcotics Agents) would represent a third pyramid superimposed over both the Pushers' and Junkies' pyramids, in which the Pushers and Junkies are the lowest denominator; conversely, the Buyers are at the bottom of the Junkies' and Pushers' pyramids, and therefore at the bottom of their own, since the fact that Buyers are

also Junkies has been established (in Chapter II, Syllogism V). As Burroughs describes the non-using buyers, they sit atop (and thus, a-bottom) a separate pyramid of subsuming, dualing interests,

> The Buyer spreads terror throughout the industry. Junkies and agents disappear. Like a vampire bat he gives off a narcotic effluvium, a dank green mist that anesthetizes his victims and renders them helpless in his enveloping presence. And once he has scored he holes up for several days like a gorged boa constrictor. Finally he is caught in the act of digesting the Narcotics Commissioner and destroyed with a flame thrower-the court of inquiry ruling that such means were justified in that the Buyer had lost his human citizenship and was, in consequence, a creature without species and a menace to the narcotics industry on all levels.
>
> (17)

The bottom/top denominator, and all the points between (who again, are all simultaneously at the tops of their own subjective pleasure/pain pyramids and the bottoms of others) has consumed lower digits on the pyramid until he/she has been subjected by the system, once the pain she/he releases into the Utilitarian system contradicts the larger system's interests: In short, everyone suffers and everyone gains in amounts equal to their actions, plus the additional burdens and rights that the larger group (or civilization) places upon them (disproportionately larger than the individual's interests as the result of double-counting), according to differing vectors and corners of the myriad (which I could not, no matter how diligently I tried, manage to demonstrate in a Table, since there are as many pyramids involved as there are people, and furthermore, as many actions as there are individual desires). To give some small inkling of this panopticon[17] of individual interests, one could imagine Table 3 as a pie-shaped, quarter slice of a square. Of

course, as the syllogisms in Chapter II of this project also illustrate, the dominant role is

indeterminate, since, as Derrida claims, "the center is not the center" (915). Taken holistically,

pyramids within the panopticon have a shifting subjective center, or top, so that there is neither

objective or absolute elite, nor objective or absolute plebes. Put simply, there is no discernible

top and no legitimate bottom, either, and so it is impossible to determine which person in the

pyramids that Burroughs sets up, each of whom considers the self the moral center or prioritized

individual, is "A rabid dog [who] cannot choose but bite" (201); even the leaders are suspect, as

Chapter II, Syllogisms I-X of this project illustrate.

The results of any addiction are therefore, in Burroughs' vision, ubiquitous, and any point

in any pyramid might experience the changes that the pleasure/pain calculation affects:

> The physical changes were slow at first, then jumped forward in black klunks,
>
> falling through his slack tissue, washing away the human lines ... In his place of
>
> total darkness mouth and eyes are one organ that leaps forward to snap with
>
> transparent teeth ... but no organ is constant as regards either function or position
>
> ... sex organs sprout anywhere ... rectums open, defecate and close ... the entire
>
> organism changes color and consistency in split-second adjustments..." (9).

Burroughs is again pointing out the fact that our realities are our perceptions, as we attempt to

adjust to each new pleasure/pain equation, all of which shift constantly. *Naked Lunch* is a

warning against the "Black insect lusts [that] open into vast other-planet landscapes ..." (187),

the ever-linking unreality created by Ethical binaries, within which "Abstract concepts [lay] bare

as algebra, [and] narrow down to a black turd or a pair of aging cojones ..." Burroughs

ultimately wishes to teach the reader "How-To extend levels of experience by opening the door

at the end of a long hall ... Doors that only open in Silence ... Naked Lunch demands Silence

from The Reader. Otherwise he is taking his own pulse ...” When one dismisses *Naked Lunch* as

“nonsense” or being “without moral merit,” one is simply criticizing one's own understanding,

which is exactly what Burroughs wants; if, on the other hand, one praises Burroughs for his

masterful means of exposing the disconnects, one is praising one's own understanding. In both

cases, the interpretations are (im)purely subjective.

Burroughs masterfully displays the troubles of calculating the pleasure/pain binary in

“hassan's rumpus room” and “a.j.'s annual party.” In the former, the author provides an even

more disturbing picture of the “Mugwump,” a creature introduced in detail in “the black meat,”

whose “[t]hin, purple-blue lips cover a razor-sharp beak of black bone with which they

frequently tear each other to shreds in fights over clients” (46). Burroughs places these savage

creatures at the top of a pyramid and helps the reader imagine what the exchange of interests

might look like, metaphorically:

> These creatures secrete an addicting fluid from their erect penises which prolongs
>
> life by slowing metabolism. (In fact all longevity agents have proved addicting in
>
> exact ratio to their effectiveness in prolonging life.) Addicts of Mugwump fluid
>
> are known as Reptiles. A number of these flow over chairs with their flexible
>
> bones and black-pink flesh. A fan of green cartilage covered with hollow, erectile
>
> hairs through which the Reptiles absorb the fluid sprouts from behind each
>
> ear. (46)

In “hassan's rumpus room,” the Mugwump rapes and kills a boy (or Reptile); as the creature

“snaps the boy's neck [,…] [a] shudder passes through the boy's body [, and] [h]is penis rises in

three great surges pulling his pelvis up, ejaculates immediately” (63). The boy has a string of

contradictory reactions to the violent/sexual act, as “[a] sweet toothache pain shoots through his

neck, down the spine to the groin, contracting the body in spasms of delight. His whole body squeezes out through his cock" (64-5). The Mugwump then rapes the boy's corpse, and in the end, "Blood flows down the boy's chin from his mouth, half-open, sweet and sulky in death [and] [t]he Mugwump falls with a fluid, sated plop" (65). The reader is likely too repulsed to do the pleasure/pain math of the exchange, which is part of the point; the individual commonly ignores the fact that the repercussions of his or her pleasure might be the pains of others. Though Burroughs has driven the equation to the furthest margins he could personally imagine, his imagination lies beyond the lines of consideration, for most, and so the passage appears (to the casual observer that lies beyond the pleasure/pain proximity of the sin) to be mere nonsense that revels in disgust; the layers of numbers have done their job in insulating the careless individual from consequence. However, for the reader who can bear to look, the Mugwump is any being whose desire/addiction for anything/Junk drives it to seek pleasure at the potential cost of another's pain (or vices versus).

By the Utilitarian standard, of course, passive observation and calculation would be the preferable path to some semblance of objectivity, but the trouble is that a subject or group of subjects is always judging an individual subject—and so objectivity is impossible; furthermore, intersubjectivity is impossible because of the flaws of the ethical code, which is written in the language of zeros[18]. "The Inspector says, 'Well, as one judge said to the other, "Be just and if you can't be just, be arbitrary." Regret cannot observe customary obscenities'" (62). I, the present judge, will therefore heed Burroughs' advice and arbitrarily choose details and assess the Mugwump exchange, with aid from Pascal's triangle (found in Tables 3, 4, and 5) and Bentham's arbitrary vectors and enumerated pains and pleasures (From *An Introduction…* 65-111).

A. The Mugwump has sex with the Boy= +1 for M.

B. The Boy is deprived of choice= -1 for B.

C. The Mugwump has power over the Boy= +1 for M.

D. The Mugwump kills the Boy= -1 for B.

E. The Boy has an orgasm as he dies= -1 +1=0 for B.

I quickly fall into the trap of double counting, as my shifting judgment of subjecthood causes a single act (killing/death/orgasm) to split into individual pleasure/pains; though this particular series of desires, actions, sensations, and judgments takes place between two individuals, which would represent the second line of the pyramid, the exchange is illustrative of how complex and how quickly exploitative the equations can become, even within the smallest subset that can be considered a group. Applying Bentham's vectors yields similarly shifting and dualing results:

F. The Mugwump's intensity of pleasure in having the sex with the Boy= +1 for M.

G. The duration of the Mugwump's pleasure is a page= +1 for M.

H. The certainty of the Mugwump's pleasure is evidenced by orgasm= +1 for M.

I. The propinquity of the Mugwump's pleasure is the instant he demands it= +1 for M.

J. The fecundity of the Mugwump's pleasure is certain, since he has sex with the Boy again post-mortem= +1 for M.

K. The purity of the Mugwump's pleasure is pure, since no pain follows and the Mugwump is "sated"= +1 for M.

L. The extent to which the Mugwump's pleasure will affect another is singular, the Boy, who also experiences orgasm= +1 for M.

The Boy's pain equation would mirror the Mugwump's pleasure equation, in the opposite direction; in essence, it seems that one entity's pleasure is another's potential pain, whether as

directly as the Mugwump encounter or as diffusely as the bottom of Table 3. In fact, Burroughs

shifts suddenly to two apparent human beings (Hassan and A.J.), who compete as equal and

opposing tops of pleasure/pain pyramids, where the numbers of the group explode into "Boys by

the hundred [,who] plummet through the roof, quivering and kicking at the end of ropes" (67),

"[a] horde of lust-mad American women [who] rush in" (69), and "men and women, boys and

girls, animals, fish, birds, the copulating rhythm of the universe flows through the room, a great

blue tide of life" (69). Of course, enumerating the pleasure/pain pyramid of the ubiquity of life

is as ridiculous as enumerating the morality of the acts of a given individual or pair/group—and

is even exponentially more vertigo-inducing than Table 3, when you consider it as one of four

entangled sides that extend outward in as many numerical layers and directions as there are

desires, actions, and people.

In "a.j.'s annual party," Burroughs continues serving the naked truth of ethical

indiscernibility, as the passive voyeur (or judge) is indicted along with the actor(s):

> Slashtubitch ejects his monocle. It sails out of sight, returns like a boomerang into
>
> his eye. He pirouettes and disappears in a blue mist, cold as liquid air ... Fadeout
>
> ... On Screen. Red-haired, green-eyed boy, white skin with a few freckles ...
>
> kissing a thin brunette girl in slacks. Clothes and hairdo suggest existentialist bars
>
> of all the world cities. They are seated on low bed covered in white silk. The girl
>
> opens his pants with gentle fingers and pulls out his cock which is small and very
>
> hard. (75)

In this case, the binary of gendered morality is defeated. The boy's phallus (commonly

understood as the scepter of the pleasure of sexual power) is lacking; on the other hand, the girl

named "Mary is strapping on a [large] rubber penis: 'Steely Dan III from Yokohama,' she says,

caressing the shaft. Milk spurts across the room" (77). Furthermore, "She greases the dingus, shoves the boy's legs over his head and works it up his ass with a series of corkscrew movements of her fluid hips" (78). By giving Mary the more developed penis (it even has an involved backstory), Burroughs has upset the normative balance of the gender binary, since the female is morally expected to be penetrated[19] and the male is expected to penetrate. Johnny, the boy, seems to enjoy the subversion, so the experience is not a -1 for this particular Boy, though the group might collectively consider it so, since the majority has the implicit power of dominance within the binary Utilitarian ideal. Mary is not forcing Johnny like the Mugwump from "hassan's rumpus room," either. Nevertheless, the subversion of the norm conflicts with the most powerful interest, those who have phalluses and have no wish for the norm to be subverted (since keeping it status quo serves their interests and changing it does not).

Burroughs further extends his subversion of the binary sex ethic by introducing a third side to the coin toss, Mark:

> Mark drops on one knee, pulling Johnny across his back by one arm. He stands up and throws him six feet onto the bed. Johnny lands on his back and bounces. Mark jumps up and grabs Johnny's ankles, throwing his legs over his head. Mark's lips are drawn back in a tight snarl. "All right, Johnny boy." He contracts his body, slow and steady as an oiled machine, pushing his cock up Johnny's ass. Johnny gives a great sigh, squirming in ecstasy. (78-9)

Burroughs has not only subverted the gendered sexual standard that says that females are penetrated and males penetrate, but he has also subverted the standard that males penetrate females, by introducing another viable pleasure equation. The author then disperses the pleasure pain equation through the panopticon of pyramids, just as he did in "hassan's rumpus room" after

working the dual-variable equation of Mugwump and Boy. The orgasmic result is again

described in a confused tit-for-tat, compared to a list of seemingly contradictory sensations,

which include "[a] train roaring through him whistle blowing […,] a scream [that] shoots down a

white hospital corridor […,] Ferris wheels, deserted houses, limestone caves […,] [and] a cobra

[that] rears, spreads, spits white venom, [and] pearl and opal chips [that] fall in a slow silent rain

through air clear as glycerine" (79). I have left many of the pains/pleasures out and replaced

them with ellipses, and Burroughs has done the same. Mary then begins to cannibalize Johnny,

particularly, "she lunches on his prick" (81), thus consuming the binary of sexual power

represented by his phallus; Johnny has thus been punished and marginalized by another

individual for subverting boundaries that are in the supposed best interest of the larger group.

Mary then asks Mark for permission to hang him (he has, after all, subverted a boundary

himself), but he rapes and hangs her, "Her neck snaps […] [and a] great fluid wave undulates

through her body" (83), an image that is identical to the result of the Mugwump/Boy equation.

"Johhny [then] dowses Mary [and himself] with gasoline" and sets them both aflame. Mark, the

penetrator, who has remained closest to the standard binary Ethic of patriarchy, has escaped

unscathed. In fact, because the complex equation of binary Ethics have self-contradicted to

Zero, "(Mary, Johnny and Mark [all survive to] take a bow with the ropes around their necks

[…,] [though] [t]hey are not as young as they appear in the Blue Movies ... […] [and] [t]hey look

tired and petulant.)" (87). As Burroughs explains his anti-Utilitarian ethic in *Naked Lunch*'s

"Post Script…Wouldn't You?," "Well when that record starts around for the billionth light year

and never the tape shall change us non-junkies take drastic action and the men separate out from

the Junk boys" (209). Certainly, Mark has been separated out from the "Junk" boy (Johnny) and

the "Junk" girl (Mary), because he understands the common binary gender division, enough to know that the penetrator is always preferred.

As Nietzsche explains the inevitable phenomena of moral contradiction between group interests and individual interests in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena…" (96) and therefore no "great" or terrible men/women, but "only the actor[s] of […] ideal" (95). Since any action we can individually send up or down a given pyramid is both good and evil, judgment is another form of desire/Junk that must be eradicated to pull the pyramids of Ethical control up from the square roots. As Burroughs warns in the aforementioned passage regarding the Junk pyramids, "Assuming a self-righteous position is nothing to the purpose unless your purpose be to keep the junk virus in operation" (*Naked Lunch* 202). Any given binary Ethical interpretation, which attempts to place an individual or subset at the top of a pyramid, also necessarily places them at the bottom of another, subverts the very idea of individuality and/or group, and thus self-contradicts down to Zero again.

Burroughs makes his criticisms of such binary Ethics explicit, in "the market," or "The Composite City [,] where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market" (89) of self-contradictory tautological cacophony and where the "[o]pening bars of 'East St. Louis Toodle-oo' [fade in and out] ... at times loud and clear then faint and intermittent like music down a windy street ...." (89). Burroughs caustically exposes the same self-contradiction in common world religions, the section sub-headed "The Prophet's Hour"(93):

> "Christ?" sneers the vicious, fruity old Saint applying pancake from an alabaster
>
> bowl ... "That cheap ham! You think I'd demean myself to commit a miracle? ...
>
> That one should have stood in carny ... " […] `Step right up, Marquesses and

Marks, and bring the little Marks too. Good for young and old, man and beast ...

The one and only legit Son of Man will cure a young boy's clap with one hand-by

contact alone, folks-create marijuana with the other, whilst walking on water and

squirting wine out his ass ... Now keep your distance, folks, you is subject to be I

irradiated by the sheer charge of this character.' (94)

Again, we the readers are confronted with the question, "Who is the snake-oil salesman, who is

the 'rabid dog' (201), and who is 'Honest Bill' (208)?" Though Burroughs spends much of

Naked Lunch picking apart the binaries generally considered Western, in the passages that follow

his blunt take on the Christ-Figure, he proves that the matter is not merely Occidental, the

problem (along with Burroughs' proposed solution of silence) is also ecumenical:

"Buddha? A notorious metabolic junky ... Makes his own you dig. In India, where

they got no sense of time, The Man is often a month late . . . 'Now let me see, is

that the second or the third monsoon? I got like a meet in Ketchupore about more

or less.' "And all them junkies sitting around in the lotus posture spitting on the

ground and waiting on The Man. So Buddha says: `I don't hafta take this sound.

I'll by God metabolize my own junk.' "`Man, you can't do that. The Revenooers

will swarm all over you. "`Over me they won't swarm. I gotta gimmick, see? I'm a

fuckin Holy Man as of right now.' "Jeez, boss, what an angle." (95-6)

Here, Burroughs proves that his criticism is also inclusive; in fact, he is indirectly asserting

skepticism toward his fellow Beats, many of whom followed Oriental paths to enlightenment.

As Burroughs puts the matter in Kathy Acker's interview, "I was not involved with Buddhism. I

know a little bit about it and Allen [Ginsberg] is very much into it, but it doesn't attract me too

much. I've never really practiced meditation." Burroughs extends his critique of binary

contradictions to "Mohammed," "Confucius," and even "Lao-Tze" (*Naked Lunch* 95-6), inclusively determining that all religion is Junk too, once bartering tops and bottoms of the binary ethical panopticon of competing interests get their hands on it. Regardless of the brand name, the resulting tautological contradiction is the same:

> "Now some citizens really wig when they make with the New Religion. These frantic individuals do not know how to come on. No class to them ... Besides, they is subject to be lynched like who wants somebody hanging around being better'n other folks? 'What you trying to do, Jack, give people a bad time? . . .' So we gotta play it cool, you dig, cool ... 'We got a take it or leave it proposition here, folks. We don't shove anything up your soul, unlike certain cheap characters who shall be nameless and are nowhere. Clear the cave for action. I'm gonna metabolize a speed ball and make with the Fire Sermon.'" (95)

Many of our entrenched Logical and Ethical misunderstandings are due to the concepts that Derrida codified in the aforementioned terms, freeplay and supplement. Burroughs came to the same basic realizations before Derrida, which seems less odd when we again consider Wittgenstein's opinion on influence: "[W]hat I have written here makes no claim to novelty in detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone else" (3). If we are all splicing into the established Logical/Ethical chains each time we speak or write, the fact that we might experience intellectual gridlock or anachronism is utterly unsurprising, in fact. Regardless, Burroughs frequently toyed with the connection between the objects being represented, the images of the things, the sounds of the things, the images of the words that represent the things, and the sounds of the words that represent the things. Take for example, Figure 1, which appears

on the first page of this project. Burroughs is sitting in a chair on his porch, with a grave marker

beside him that reads "Bur-Rose." The written word has grown further away from its root

objects to create the illusion of subjects, and our vision of the object is thereby obscured or even

exchanged. Burroughs' particular name creates a binary that is symbolic of the author's self,

since he lures the reader into instructive sensations and imageries and then makes with the barb.

  As Shakespeare wrote in Act II, Scene II of *Romeo and Juliet*, "that which we call a

rose/By any other name would smell as sweet" (91), and of course, the converse is true as well.

A Burroughs by any other name would still lure in the unsuspecting sensate for a good mental

pricking. Such freeplay also lends crucial keys that open the doors into his derivations. For

instance, "Dr. Benway [,who] had been called in as advisor to the Freeland Republic," (19)

manipulates the pleasure/pain equation in such an unabashedly biased and cruel manner that all

who come into contact with him are subjected to his system, "T.D.-Total Demoralization." The

evidence thus far, (e.g. The Algebra of Need's connection with the felicific calculus, Burroughs

explicit mention of pleasure and pain as sole concerns, et al) makes obvious the fact that

"Benway" is another such instance of nominal freeplay, in which Burroughs tells the reader that

he is personifying "Bentham's Way." Also, even more subtly, Burroughs disperses hints related

to Utilitariansism's prodigal son, John Stuart Mill: The word "million" is used roughly fourteen

times throughout the text (and few more in the annexed chapters of the restored edition). We

scholars know, of course, that one of our habits include tacking a suffix to the end of another

scholar's name to create Nietzschean, Burroughsian, or Millean. In each use of "million,"

Burroughs is describing variables in the Junk equation: "million fairies" (42), "million

screaming junkies" (45), "million masturbating boys" (98), and so on. "Torture of a Million

mirrors" (68) is perhaps the most notable instance, since the Junk pyramids, in all their brand

names, all reflect back the pains and pleasures endlessly in forward and reverse, with no changes

to the images, no matter the tint.

Interestingly, Bill Burroughs only uses a derivative of the word "billion" once within the

first edition of the Grove Press text, when he produces the strangely circular and contradictory

statement, "Well when that record starts around for the billionth light year and never the tape

shall change us non-junkies take drastic action and the men separate out from the Junk boys"

(209). Burroughs' act of breaking down the typical linguistic gates of punctuation has netted

multiple meanings yet again. Of course, if we are to dig the "million" connection, we can buy

the "billion's" connection to Bill Burroughs. If we read the sentence as "Well[,] when that

record starts around for the billionth light year and never the tape shall change[,] us non-junkies

take drastic action[,] and the men separate out from the Junk boys" Burroughs has set up a power

pyramid wherein he counts himself a self-righteous "non-junkie" and thus the actor against the

afflicted. Alternatively, if we read the sentence as "(All will be) Well when that record starts

around for the light year of Bill (Burroughs) and never the (red) tape shall change us[.]

[N]on(word and/or moral)-junkies, take drastic action and the men separate out from the Junk

boys," Burroughs counts himself amongst those who have shed convention and calls others like

him to action.

I am certain that many other readings of the above sentence, as well as Burroughs' larger

chains of anti-logic and anti-ethic, can be codified. However, I am as certain as I can be (that is

to say, not the least bit certain) that this project constitutes AN accurate reading of *Naked Lunch*,

which accommodates millions and even billions of subjective readers and readings. In the

interest of tying up one more of the many loose ends that have been left hanging (some

intentionally, some, in the interest of the space and time of this article, which cannot possibly

connect all the chains within *Naked Lunch*'s cover, let alone all those interdependent concepts

that constitute the web of common moralities and languages)—I will quote J.S. Mill, who in his

autobiography, ultimately comes to the following conclusion regarding his lifetime of intellectual

endeavors, after rejecting Bentham's cold, binary Logic and Ethic systems: "I needed to be

made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation," a.k.a.,

SILENCE. In an ethical reality constructed of logical binaries, the net result is nothing at all,

unless we realize that all individual interests count. Regardless, Ethically, you must be infected

to ever be cured.

IV. The Conclusion Forward

In 1997, at the end of Burroughs' chain of anti-word-virus, when the old horse they called "Old Bull" gave out, and the "Man Within" floated out into the ether from whence he came, did he feel like he had won? If he stuck around for the growing tide of equal rights for women, homosexuals, drug addicts—and the days when all the arbitrarily lowest denominators of all the Junk Pyramids in Egypt and Libya and other lands of the Middle East and around the globe rose up against their Pushers—would he have left with a tautological halo—or would he have kept his sharp, contradictory horns? We cannot blame Aristotle for the binary way in which our minds work; after all, he merely described that binary way in the terms of the Logical system. Likewise, we cannot blame Bentham nor Mill for mathematizing morality; after all, they merely described the way religion works in terms of the Ethical system. Finally, we cannot blame Burroughs for adding clarity to the inherent contradictions of both systems, by way of confusion and obfuscation; after all, he merely showed us the mosaics of our shattered illusions, by describing those contradictions in terms of the Word/Junk Virus and The Algebra of Need. Alas, we cannot blame each other for desiring nor judging; after all, we simply act out of absolute need to act (even in nonaction). As Dante placed Aristotle in the kinder, gentler parts of Hell, we should do Bentham, Mill, Burroughs, and ourselves—the same (dis)courtesy.

Burroughs, in *Naked Lunch*, forces the reader to silently reconsider worn-out assumptions by drowning out the subconscious noise of thought/language/desire/judgment chains that rattle away incessantly in both the collective and individual human psyche. The lunch is always naked in the same sense that the fabled emperor is infinitely sans clothes on the page. The common trope known as the "butterfly effect" (coined by Edward Lorenz, but widely disseminated in fiction) claims that the flapping of the titular insect's wings might cause a hurricane. If we

imagine each decentered Logical center, or the top/bottom of every Ethical pyramid as a

butterfly, that seems to hold true. If William S. Burroughs were such a butterfly, then he would

be of more terrifying, thought-shattering proportions than any kaiju that Toho could

envision[20]…and has thus sent many a self-respecting hipster and/or self-respecting scholar

reeling for the more shuttered structures of convention. However, as I cut and paste quotes and

bits of logic and anti-logic into this project, I cannot escape feeling the heavy mettle of gratitude

for Burroughs' acts of opening doors and windows to let the (en)lightning in: Burroughs, who

eventually realized (with the aid of Brion Gysin) that he needed actual scissors, rather than

conceptual ones, paved the way for a Billion new ideas, word vaccines, and patterns that

have/will have erased many of the age-old traps and replaced them with doorways. For good or

for ill, all speakers and writers in the digitally augmented postmodern age owe him the same

tithe. The unerasable American author kicked the doors down in the 50s and bided his time til

the 60s, when he could start pied-pipering the children out through the way in, where he is still

whistling eerily through the doorways and into the wind.

Notes

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[1] Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*, 191.

[2] This subtitle is a play on Burroughs' "Atrophied Preface" of *Naked Lunch* (though my introduction has not atrophied so far endward). I numbered this chapter not (~) I, after some significant cutting and pasting placed my introduction after the brief review of secondary sources, and that seemed to create an opportunity to subtly begin making my point about logical binaries. The ~I also interacts with the superscript numbers, which implicitly states that understanding the binary systems of logic is NOT as easy as 1, 2, 3 (though once boiled down to essentials, it is ultimately as simplistic and empty as 1-1, as I argue throughout).

[3] Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*, 14, 30.

[4] According to the Merriam-Webster's website, "causing or intended to cause happiness."

[5] This question implies the rest of itself, like any good word virus. "Wouldn't you?" is really asking "Wouldn't you, if you were me?"—an unanswerable question and thus a dead-end riddle of subjectivity.

[6] Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*, 11.

[7] During the interview with Kathy Acker, Burroughs recounts an early desire to be a doctor, an interest that he continued to study as a hobby.

[8] Though I have not found direct evidence of influence, the conceptual similarities, which I detail, are powerful. Also, as I clarify in later sections regarding Ludwig Wittgenstein, indirect influences are fairly clear, and moreover, according to Wittgenstein, influences are utterly beside the point.

[9] Wittgenstein states this proposition in such a way that is impossible to recreate here, but Table 1 and Table 2, which come later in the project, unpacks the necessary details of this premise.

[10] See Tanner quote in Chapter I.

[11] I have adapted Tables 1 and 2 from Irving M. Copi's and Carl Cohen's *Introduction to Logic*, 12th ed., and as such, all information can be found in the front inside cover. This textbook is the common source for undergraduate instruction in Logic, and I have relied on this resource heavily in order to reconstruct Burroughs' syllogisms, to which he often only gives the reader conclusions, sans premises.

[12] I quote Burroughs explicitly blaming the confusion on the slippery definitions of abstract concepts, which he claims is only made worse by the either/or binaries inherent to Western logic.

[13] Passive voice is intentional here, since it better illustrates Burroughs' intent of contradicting the binary norm of power.

[14] Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*, 19.

[15] See Chapter II.

[16] I obtained this image from sinosplice.com

[17] The Panopticon was a prison of Bentham's design, which allowed the guards to watch the inmates without their awareness, creating a sense of honesty through paranoia. Here, I have intentionally used it as both a more general term that implies all one can see and a specific term, which implies Bentham's interest in controlling the marginalized individual by arbitrarily placing another individual higher in the socially accepted hierarchy, since his institutional building was based upon his Utilitarian ideals.

[18] As explored in Chapter II, the language based on binary logic (good/bad, cold/hot, etc.) is, at best, a self-frustrating series of concepts that are individually defined and always split into two, then ascribed positive and negative value arbitrarily, so that one always dominates another; at

worst, the binary language is abused by individuals who see the bigger picture and exploit those who are taught to see everything in halves.

[19] Passive voice is again intentional in service of my point.

[20] Toho films (in)famously produces the Japanese kaiju (or monster) movies, including *Mothra*.

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