

Naked Life: William S. Burroughs, Bioscientist
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*This is Revelation and Prophecy of what I can pick up without FM on my 1920 crystal set with antennae of jissom...The way OUT is the way IN....*¹

To write is also to become something other than a writer. Gilles Deleuze²

1(Naked Lunch, p. 229)

2(Critique et clinique, p. 6)

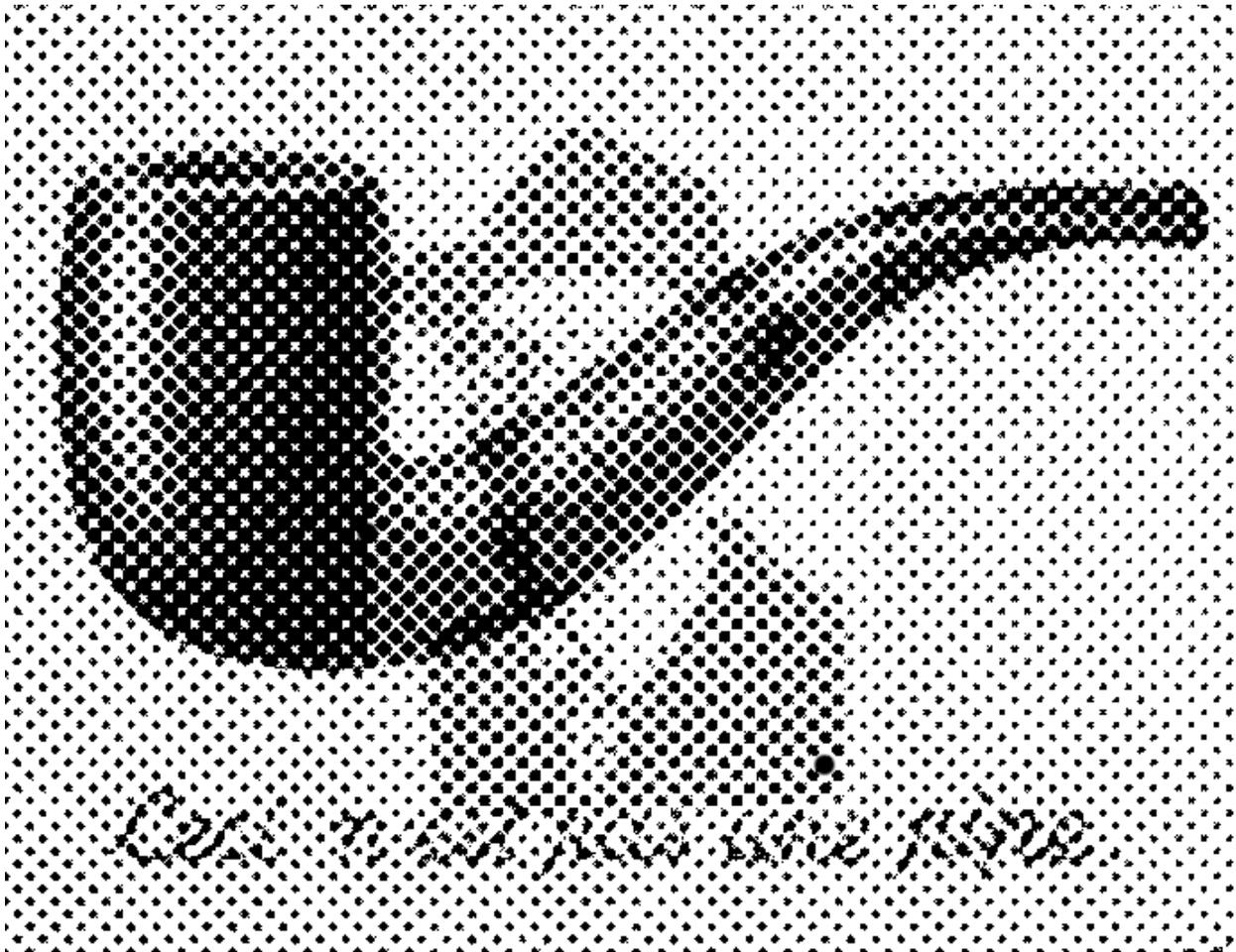


Illustration 1: This is Not an Author?

It is perhaps true that one cannot, as Burroughs taught us, *fake* quality writing anymore than you can fake a good meal. As such, most readers who come with an open mind and, yes, "read", rather than merely consume, Naked Lunch - Burroughs' early (1959) effervescent novel of experimental verve and poetic genius - recognize, however begrudgingly, the work of a master chef. The cuisine may not be to everyone's taste, this Naked Lunch, but it is a work of such stunning novelty and comic timing that the patient and open minded reader must, finally, laugh.

Americans have a special horror of giving up control, of letting things happen in their own way without interference. They would like to jump down into their own stomachs and digest the food and shovel the shit out... (NL, 215, fn. Gamow)

It is perhaps an only slightly lesser challenge to fake quality science, where inquiry demands the discipline of open mind and the clear, immersive observation that can result. Indeed, robust scientific inquiry would seem to demand what Burroughs dubbed, following Korzybski, the “extermination” of rational thought. The unacknowledged role of rhetorical or “semantic” maps in our consciousness was Korzybski's quarry, but the goal was identical to that offered by Timothy Leary et al in their remix of the Tibetan Book of the Dead:

In the ego-free state, wherein all things are like the void and cloudless sky, And the naked spotless intellect is like a transparent vacuum; At this moment, know yourself and abide in that state.

Asymptotically, investigators must approach zero attachment to any belief or concept, however cherished it may be, and the first practice of such detachment is to recognize, wherever possible, the slippage between our linguistic models of reality and reality itself. The most replicable form of this thought from Korzybski's enormous opus was simply "The Map is not the territory", and with Burroughs we might add: "The map is not the territory. And neither is the territory!" Burroughs' downright shamanic treatment of language - witness the 196x icaro “word Authority more habit forming than heroin” - works to erode and even “wash away” the usual semantic webs and habit structures in which we all dwell. In The Ticket That Exploded, Burroughs has recourse to the “sensory deprivation” tank invented by John Lilly for recounting this work of erasure so fundamental to his own practice, this “blast of silence.”

--Body outlines extend and break here—The stretching membrane of skin dissolves—Sudden taste of blood in his throat as gristle vaporizes and the words wash away and the halves of his body separated like a mold --...Screaming without a throat without speech centers as the brain split down the middle and the feed-back sound shut off in a blast of silence. (Ticket, p. 83)

Korzybski points out that few undertake this form of investigation willingly,

But exactly the distinctive work of science is the modification, the reconstruction, the abandonment of old ideas; the construction of new ones on the basis of observation. This however is a distressing operation, and many refuse to undergo it, even many whose work is the practice of scientific investigation. The old ideas persist along with the new observations, they form the basis— often unconsciously—for many of the conclusions that are drawn. (<http://www.esgs.org/uk/art/sands-ch01.pdf>)

Korzybski's work and teaching was devoted in part to overcoming the “either/or” logic of aristotelian logic, and with him Burroughs sought to navigate a “Third Mind” available for exploration by those willing to let go of their attachment to “word authority.” “Cure is always: *Let go! Jump!* (NL, p. 222)

By approaching this “blast of silence” or zero degree of attachment to any thought that would understand a living system as “either” an organism “or” a machine, Burroughs was able to observe and represent aspects of living systems that were not on the radar of mainstream life sciences, enthralled as they were with the molecular machinery of life, nucleic acids and proteins. By offering recipes for making life "naked", Burroughs teaches readers to engage the complex world of our perceptions with what some Buddhist traditions call "diamond mind", and in so doing his recombinant texts could be seen to be recipes for the alteration of consciousness – the induction of clear mind through the interruption of “ordinary” internal thought. The Diamond Sutra explains that it is precisely the singularity of any given “belief in life” that prevents it from being anything but a “calling”, an act of naming:

And why? Because, O Subhûti, if a man were to say that belief in self, belief in a being, belief in life, belief in personality had been preached by the Tathâgata, would he be speaking truly?' Subhûti said: 'Not indeed, Bhagavat, not indeed, Sugata; he would not be speaking truly. And why? Because, O Bhagavat, what was preached by the Tathâgata as a belief in self, that was preached by the Tathâgata as no-belief; therefore it is called belief in self.'

“*Therefore it is called belief in self*” - and its repetition in various forms throughout the 32 stanzas of the sutra – indicates that the rhetorical act of “calling” (For Korzybski, “mapping”) is precisely and concisely not the statement it refers to or the “called” object (Korzybski's “territory.”).

And Naked Lunch is, if we are to believe an Atrophied Preface two hundred and eighteen pages into a work of fiction, a set of recipes: “Naked Lunch is a blueprint, a How-To Book ...” As such, NL is a fundamentally algorithmic text, a set of recipes where

“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 cajones...”

Refusing the opposition between abstraction and mundane, finite, rotting and shitting materiality, these recipes work to disrupt habitual thought formations and behavior, an alteration of consciousness whose readerly contribution is an active silence:

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. (NL, 224_)

Burroughs offers us training in a silence before which the lunch is indeed naked. *Rather than being offered a work to “consume”, Burroughs offers his work as a manual for achieving the blast of silence.* “ In short, Naked Lunch is a manual for overcoming current conditions through mutation, and in some sense we must only shut up long enough to mutate. When asked about his message to politicians, Burroughs responded that these science fiction creatures should “Tell the truth once and for all and shut up forever.”

And in silence, we behold a very different and no less scientific model of life in Burroughs's writings than that offered by 1950's nascent molecular biology, understandably transfixed as it was by the work of the DNA Word. In the blast of silence solicited and induced by Burroughs in

Naked Lunch, a recognizable “subjective correlative” to the emerging informatic vision of living systems can be perceived. Here readers must practice introception and explore *life from the inside*. “The way *OUT* is the way *IN*...” This way “IN” is itself as manipulable as the external world, where the practices of molecular biology augured complete control over living systems. Burroughs' way “IN”, though, was no rigorous and emerged out of an apprenticeship with both junk, whose addictive potentials pull the user toward the machine state of repetition, entropy and death, and yage, a plant adjunct Burroughs came to describe as a time travel technology. **yage letters** In both cases it is the very difference between living systems and machines that is both blurred and advanced.

Burroughs was of course not alone in his advance beyond either mechanism or vitalism. Most recently, Stephen Wolfram has focused on the concept of “irreducibility” in his studies of cellular automata, where remarkable and thoroughly unpredictable complexity emerges out of the (viral?) iteration of simple rules. Wolfram adopts the language of “irreducibility” in order to amplify the epistemological limits reached by his research; only by growing and exploring this artificial life forms can they be known. By analogy, Burroughs had to drink yage – and drink it again – in his own quest for what he called the “Final Fix”, a way out on the algebra.

This “subjective” aspect of living systems – they must be lived in order to be understood - induced Physicist Niels Bohr to call for a complementary model of living systems akin to the complementary wave/particle model in physics. Bohr sought a theory that included both the unmistakably and irreducible “teleological” pull of life and our capacities to effectively describe and manipulate organisms as mechanistic systems. More recent work in thermodynamics by researchers Stanley Salthe, Rod Swenson, James Jay Kay, Eric Schneider and Dorion Sagan suggest that living systems are indeed pulled toward the dissipation of ever increasing amounts of energy and information.

Bohr's “teleomechanical” model of living systems has not had much influence, and for the most part the return of teleological thinking to biology has not yet begun to alter our maps of living systems, which are, as biologist J.B. Haldane remarked long ago, stranger than we can imagine.

Hence the evolution of our imagined maps of evolution becomes crucial to any advance in our ongoing exploration of nature, and by composing both the machinic and irreducible aspects of living systems in one, necessarily disjunctive, text, Burroughs offers us a new map for new territories opened up by emerging biotechnological and biochemical visions of (trans)human beings. *Yage letters*The “junkie” approaches the pure form of habit structure, the human outted as biochemical machine. Yet these exempla of the “algebra of need” are also urging, surging “wetware” with what Jean Baptiste LaMarck called “the inner feeling of being alive.”

They gibber and squeal at sight of it. The spit hangs off their chin, and their stomach rumbles and all their guts grind in peristalsis while they cook up, dissolving the body's decent skin, you expect any moment a great blob of protoplasm will flop right out and surround the junk. Really disgust you to see it...Isn't Life peculiar? (NL, 5)

And even reading about such “Life” makes me gibber and giggle at the site of it. It is life viewed from the perspective of naked life, the living need of an addict even as she approaches the pure state of a machine: more more more more, the algebra of need, the ever increasing demands of

addiction, and, indeed, thermodynamics, for more. “Thermodynamics wins at a crawl.” It was Philip K. Dick's androids translated by Ridley Scot who spoke the immortal cyborg mantra, “More life, fucker!”, but it was Burroughs who was able to most abstract it from his own persona and ego. While Dick suffered the ordeal of VALIS as he experienced what it was to be part of an enormously abstract machine identical to the cosmos. Burroughs' practiced emptiness allowed him a perhaps slightly wider aperture with which he could open his mind to the future in all of its strangeness and otherness:

Wrong! I am never here....Never that is fully in possession, but somehow in a position to forestall ill advised moves.” (NL, p. 13)

Burroughs recalls to our consciousness, again and again, the sheer metabolic fact of our embodiment, as the flows of which we are composed become outsourced with terrified hilarity:

“Yes I know it all. The finance company is repossessing your wife's artificial kidney....They are evicting your grandmother from her iron lung.”NL, 184

And while high quality hoaxes are a veritable tradition in physics, these exceptions prove the rule that "normal" science resists challenges to the status of truth itself, a challenge often posed by the mere existence of compelling fiction.³ Perhaps Burroughs was the greatest fake writer ever, a confidence man crossed with an Intelligence Agent. I call Burroughs a "fake" writer not because his writing lacks authenticity or rhetorical effect, both of which it exudes with intensity and quantity. Instead, Burroughs Simulated the Writer Archetype and hacked the obsessive figure of the writer himself, a shamanic dismemberment or “cut up” and not Death of the Author. This map of the territory "William S. Burroughs" or "Bill Lee" as a "fake writer" suggests that Burroughs' activities as a writer provided the armature for a thorough going investigation into a yet another map, and yet not one among others - "life." By amplifying the relentlessly teleological aspect of living systems, Burroughs demonstrated that for the sake of scientific inquiry, it is sometimes necessary to pretend to be something other than a Scientist, if only because that archetype, even into the present, demands a separation of the observer from the observed, a separation Burroughs consistently dismembered in his fictional and non fictional writings. Beginning with Burroughs' experimental ingestion of yage and use of DMT in the 1950's and continuing to his investigation of dreaming in My Education, Burroughs' investigations into the biological aspects of consciousness were "involutionary" and “metabolic” ; they began with experimentation on and with the self through manipulation of the processes of ingestion (a junky eats through her arm, Bill Lee drinks yage for the “final fix”) and digestion (a black turd). Science from the inside, Burroughs's work fits the criteria embryologist and theoretical biologist Stanley Salthe offers to define an “internalist” science.

Internalism is the attempt to understand ('model' may be too "objective" a concept) a system from within, with the inquirer being a part, inside the system, and therefore unable to see itself as if from outside. In contrast, the mirror would symbolize the stance taken up in standard

3 Footnote on quantum mechanics

(externalist) scientific modeling, delivering a spatiotemporally global picture of a whole system, describable in the universal present tense (as in: 'organisms reproduce' or 'a star's energy dissipates'). (http://www.nbi.dk/~natphil/salthe/internalism_summarized.pdf)

In a discussion of animal cruelty, Burroughs points specifically to this internalist perspective, a point of view characterized by a fertile negation whose effect is unmitigated and inspired compassion: his inability to separate himself from other organisms separates him from those who take a more mechanistic understanding of living systems:

I am using myself as a reference point of view to assess current and future trends. This is not megalomania. It is simply the only measuring artifact available. Observer William: 023. Trends can be compacted into one word...GAP. Widening GAPs. GAP between 023, and those who can club seal cubs to death, set cats on fire, shoot out the eyes of lemurs with slingshots. (WV, p. 511)

This separation that emerges from an otherwise thoroughly connective affect (compassion) could be seen to be the very basis of Burroughs' life science, one that queries irreducible aspects of living systems. By contrast, the scientific model of the DNA word encouraged a perspective Burroughs summarized under the word "control":

Like all control systems it depends on maintaining a monopoly position. If anybody can be tape recorder 3 then tape recorder 3 loses power. God must be THE GOD. (Electronic Revolution)

With the rise of the well named "Central Dogma" in molecular biology which insisted on a static genome beyond alteration by an organism, so too must DNA be THE God of living systems. And, so the Dogma decreed, there was to be no feedback between an environment and DNA during the life of an organism, including presumably the feedback between human consciousness and DNA. To explore those other aspects of living systems that elude this monopoly and closure of control, in Naked Lunch, Burroughs casts himself as a scientific instrument whose read out is both "Direct" and partial, focusing on "certain areas of psychic process."

I am a recording instrument. . . I do not presume to impose "story" "plot" "continuity". . . Insofar as I succeed in *Direct* recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function. . . I am not an entertainer. . . (NL 221)

From his practices with orgone to his vision of the control society and artificial life forms, Burroughs' investigation of "life" offers a conceptual framework resonant with and complementary to recent calls for "First Person Science", a mode of scientific description that integrates an observer into a participatory universe where living systems and their investigators cannot be neatly separated. In what follows I will splice Burroughs' contributions to the life sciences into an account of my recent work as a participant observer with international organizations in the field of biometrics, where in the "blast of silence", Burroughs and his creations become practical and useful guides to anticipating the likely effects of any given

(bio)technology. A recording instrument, Burroughs *is* a biotechnology reporting on his own, biometric, nature

Wetware Protocols: A Blast of Silence

The farmer's eye is the best fertilizer. Pliny⁴

πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τὸν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ οὐκ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν. Protagoras

"We each live in our own world - together." - mobius

"The forward step must be made in silence..." Burroughs⁵

Mobius is not my name, but it is certainly my form. A brief investigation into topology reveals that despite our common sense insistence that "inside" and "outside" are words indicating entirely distinct surfaces, it is in fact commonplace - perhaps "The commonplace or *chora*" - in nature to observe that all of space must be comprehended as a continuum. Beyond the fascination offered by a cosmological account of the origin of the universe, which, like our lives, can be narrated in terms of "In the beginning", the Big Bang model quietly asserts a relentless continuity between past and present, a 13.7 billion year moment of expansion and differentiation. Charles Darwin cocked his head to the side and took a long gander at an "entangled bank", and when he did so, he was a monist comprehending natural and sexual selection manifesting different aspects of one continuously transforming system, what his Grandfather Erasmus called the "long filament of life." William Burroughs, learning from Count Korzybski, knew that "inside" and "outside" are quite simply labels for an evolutionary reality too exquisitely beautiful and psychologically difficult to comprehend, and that words were simply "maps" for guiding a more fundamentally perceptual and intuitive operation of thought in relation to reality.

Burroughs' genuine "genius" (Mailer) was to extend the Darwinian insight to fragments of language, signs, symbols and images, and to use evolutionary techniques (such as the cut up) to transform and evolve his own texts. Along with Carl Jung, whose concept of the archetype is much maligned but often replicated (cf. Pepsi appropriating the "yinm/yang" symbol), Burroughs must be ranked as one of the great scientists of 20th century mind. Unacknowledged and repressed, symbols, logos and pop songs become mind viruses crowding out even the momentary experience of actuality or, in the case of the life sciences, vitality. Scientist Evelyn Fox Keller writes that "We risk making nature tell us stories we wish to hear" when it comes to living systems, and Burroughs' offers a potent antidote to the power of any given historical and scientific context to mask or occlude living systems as they are, in all of their strangeness. Keller's early work focused on that suitably Burroughsian organism the slime mold, and found that a scientific "algebra of need" had characterized previous research, where the desire for a system of explanation rooted in a central "organizer" or "governor" cell had occluded a more distributed system by which the slime mold aggregates.

4[<http://www.answers.com/topic/1st-century>

5(<http://www.deepleafproductions.com/wilsonlibrary/texts/wsb-inter.html>)

What Burroughs - or, rather Lee, or the other labels we have assembled together in that feast Naked Lunch - labeled "factualism" entails an empiricism of the self, an ongoing and evolving response-ability to the festival of life forms hosting and hosted by the self. Burroughs was comfortable writing texts not "governed" by him; no All Powerful Organizer Author was in charge of the emerging text, and if he was, he would be cut up... When Burroughs writes, then, it is less a representation of life, but is instead a continuous response to it, a "recording instrument" whose condition of operation is to cut up the Author Himself. "Inside. Outside. Let's Call the whole thing off. Suddenly, map and territory meet as One: Tell me: What do you say we play a little William Tell?" What does, in fact, William tell?

I saw it past invading the present, rancid magic of slot machines and roadhouses ...Selling is more of a habit than using...He claimed tea put him in touch with supra blue gravitational fields...Causal thinking never yields accurate description of metabolic process-limitations of existing language (15)

No matter how hard Mobius works to differentiate these two worlds - the interior world of his involutory investigations into Mind, and the exterior world that often denies the very existence of Mind - he finds them to be One. Of a piece. All together now...

Mobius is on his bike. Rather, Mobius rides the bike, an old French frame single speed fixed gear that does not allow him to coast. Ever. Pedal pull breath chant must become a reflex. Mobius has become bike, Mobius is the label for the place where inside and outside call it off. Mobius pedals towards the Western Lands, making tight dervish circles singing.

The bike is an interface. The dappled sunlight through the maples and the oaks and the hemlocks cast baroque, curling shadows across a granite sand path. Birdsong seems to synchronize with the rhythms of umbra and penumbra. These fire roads make good stalking grounds for the morel, one of mobius's prey.

Something is on the ground. Mobius skids to a halt, the knobbed rear tire tearing at itself.

It is nothing. A piece of birch bark. Native Americans used it as parchment.

Pedal pull breath chant must become a reflex.

That night, a dream had mobius. The dream was like Burroughs's packing dream, the boat is whistling in the harbor, trying to pack, gotta get out of Gibraltar...

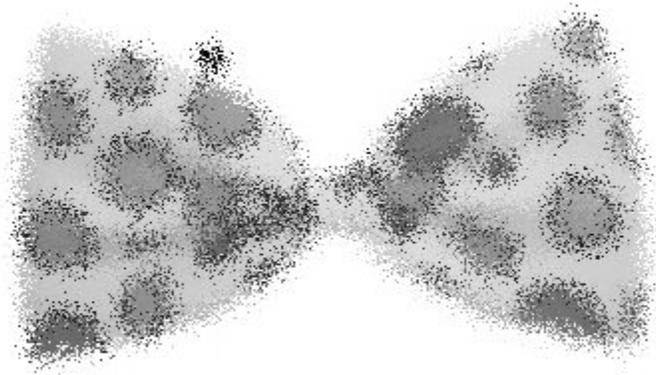
A writer's will is the winds of dead calm of the Western Lands. Point way out he can start stirring of the sail. Writer, where are you going? To write. Here we are texts already written on the sky...The texts sing. Everything is grass and bushes, a desert or a maze of texts. Here you are...never use the same door twice. Sky in all directions...on the word for word. The word for word is word... (WV, 515)

Something *is* there. A scroll of parchment. Birch. The parchment unrolls mobius, who beholds it, blinking, with eyes like a Mugwamp. It's typed in twelve point pico, a typewriter, a Remington by the looks of it. "Twelve Gauge" I think to myself...It tells a story:

I can feel the heat closing in, feel them out there making their moves, setting up their devil doll venture capitalist stool pigeons, crooning over a fat roach I feel burning toward my fingerprints, whistling on the exhale and vaulting the railing near the tourist kiosks and drink stands serving the Swiss cave near which I crouch...It's a science party, and our quarry's the numbers and levels for the human body. Biometrics, a sound check for Control. "Check one, Check two. Check." To wit: How loud, how bright, how hard, how hot? Idea is, we start designing the machines for our bodies rather than the other way around. Some of the machines will even tell us who we are. Or aren't.

We project to a large screen in a well designed conference room in a Franciscan Retreat shadowed and sheltered by the Swiss Alps, one hour from Geneva. Our collective is TC 25/WG 5, Quantities and Units, and their letter symbols. Glyphs and tables flicker on the screen, a cursor blinks and moves back a few spaces from a superscript, as if in terrified awe of its tiny font. Text scrolls. We are bootstrapping telebiometrics, a system for biologically based human authentication at a distance, by working out its vocabulary and units of measure, its protocols.

AJ is in his element, working the screen and the phone and his crew toward an impossible consensus about the fundamental measurements of the human sensory system. I say "impossible" because one of the things I have learned during my investigations of telebiometrics is that "we all live in our own world



-together". What with the combinations and recombinations between and among the senses and the attention we give to them, any given scene can be tuned in such a multitude of ways that the world very likely feels different to each and every one of us even as we experience momentary

flashes of telepathy, a feeling of what it is to be a body for each and every individuated organism. I say "very likely" because given this sensory diapsora, it is good to remember along with the Count that "the map is not the territory." Burroughs writes:

Emphatically we do not oppose telepathic research. In fact, telepathy properly used and understood could be the ultimate defense against any form of organized coercion or tyranny on the part of pressure groups or individual control addicts. We oppose, as we oppose atomic war, the use of such knowledge to control, coerce, debase, exploit or annihilate the individuality of another living creature. Telepathy is not, by its nature, a one-way process. To attempt to set up a one-way telepathic broadcast must be regarded as an unqualified evil...."(NL, 167)

So, each of us, living in our own world, together, shares their world with machines. And this sharing - it's increasingly intimate. "Tele-pathic research" now must be parsed as research connecting bodies at a distance.

AJ's gig is telemedicine - acupuncture at a distance, networks of distributed healing. He comes on real coyote, a trickster, tantric, pantheist, last of the great taxonomists. He cuts the world up into chunks so that we can all connect them. He is the broker, a break beat artist of love, ideas and money whose mix renders the future. His is the path of freedom from fear and attachment to any given outcome, a grinning, laughing mustached bow tie wearing shaman of emerging technologies, brokering and making deals between those two dimensions, past and future.

And yes telebiometrics is both. How old is measurement? Technoscientific culture has a thing for the Greeks as well as the Romans, borrowing letter symbols from the former and naming strategies from the latter ("Homo Sapiens", as a species name, speaks the language of the Roman Empire). Protagoras, the eponymous teacher and "pre-Socratic" philosopher of Plato's dialogue of the same name, offered a definition of human beings as precisely beings of measurement. Socrates samples from him in Plato's Theatetus:

Then you were quite right in affirming that knowledge is only perception; and the meaning turns out to be the same, whether with Homer and Heraclitus, and all that company, you say that all is motion and flux, or with the great sage Protagoras, "that man is the measure of all things";

The irony here is of course extraordinary, perhaps beyond measure. In Socrates' mouth, the word "only" borders on *non compos mentis*: What is "only" a perception about the pixels flickering at me from the screen? Is the celestial blue of today's Central Pennsylvanian sky something meager? Who is the painter who can make of any image of the sea "only" a perception? Burroughs: "There is only one thing a writer can write about: *what is in front of his senses at the moment of writing.*" (NL, 221)⁶

⁶And perhaps not the least of our ironies here is that in one gesture, Socrates transforms Heraclitus, whose foot allegedly never enters the same river twice, into a thinker of the same: "the meaning turns out to be the same, whether with Homer and Heraclitus, and all that company,

This “Factualist” approach transforms the Author into a biometric device, a transcription of sensory information into text. This insistence on being a “recording instrument” does not introduce a faux objectivism into Burroughs's work, which has nothing to do with the “nothing but the facts, mam” attitude of his contemporary Dragnet character whose relentless search for nothing but facts seems to render “nothing but cold war law and order propaganda.” Instead, Burroughs's insistence on being a “recording instrument” reminds us of his paradoxical operation as writer – to continually erase the habitual meanings linking “maps” to “territories.” As a first person recording device, Burroughs is a psychonaut seeking the expansion of consciousness through the interruption of Word Broadcasts:

“I feel that the principal instrument of monopoly and control that prevents expansion of consciousness is the word lines controlling thought feeling and apparent sensory impressions of the human host.”

And “Man is the measure of all things” could be precisely such a “word line”, a definition arresting human being into a human-centric world view that narrows the available bandwidth of consciousness by crowding it with continual measurement. The emerging technologies of biometrics could very well make this the literal definition of human being, as we become nothing but instances of an ongoing measurement – of our consumer preferences, our criminal and libidinal inclinations, and our bloodstreams playing peekaboo with Drug War surveillance gone wild. But in Naked Lunch Burroughs demonstrates a methodology for exhausting and moving beyond this definition of human becoming, reminding us that each of our maps - “man” “is” “the” “measure” “of” “all” “things” - only masquerades as a territory. The act of recording or transcription – the practice formerly known as Authorship – now becomes an exercise in rigorous detachment, beginning with a blast of silence:

The forward step must be made in silence. We detach ourselves from word forms-this can be accomplished by substituting for words, letters, concepts, verbal concepts, other modes of expression; for example, color. We can translate word and letter into color (Rimbaud stated that in his color vowels, words quote "words" can be read in silent color.) In other words man must get away from verbal forms to attain the consciousness, that which is there to be perceived at hand.

And what is “at hand”, of course, is a color: Green. What is at hand now fifty years after Naked Lunch is an ecosystemic distress whose very roots, Burroughs suggests, can be found in our unacknowledged allegiance to a mechanistic model of life, a model tending toward the elimination of affect:

All political organizations tend to function like a machine, to eliminate the unpredictable factor of AFFECT---emotion. Any

you say that all is motion and flux, or with the great sage Protagoras, "that man is the measure of all things";

machine tends to absorb, eliminate, Affect. Yet the only person who can make a machine move is someone who has a motive, who has Affect. If all individuals were conditioned to machine efficiency in the performance of their duties they would have to be at least one person outside the machine to give the necessary orders; if the machine absorbed or eliminated all those outside the machine the machine will slow down and stop forever. Any unchecked impulse does, within the human body & psyche, lead to the destruction of the organism.

Burroughs's friend and fellow life scientist Timothy Leary wrote of Burroughs as an "Intelligence Agent", an agent acting as a local area problem solver for evolution. (Buckminster Fuller) Mobius imagines Burroughs's Intelligence Agent archetype whenever he gets a little bit freaked out by the flickering projector and the idea of a biometric sensor capturing every bodily sign and signal...

"What are You Doing Here? Who Are You?"(NL, 220)

The word "wetware" is highlighted on the screen: "*That aspect of any living system that can be treated as an information system.*" From the perspective of the participants of TC 25/WG 5, this is mobius's word. And some of them don't like it a bit. Makes mobius feel all figure/ground uncertain.

An engineer's stomach reacts and speaks: "Disgusts you to hear it come out of my meathole. Slang. *Not human*. Computer Freak Speak."

A delegate rises to general murmuring. mobius slurps coffee. "It reeks of filthy carbuncle. Makes me sweat an avalanche of ear dross. It'll lead to new standards in rectal leakage. An attack on the Lipid Structure Of the Health State!"

. . . .So instead of yelling "Where am I?" cool it and look around and you will find out approximately. . . .You were not there for *The Beginning*. *You will not be there for The End*. . . .Your knowledge of what is going on can only be superficial and relative. . . .(NL 220)

AJ's tie swells with the silence. mobius moves his mouth only a little to begin the flow: "It's a mnemonic device. Installs a tripartite remembrance module for eternal embodiment remembrance loops, a piece o' string about the designer's finger to remind them of their nature. Hardware, software, wetware. Gotta have all three."

A naked lunch is natural to us

We eat reality sandwiches

But allegories are so much lettuce

Don't hide the madness⁷

⁷Allen Ginsberg, "On Burroughs' Work , Reality Sandwiches, p. 30

