Chapter Three
The 'Glorious Frontier Heritage' in the United States, Mexico and South America, 1946-1953

In the following chapter, Lee's fictional travels, as depicted in *Junky*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*, and Burroughs' own travels, as related in his correspondence, will be examined in more detail. The purpose here is to trace Burroughs' attempts to live out the "glorious frontier" lifestyle in the different locales through which he travelled, and to examine the parallel, though not identical, journey conducted by his protagonist, Lee.[1] The first section primarily addresses the attempts of author and protagonist to farm in the Rio Grande Valley. The Rio Grande Valley will be discussed as an unsuccessful attempt to reinstate the "glorious frontier heritage" for white middle-class American farmers.[2] The second section centres on the representations of Mexico in Burroughs' writing, with particular reference to *Queer*. These representations will be examined as the projections of a white, male, middle-class American. The third section, which is based on *The Yage Letters*, examines Lee's, and Burroughs', expedition into South America, and interest in yagé, in the context of post-war United States economic imperialism. Throughout this chapter, other interrelated border crossings, such as those between 'exile' and 'everyman', and between white American 'self' and racial 'other', will also be discussed.

I: The Lost Frontier in America, 1949-1949

The following section will trace the ways in which Lee's status as junkie allowed him to cross the boundary between marginalized 'exile' and representative 'everyman' within 1950s American society. Initially, Lee's 'everyman' status will be compared with Ishmael's claim, as sailor, to speak for "almost all men."[3] The analysis will then concentrate on the fictionalised account in *Junky* of Burroughs' attempts to farm in the Rio Grande Valley. The Valley will initially be discussed as a representative microcosm of contemporary America society. However, Burroughs' attempts to live out the "glorious frontier" lifestyle in the Rio Grande will be contrasted by Gloria Anzaldúa's observations about the lives of the Mexican wetbacks whose cheap labour was essential to that "frontier" lifestyle.[4]

The Exile as Everyman

As Carolyn Potter notes, Ishmael in *Moby Dick* begins his narrative in the exiled margins, with his opening three words. While he may "proceed to confirm if not his abnormality, at least his eccentricity"[5] by explaining he goes to sea as a "substitute for pistol and ball", by the end of his opening paragraph, Ishmael is suddenly speaking, with some confidence, in the name of "almost all men".[6] There is "nothing surprising", he insists, in taking to sea as a substitute for suicide:

> If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me. [7]

As Potter points out, Ishmael has made a seamless, charming transition from "eccentricity to normality", or from the position of a no-man to the position of an

everyman.[8] It is, Potter concludes, a "pattern" that Ishmael continually repeats, where "boundaries", here the boundary between "outcast" and "society", are "evoked in order to be crossed and finally blurred."[9]

In the Prologue to *Junky*, Lee makes a similar transition, as seamless if not quite so charming, from isolate exile, as illustrated by the initial two pages of the Prologue, to spokesman for all and sundry. As Potter notes, crucial to Ishmael's transition from no-man to every-man is his acquisition of the "social identity of the whaleman".[10] While Ishmael may begin *Moby Dick* as, in Fiedler's description, "a rather absurd greenhorn", fit for "gags and pratfalls"[11], he becomes a whaling authority, and through his discussions of whaling he weaves his wider philosophies. His passionate defence of whaling in "The Advocate", for example, comes to a concluding flourish with the declaration that "a whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard."[12] Similarly, it is Lee's experience with junk that enables him to make the ringing, declarative statements with which his Prologue concludes its performance:

> Junk is a cellular equation that teaches the user facts of general validity [...] I have learned the junk equation. Junk is not, like alcohol or weed, a means to increased enjoyment of life. Junk is not a kick. It is a way of life. (*Junky*/xvi)

Lee becomes the laureate of junk, dispensing junk wisdom, teaching his reader the "junk equation", as if the "spoon and dropper" (*Naked Lunch*/17) had been Lee's "Yale College and [..] Harvard."[13] There is a comic irony to Ishmael's passionate advocacy of whaling, and thereby his position as every-man, for, as he himself notes, he is still speaking for "socially marginal outcasts", whose trade "has somehow come to be regarded as a rather unpoetical and disreputable pursuit."[14] Lee faces a similar problem in convincing his reader of the validity of his observations, for if whaling was considered "rather unpoetical", junk was, as Geoff Ward writes, "inseparable in the public mind from serious criminality."[15] What is it, then, that Lee and Ishmael have learnt at their respective universities of life, that allows them to speak for "almost all

men"?[16]

What junk has taught Lee is that everybody is in a condition of isolate exile. "I have seen", Lee writes, "a cell full of sick junkies silent and immobile in separate misery. They knew the pointlessness of complaining or moving. They knew that basically no one can help anyone else." (*Junky*/xvi) Likewise, Ishmael describes his fellow whalers as "*Isolatoes*", each "living on a separate continent of his own."[17] Ishmael's vision of alienation gives way seamlessly, however, to a vision of community. The whalers, he declares, are a "Anacharsis Clootz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth", a global gathering of men "federated along one keel" of the Pequod.[18] According to Stephen Fredman, writing in *The Grounding of American Poetry*, a shifting dialectic between the condition of "self-exile" and everyman can be seen as "a constitutive quality of the American character", since "one can state with conviction that people have come to America, for the most part, by consciously exiling themselves from a native land."[19] The status of the exile in American society is therefore paradoxical: it is Lee's and Ishmael's condition of exile that forms the basis of their status as representative figures, that link them to the "Anacharsis Clootz deputation" of men.[20]

To be linked by other people only by mutual isolation is not always a cause for celebration, however. In the Mexico City section of *Junky*, with Lee sitting in Lola's bar listening to other people's conversations, the condition of personal exile and isolation widens out to encompass the entire universe:

> The conversations had a nightmare flatness, talking dice spilled in the tube metal chairs, human aggregates disintegrating in cosmic insanity, random events in a dying universe. (*Junky*/139)

Junk here has become, as Will Self suggests, a "synecdoche" by which Burroughs can explore the "being of man" in a far larger context than that of the withdrawing addict in a cafe.[21] As Timothy S. Murphy notes in his essay "William Burroughs Between

Indifference and Revalorization: notes towards a political reading", *Junky* and *Queer* can be read as "points of departure for an exacting critique of the social organization of late capital", with the "addict and the homosexual" serving "not as pathologies or deviances from a transhistorical norm, but as specific subjective structures formed in the interstices of capital".[22] Similarly, the socially marginalized figure of the sailor, in *Moby Dick*, also reflected back on economic realities on land. In *Call Me Ishmael*, for example, Charles Olson reminds us of the "part the chase of the whale played" in the "American economy."[23] "Don't think", Olson argues, that "whaling was any different from any other American industry."[24] According to William Spanos, Melville's "insistent descriptions and analyses of the economics, labor relations, and production and consumption processes of whaling make it overwhelmingly clear that whaling is an American capitalist industrial enterprise and the whale ship is a American capitalist factory".[25] In its illegality, and its connection to the criminal underworld, junk seems, even more than whaling, to be a very separate business, entirely unrelated to wider American concerns, and the narrative of *Junky*, in its obsessive engagement with junk, seems to block out other issues and perspectives. Junk itself, like the language that goes with it, is nearly everywhere in the text.

Consider, for example, the following sequence:

> 103rd and Broadway looks like any other Broadway block. A cafeteria, a movie, stores. In the middle of Broadway is an island with some grass and benches placed at intervals. 103rd is a subway stop, a crowded block. This is junk territory. Junk haunts the cafeteria, roams up and down the block, sometimes half-crossing Broadway to rest on one of the island benches. A ghost in daylight on a crowded street. (*Junky*/28-9)

In this passage, as elsewhere in the text, the representation of junk is constantly shifting. Junk is always a material object, a commodity, from the first glimpse of "a flat yellow box with five on-half grain syrettes of morphine tartrate." (*Junky*/2). Here, however, it is also a poetic abstraction ("Junk haunts the cafeteria") that in the course of a sentence becomes an individual junkie "half-crossing Broadway to rest on one of

the island benches." (*Junky*/29) The image of this junkie, juxtaposed against the "crowded street" of Broadway, becomes a personification of junk, a "ghost in daylight". (*Junky*/29) Distinctions are blurred here, as junk becomes inseparable from the junkie, who in turn is inseparable from his/her environment: "This is junk territory." (*Junky*/29)

Faced with this all-consuming junky world, the reader may wish to assert its difference from the 'ordinary' reality of New York or America: this is *not* junk territory. The narrative of *Junky*, however, is careful to problematise such a separation. The description of "junk territory" quoted above, for example, begins thus: "103rd and Broadway looks like any Broadway block. A cafeteria, a movie, stores [...] 103rd is a subway stop, a crowded block." (*Junky*/28-9) The prose is here describing "103rd and Broadway" as it might appear to an "ordinary" America: a "subway stop", part of New York's vast transportation system, connected to the rest of the city, full of people passing through. (*Junky*/29) "103rd and Broadway", however, while a "subway stop" to the 'ordinary' American, is also a point of "connection" for the junky, linking the buyer to the seller, the junk to the junky. (*Junky*/28-9) The source of the heroin that ends up on 103rd and Broadway is "Mexico, where there were poppy fields tended by Chinese." (*Junky*/28) The junk travels along "lines of communication" undetected by the 'ordinary' American. The seller is as inconspicuous as the buyers: he sits waiting "at a table in the cafeteria. You gave him money at the table, and meet him around the corner three minutes later when he would deliver the junk." (*Junky*/29) The image of the "ghost in daylight on a crowded street" (*Junky*/29) is a juxtaposition of two worlds, apparently very different, and yet inextricably linked. As Burroughs explained to Ginsberg, the "line between legitimate and criminal activity" had "broken down since the war."[26] The process by which junk travels from the poppy field to the bloodstream of the junky, while not conspicuous to

the 'ordinary' American, is not therefore separate from an 'ordinary' reality. In "The Valley" section of *Junky* the distinctions between "legitimate and criminal activity" are undermined, since Burroughs employs the same model used to represent the hierarchical world of junk to describe the economics of farming in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Valley

The naming of the "strip" of potential farming land "sixty miles long and twenty miles wide" as the "Valley" lends the Rio Grande sequence a mythic, representative quality. (*Junky*/105) The Valley is described as a microcosm of America, as if "the worst features of America had drained down to the Valley and concentrated there." (*Junky*/108) The Valley is a small economic world, subject to the law of diminishing returns. Since there is no "human element" to interfere with its inexorable logic, the Valley, "like a formula in high school algebra", is headed to its exponential conclusion: "The very rich are getting richer, and all the others are going broke." (*Junky*/108) The Valley therefore resembles the predatorial, hierarchical system of junk, in which every level feeds on the one below it, while itself relying upon, and indeed, being eaten, by the level above it. In *Junky*, for example, Bill Gains is described as a "mere parish priest" in the "hierarchy of junk" , who speaks with "sepulchral awe" of the level above him: "The connections say ..." (*Junky*/42)

The close relationship between the economic world of the Valley and the hierarchy of junk is suggested by the specific example of a Valley resident: "Gary West [...] from Minneapolis. (*Junky*/106) West buys a plot of land in the Valley and is unable to leave it, like a junky unable to leave junk behind. He "would run like a

hooked fish until the drag of his dying cells tired him out, and the Valley reeled him in [...]" (*Junky*/107) West is addicted to the Valley, and like the junkies in Lexington, his conversation always returns obsessively to the only thing that was real to him. Listening to West talk, "you got the uncanny feeling that places like Milwaukee didn't exist." (*Junky*/107) The erosion of West's individuality through his addiction to the Valley echoes the erosions caused by junk. The "103rd Street boys", junkie "oldtimers", "were of various nationalities and physical types, but they all looked alike somehow. They all looked like junk." (*Junkie*/30)

This erosion of selfhood was not restricted to junkies and inhabitants of the Valley, however. John Patrick Diggins, in *The Proud Decades* (1988), cites two key texts, written in the 1950s, concerning the "fate of the individual in modern mass society."[27] William H.Whyte's *The Organisation Man* (1956) stressed that the most important goal for an American was "to be well-liked", which meant "adjusting one's behaviour to the demands of the larger community."[28] In *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), David Riesman claimed that "mid-twentieth century America" was "shifting profoundly" from "one social-character structure to another."[29] The "tradition-directed man" of "preindustrial communities", and the "inner-directed man" of the "nineteenth century age of capitalism" had given way to the "other-directed" man of "modern mass society", who "received his attitudes and values from his peer group or from the dictates of society itself."[30] The "other directed" man "feared being different, even feared being too successful."[31] Similarly, the sociologist Erving Goffman, in his book *Asylums* (1959), made a study of "total institutions", that is, places such as "prisons, mental hospitals, monasteries, ships at sea", in which "behaviour was monitored and controlled", and where "the inmates developed theatrical role-playing strategies as a means of 'adjustment' to the loss of autonomous self-hood."[32] The recurrent suggestion of Goffman's book was that modern corporations and bureaucracies, with their

"demands for an endlessly manipulable [...] personality", were creating "the same kind of fragmented personae that appeared in total institutions."[33] Likewise, faced with his publisher's demands for a "biographical note", Burroughs wrote that he "felt like a personnel manager just said, 'Tell me about yourself.'"[34] Burroughs' response to this external pressure, urging him to present "an endlessly manipulable personality", was the "fragmented personae" he presented instead to Ginsberg.[35]

The depiction of the Rio Grande Valley in *Junky* reflected the substantial gap between the myth of the American frontier and the contemporary politics and economics of the American West. In the Valley, the "small farmers" were preyed upon by the "Big Holders", who "own all the Valley banks". (*Junky*/108-9) Therefore, when the small farmers go bankrupt, as they inevitably do, the land goes to the "Valley banks", and therefore to the "Big Holders". (*Junky*/109) "Soon", writes Lee, "the Big Holders will own the Valley." (*Junky*/109) The invulnerable position of the "Big Holders" emerged out of what Richard Maxwell Brown terms the "Western Civil War of Incorporation"[36]. The process of "incorporation", which was "well under way by 1870 and lasted to 1920", was conducted in the name of "the conservative, consolidating authority of capital".[37] The period was marked by intermittently bloody struggles between the incorporationists, and those who resisted the process of incorporation: a "coalition of small ranchers and cowboy outlaws"[38] and "dissident, often radical, labor unionists".[39] The conservative side emerged from this struggle, in the 1920s, "strongly victorious".[40]

The presence in the Valley of "Border Patrols", who shut off the small farmer from their source of cheap labour, the Mexican "wetbacks", reflected the increasing role played by the Federal government in the American West. (*Junky*/106) According to Carl Abbott, through the course of the twentieth century the federal presence became "more active and omnipresent than nineteenth-century pioneers could have

imagined", and this has had a "powerful effect" on the "'independent' and 'individualistic'" traditions of the West.[41] The descendants of those westerners who had upheld the "ethic of individual enterprise" now found themselves "dependent on farm supports, subsidized water, defence contracts, and mass-transit grants."[42] Burroughs' letters to Ginsberg express his dismay at the changes that increased federalization had brought. Just as Lee's use of junk was a magnet to "the Federals" (*Junky*/56), Burroughs attempts to farm in the Rio Grande Valley brought "Border Patrol Agents deporting our Field Hands" and "D of A Bureaucrats telling us what, where and when to plant."[43] As far as Burroughs was concerned, these "obscenity bunch of bureaucrats" were the "Wrath of God", although "us farmers have other names for it."[44] "What ever happened", he asked, "to our glorious Frontier heritage of minding ones own business. The Frontiersman has shrunk to a wretched, interfering, Liberal bureaucrat."[45] In describing the federal bureaucracy as "cancer on the political body of this country which no longer belongs to its citizens"[46], Burroughs employed the "rhetorical figure", seen by Jonathan Paul Eburne as being symptomatic of the demonisation of the other in Cold War America, of a "festering and highly contagious disease which threatened the national 'body' with pollution."[47] Patricia Limerick, however, while also using the metaphor of disease, argues that if the economy of the American West "suffered from a systemic imbalance - a sort of economic diabetes", then "federal money" was the "insulin" that "kept the system working."[48] As Limerick suggests, the notion that federalization was a restrictive agency has formed an part of the "sense of victimization" expressed by white American farmers.[49] Indeed, Limerick argues that white American history has been "composed of one continuous fabric", in which "the figure of the innocent victim is the dominant motif".[50] Burroughs evocation of the "glorious frontier heritage", now lost to federal bureaucracy, recalls, as has been suggested, Renato Rosaldo's notion of "imperialist nostalgia", by which

the "agent of colonialism long for the very forms of life that they", or their own precursors, "intentionally altered or destroyed."[51]

According to Limerick, another "category of injured innocent" was the farmer who had "believed and acted upon the promises of promoters and boomers."[52] In *Junky*, the Valley is described as having been set up by "real estate operators" who "brought trainloads of prospects" in the 1920s, claiming that citrus farming was a "flawless set-up for old people who want to retire and take life easy." (*Junky*/105) One of these "pioneer promoters" even "constructed a large artificial lake" and sold off plots around it, promising that the lake would irrigate the crops. (*Junky*/105) Having received his money, the "promoter" disappeared with his "artificial lake". (*Junky*/105) This disappearing trick left the "prospects" facing arid desert, and the "premonition of doom". (*Junky*/106) Lee's prophecy that the Valley, once a "desert", will "be a desert again", reflected what to Patricia Limerick has been one of the continuities in the history of the American West: the aridity of the area, and its consequences for its inhabitants. The early white pioneers, Limerick argues, "knew that water was a scarce resource" in the West, and made "hard choices" on that basis.[53] It was later pioneers who brought the "vision that American water" could "finally submit to the masterful American will."[54] William Ellsworth Smythe, who had seen the effects of drought in Nebraska in 1890 and was, according to Limerick "one of the most articulate and tireless advocates of irrigation", foresaw "two tracks of trouble converge in American history".[55] Firstly, beyond the "ninety-eighth meridian" on the North American continent, "precipitation becomes insufficient to support agriculture", which meant that "westward expansion" beyond that point would be "defeated" by the arid conditions. Secondly, the "growth and consolidation of big business" meant that the "native middle-class professional" was both "threatened from below by immigrants",[56] and from above by the "Big Holders". (*Junky*/108)

The perspective that Lee has on the Valley is very much that of the "middle-class" farmer "getting the squeeze." (*Junky*/108) Smythe saw the middle class farmer as a "surplus man", who risked being "outmoded by the trends of the time."[57] Smythe's "crusade for federal support for irrigation" was intended to open a "new frontier" for the "surplus man", both in terms of "geographical expansion" and "in opportunity for those penned up and in need of a refuge."[58] However, this "haven for the beleaguered middle class" became home to "agribusiness and suburban sprawl."[59] The Valley is described in *Junky* as a "vast suburb of flimsy houses", with "the impermanent look of a camp, or carnival." (*Junky*/105)

In the 1930s, the white American agribusiness corporations removed the last of the small Chicano landowners, and hired the Mexicans to irrigate the land. As Anzaldúa notes in *Borderlands|La Frontera*, the Mexicans were forced to watch land that had once belonged to them being scraped "clean of natural vegetation".[60] Anzaldúa remembers, from her own childhood, the "end of dryland farming", seeing "the land cleared" and "the huge pipes" being "connected to underwater sources sticking up in the air".[61] In the 1950s, she watched the land being "cut up into thousands of neat rectangles and squares, constantly being irrigated."[62] In the "340-day growth season", the "seeds of any kind of fruit or vegetable had only to be stuck in the ground in order to grow."[63] According to Limerick, the use of "accelerated pumping", which to earlier Western historians like Walter Prescott Webb had seemed an "intelligent adaptation to arid land", has depleted the "groundwater", and while there is some disagreement as to the rate of depletion, Limerick concludes that the "Ogallala aquifer underneath much of the Great Plains is shrinking, facing exhaustion sometime in the next few decades."[64] Lee's prophecy about the Valley's reversion to a "desert" therefore has some credence.

Anzaldúa concludes *Borderlands|La Frontera* with a similar prophecy, though

here the prophecy also concerns the return of the area to its rightful owners: "This land was Mexican once / was Indian always / and is. / And will be again."[65] Anzaldúa traces the history of the Texas/Mexico borderlands as far back as 35000 B.C, claiming that traces of her "ancient Indian ancestors" had been found there, representing the "oldest evidence of humankind in the U.S."[66] After the Spanish invasion of Mexico at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Spaniards and the remainder of the Indian population of Mexico "explored and settled parts of the U.S. Southwest."[67] As Anzaldúa points out, this was a period of complex racial fusion in the Texas area between Spaniards, Indians, and American Indians.[68]

In the early 1800s, however, the "Anglos migrated illegally into Texas", which at that point was still part of Mexico, and in 1846 the U.S. - Mexican war began. Mexico was forced to "give up almost half of her nation", and the U.S. gained the states of "Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California."[69] In 1848, a new borderline was established, and 100,000 Mexicans were stranded on the U.S. side of the border. They were, writes Anzaldúa, "jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed", and separated from their identity and history.[70] Mexican-American resistance to the Anglos was not tolerated. After a Chicano group robbed a train in Brownsville, Texas in 1915, a hundred Chicanos were killed and 20,000 army troops were brought in.[71]

The presence of the Mexican labourers in the Rio Grande Valley was another important aspect of the politics and economics of the contemporary American West. According to Patricia Limerick, the extension of the railroad system into the Southwest had lead to "heavy labour demands", and this encouraged companies to recruit Mexican labourers, who were contracted and transported across the border into the United States "in cheerful defiance of the federal laws prohibiting the importation of contract labor."[72] The railroads, and especially the "refrigerated car", along with the

"rise of Southwest irrigation", also "made the exportation of fruits and vegetables possible", and this "set off a new phase of agribusiness."[73] As a "respectable farmer" in the Rio Grande Valley, Burroughs was expected to violate the law by employing "Mexican laborers who enter the Country illegally with our aid and connivance."[74] Indeed, an important part of appeal of the Rio Grande Valley was its proximity to the Mexican border, and therefore to cheap Mexican labour. It was, Burroughs told Ginsberg by letter, "one of the few remaining areas of cheap labor in the U.S.A."[75] The "only alternative" to hiring Mexican labourers was "mechanization", which required a "large initial outlay for expensive equipment and processing plants."[76] If small farmers had to "pay a living wage for labor", Burroughs argued, "they would be ruined."[77]

While the letters Burroughs wrote during his stay in the "Valley" give vent to a bullish expression of his individual rights, they are also clear-eyed about the ambiguity of his own position. Burroughs noted, for example, that the "'civil liberties' of " the Mexican wetbacks "are violated repeatedly": they are "often kept on the job at the point of a gun [...]" and workers who attempt to walk out "are shot."[78] In a newspaper article that Burroughs sent to Ginsberg, a U.S. immigration official alleges that the "100,000 Mexican farm laborers now in Texas" were being "forced to work 'in a virtual state of peonage.'"[79] "Personally", Burroughs concluded of his role as "professional farmer", "I find pushing junk a great deal more restful and less compromising from an ethical standpoint."[80] As his experience as a farmer proved, taking up a "regular" job did not mean that he now lived within the law, merely that his "present violations" of that law were "condoned by a corrupt government."[81] A "regular job" required "a constant state of pretense and dissimulation".[82] The "necessity of a continual misrepresentation of one's personality", in other words, "lying", was particularly "urgent" in "such lines as radio, advertising, publicity and, of course, television."[83] "Most everybody in business", Burroughs claimed, "violates the

law every day."[84] Burroughs' experience as a farmer in the Rio Grande had convinced him that there was little difference between the two supposedly separate, "legitimate" and "criminal" worlds.[85]

The Limits of Exile

Throughout *Junky*, the reader is faced with an 'exiled' experience - the isolation, the consumerist longings, the dubious illegalities of the junky, the exile's status as a marginalized 'no-man' - that continually echoes the 'mainstream' experience of the American 'everyman'. However, Lee's wise words about junk ("You need a good bedside manner with doctors or you will get nowhere") have a parodic quality, undercutting the earnestness of their tone. (*Junky*/21) Similarly, Ishmael's proclamation that a "whaleship was my Yale College and my Harvard" signals a voice that is simultaneously profoundly serious and deeply ironic.[86] The transition between 'eccentricity' and 'normality' that Ishmael makes within the opening paragraph of *Moby Dick* serves, as Carolyn Potter claims, to "undermine our most basic and fixed assumptions and beliefs, to destabilize our culturally inscribed patterns of perception".[87] Ishmael is also, however, continually making the transition back from 'normality' to 'eccentricity', or from 'every-man' to 'no-man'. At such moments, having lured the reader into seeing whaling as a microcosm of everything, Ishmael as 'every-man' then disappears before the reader's eyes, and whaling becomes, once more, a "rather unpoetical pursuit" with little significance beyond itself. (*Moby Dick*/98)

A similar dialectic between 'every-man' and 'no-man' is discernible within *Junky*. In the Prologue to *Junky*, for example, junk is described as a "cellular equation that teaches the user facts of general validity", an observation that suggests that junk can provide a key to life, a means of understanding mainstream experience through

marginalized experience. (*Junky*/xvi) Yet, what junk in fact teaches Lee is that "there is no key, no secret someone else has that he can give you." (*Junky*/xvi) Lee is careful to describe junk as not a key to life, but a "way of life", one way, presumably, amongst many. (*Junky*/xvi) The conclusion to *Junky*, with the expression of Lee's hope that he "will find in yage" what he was "looking for in junk", further demonstrates that Lee as junky has disappeared, and that the lessons that junk has taught him, and that he has passed on to his reader, are not necessarily universally applicable. (*Junky*/152)

The extent to which Lee's, and Burroughs', position is specific rather than universal becomes clearer when Burroughs' use of the phrase "glorious frontier heritage" is examined in more detail.[88] As has been noted, Burroughs, following Jack Black, made investigations into the American criminal underworld. Throughout *Junky* there are traces of this version of the American frontier-myth: the frontier as location for old-fashioned, romanticised criminality.[89] Burroughs' correspondence, however, reveals his more conventional attempts to live out the "frontier" lifestyle. As has been noted, Smythe had advocated the irrigation of the "desert West" to provide a "new frontier" of "geographical expansion" and new opportunities for the white middle-class farmer,[90] and it was Burroughs' frustrated attempts to live out Smythe's dream that lead to his lament, written in a letter to Allen Ginsberg from Mexico City, for the "glorious frontier heritage of minding ones own business."[91] The notion of a "glorious frontier heritage" was specific to white Americans. William G. Robbins quotes David Weber's observation that in Mexico "there has been no counterpart to the American idealization of frontier life. No myth about the salubrious impact of the frontier exists on which a Mexican Turner might construct a credible intellectual edifice."[92] While to white Americans westward expansion meant "a persistently advancing frontier" and "ever greater riches", to Mexicans it carried "nearly opposite meanings."[93]

If Burroughs' attempt to farm in the Rio Grande were brief and unsuccessful, his correspondence makes clear that he tried hard to live out the "glorious frontier" lifestyle.[94] According to Richard Maxwell Brown, there was a "cluster of beliefs" that were "mentally programmed" into the psyche of the white inhabitants of the American West, and were related to their tendency to "commit violence".[95] These central beliefs were "the doctrine of no retreat; the imperative of personal self-redress; the homestead ethic; the ethic of individual enterprise; the Code of the West; and the ideology of vigilantism."[96] Many of these beliefs were expressed in Burroughs' attempt to live out the frontier lifestyle.

Throughout this period, Burroughs was true, in his own idiosyncratic fashion, to the "ethic of individual enterprise".[97] Burroughs' intellectual allegiance to the individualistic ethic is clear from his letters to Ginsberg and Kerouac.[98] The "only *possible* ethic", Burroughs told Kerouac, "is what one *wants* to do."[99] However, in practice, his attempts to live out the frontier ethic were doomed to be comic, futile, and even tragic. After his first arrest in New York, fictionally depicted in *Junky* (pp. 26-8), Burroughs was sent home to stay with his parents in St. Louis for the summer. While there, Burroughs and his friend Kells Elvins "dreamed up various moneymaking schemes"[100], including, as Burroughs explained in a letter to Allen Ginsberg, the sale of "fluoride tablets for tooth decay": "Death Country Bill's Tooth and Bone Tablets from the Country Without a Toothache."[101] According to Ted Morgan, Burroughs saw himself as a "crusader for 'white suit'-type products", products, that is, that would replace all previous products, such as "concrete houses that would last forever, fluoride mouthwashes that would do away with cavities."[102] He wrote to Ginsberg claiming that he would be giving all his attention to "patent medicines and household appliances."[103] As Ted Morgan points out, Burroughs was "reverting, in his imagination at least, to the ambitions of his paternal grandfather".[104]

Burroughs' grandfather, the original William Seward Burroughs, inventor of the adding machine, had been a prime exponent of the frontier spirit. His life had been "a parable of entrepreneurial capitalism in the land of limitless opportunity", where "anything was possible, where a young man, hard-working and inventive, could, in a decade, make a fortune and found a great corporation."[105] Burroughs' own attempt to live out that myth ended, inevitably, in bathos. "This patent medicine deal", Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg, "is one long beef with the Pure Food and Drug Dept."[106] The first William Seward Burroughs had belonged to a different world, and no longer was America a "land of limitless opportunity".[107] This pattern of optimism and frustration would mark all of Burroughs' attempts to live out the frontier dream.[108]

By October 1946, Burroughs announced that he was planning to "spend the winter" in New Waverly, Texas, where money was "to be made like picking fruit off the trees. Grapefruit that is."[109] He was going into the "mail order citrus business."[110] He was also, as his letters make clear, growing opium and marijuana.[111] Having taken a loss on his marijuana crop, Burroughs left New Waverly for New Orleans, where he "bought some farm land in the Rio Grande Valley".[112] He felt sure, he wrote to Ginsberg, that he would "bring in a sizable bundle of gelts come cotton picking time."[113] By May 1947, Burroughs felt able to describe himself, in a letter to Jack Keroauc, as a "professional farmer", before offering his "few words on the subject of buying a farm."[114] In an earlier letter to Kerouac, Burroughs had even gone so far as to describe himself as one of the "sons of the soil".[115] In fact, as Burroughs admitted to Ginsberg, this particular "son of the soil" provided the capital, while someone else was "doing the work on a share basis."[116] There was no realization here of one key aspect of the white American frontier mythology: the profound and fulfilling connection to the earth and to the world of nature. Burroughs and his partner, Kells Elvins, "incorporated" their "holdings", "bought" their "equipment", "hired a

manager", and then sat back and waited for the money to roll in.[117]

Burroughs' letters express a continual booster optimism. "My farming enterprise", Burroughs wrote, "looks very good. [...] Should realize about $15,000 clear for each of us in the next 6 months."[118] A month later, Burroughs claimed that in these "inflation times" he "couldn't be in a better spot."[119] The pea crop was due "in about a week", the lettuce and carrots were "coming along", and there was a mysterious "oil deal on", which promised "quick $."[120] "Make everything pay", Burroughs claimed, "is my motto."[121] Burroughs' letters, however, also detail, if somewhat begrudgingly, the gap between his high hopes for his farm ("I expect at least $2000 for my cut of 30 acres of carrots which are about ready to come off") and the disappointing realities: "Just received call from McAllen. $500 for my share, and lucky to get that. Bottom fell out of carrots [...]".[122]

In New Orleans, Burroughs became embroiled in a "feud" with his "nabors", who he described as "a termite nest of Dagos".[123] Here, Burroughs was true to what Richard Maxwell Brown calls the "doctrine of no duty to retreat".[124] "I'm ready", Burroughs assured Jack Kerouac, "I've got enough guns here to stand off a siege. Shooting is my principal pastime."[125] As Brown suggests, "violent behaviour" in the American West was closely linked to the "grass-roots doctrine" of the "homestead ethic".[126] Although Burroughs was continually uprooting, he did also attempt to set up a traditional homestead. In New Orleans, for example, he planned to build "a sort of hunting lodge" in a "piece of swamp I bought."[127] He also pledged allegiance to the related code of "masculine honour" that was prevalent in the American West.[128] In a letter dated January 11th, 1951, sent from Mexico City, Burroughs explained to Ginsberg that he was "responsible not only" for himself, but also "for Joan and the children."[129] He had an "absolute duty to place their welfare high on the priority list."[130] Further, he had "not only the right, but the duty to carry a gun and protect my person

against any attack that might deprive my family of support."[131]

Discerning the seriousness of these adopted personas is problematic. A dry humour permeates these letters, as with all of Burroughs' writing, and there is a clear element of performance and parody to Burroughs' bullishness. "Its almost impossible to get anyone to do anything", he ends an exasperated letter to Kerouac about a variety of forms of governmental interference.[132] "Unions! That's the trouble, Unions!"[133] However, despite the performative nature of his correspondence and his 'marginalized' status as junkie and homosexual, Burroughs was still inextricably linked to the 'mainstream' values of middle-class American society. Part of the attraction of living in Mexico City, Burroughs would later write, was that "the cops recognize you as their superior and would never venture to stop or question a well dressed upper class character like myself."[134] Similarly, despite his adoption of the status of exile, Fiedler's white American protagonist, a "renegade from respectability and belongingness", nonetheless, has ties to the "reigning race and class."[135] Burroughs' fictional protagonist, Lee, describes his fellow addict Bill Gains as a "vague respectable presence", the "typical upper middle class citizen" taken to an invisible extreme. (*Junky*/41) This description of Gains has, of course, considerable resonance for Lee himself. The "upper middle class citizen" may well be, like Bill Gains, a "composite of negatives", but, importantly, he retains his "vague respectable presence." (*Junky*, 41) The distinction is important, since the frameworks of American, and Mexican society relied on stark divisions based on class, race and gender.

The extent to which Lee's perspective is specific rather than universal is further clarified when his perspective on the Rio Grande Valley and the U.S.-Mexican border is placed in the context of other, non-white, perspectives. As Sarah Deutsch, George J.Sánchez and Gary Y.Okihiro point out in their essay "Contemporary People/Contested Places", the "southern border of the United States", the end result of

the 1846-48 Mexican-American War, is "one of the longest continuous borders shared by two nations".[136] Those "two nations" are strikingly different in terms of economic status. Although Mexican culture remained dominant in the U.S./Mexico borderlands up to and beyond the turn of this century, Anglo-Americans began to assume positions of political and economic power after 1848, and in 1917 the U.S. Congress acted to make immigration across the border difficult. In 1922, a Labour Department official had noted that the "average unskilled Mexican alien" would cross the border into the United States as if he were only visiting "an unknown portion of his own country ... To him there is no real or imaginary line."[137] The introduction of new restrictions, such as a literacy test, a medical examination, and a head tax, did nothing to deter "undocumented immigration from Mexico."[138] The introduction of a "Border Patrol", in 1924, however, was crucial in defining the Mexican as the "other", the "alien" of the region. "Eventually", write Deutsch, Sánchez and Okihiro, "crossing the border became a painful and abrupt event permeated by an atmosphere of racism and control - an event that clearly demarcated one society from another."[139]

These demarcations are clear from the depictions of the U.S. Mexico border-crossings in Burroughs' and Anzaldúa's writing. In *Junky*, Lee arrives in the Rio Grande Valley "in the post-cure drag", with "no appetite and no energy". (*Junky*/109) After a summer of farming cotton, Lee leaves the Valley, giving economic reasons: the high "operating costs and the high cost of living [...] took most of the profit." (*Junky*/110) Appropriately enough, his decision to "pull out of the Valley" (*Junky*/110) is also a decision to leave America, to go not West, but South. Lee decides "to take steps to remain in Mexico when I got there." (*Junky*/111) The "Mexican wetbacks" that Anzuldúa describe make this border-crossing in reverse, although also for "economic reasons."[140] Since they cannot use the bridges, they "float on inflatable rafts across *el Río Grande* or wade or swim across naked, clutching their

clothes over their heads."[141] If caught by the "Border Patrol vans", they are "handcuffed, locked in jeeps, and then kicked back across the border."[142] One out of three illegal border-crossers are caught. They "return to enact their rite of passage as many as three times a day." Some who make it across "fall prey to Mexican robbers".[143] A woman making this border crossing must "contend not only with sexual violence, but like all women, she is prey to a sense of physical helplessness."[144] She must leave "the familiar and safe homeground to venture into unknown and possibly dangerous terrain."[145] In this, of course, her journey echoes that of the white male American protagonist, although her economic and social status are very different. These differences will be examined in the following section on the representations of Mexico in Burroughs' writing.

II Mexico, 1949-1952

In the following section, an examination will be made into the attitude of both Lee and Burroughs regarding the border-crossing into Mexico. As Oliver Harris writes, Burroughs' own move to Mexico City in 1949 anticipated his "expeditions into Central and South America", "geographic movements south" that were "regressions in time, quests in older cultures, hotter climes, for mythical America's 'glorious Frontier heritage.'"[146] Arriving in Mexico City, Burroughs observed, evidently with some pleasure, that conditions were "about where the U.S. was in 1880."[147] The move into Mexico was clearly an attempt to leave the United States behind, to escape its "ever-increasing interference in the business of each citizen".[148]. "What a relief", Burroughs wrote in a letter to Jack Kerouac, "to be rid of the U.S. for good and all, and to be in this fine free country!"[149] However, when Burroughs', and Lee's, travels into Mexico are viewed in the context of post-war United States economic and foreign policy, the solitary "renegade from respectability and belongingness" becomes part of a wider United States expansion into Mexico and South America.[150] Indeed, the depictions of Mexico in Burroughs' fiction and correspondence betray a white American horror and fascination for the racial other.

The Ugly Spirit

As has already been noted, Burroughs Introduction to *Queer* retrospectively alters the reader's response to the main text by asserting the centrality of an event outside of the text itself: the "accidental shooting" of his wife, Joan Vollmer, in "September 1951." (*Queer*/14) The particular details of this tragic event are outside the remit of this study. However, Burroughs' interpretation of his own text does help

to clarify the political and historical context in which the text was written. Burroughs' Introduction to *Queer* refers to the presence of an "ugly spirit", which, Burroughs suggests, "shot Joan". (*Queer*/15) In March 1992, Burroughs attempted "to evict" this "ugly spirit", and this exorcism, referred to briefly in *My Education*, is described in more detail in an account written by Allen Ginsberg, printed in *The Observer* magazine and reiterated in Barry Miles' *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*.[151] Some of Burroughs' descriptions of this "ugly spirit" suggest an unspecific, timeless source of evil.[152] In his informal interview with Ginsberg following the attempted exorcism, however, Burroughs explained the ugly spirit in an historically and politically specific context. It was, Burroughs felt strongly, "very much related to the American Tycoon. To William Randolph Hearst, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, that whole stratum of American acquisitive evil. Monopolistic, acquisitive evil. Ugly evil. The ugly American [...] at his ugly worst."[153] It contained, he claimed, the "whole of American capitalism", the "C.I.A.", but in particular "William Randolph Hearst", who Ginsberg describes as "the word man, the original image-manipulator."[154] Ginsberg raised the possibility that the ugly spirit was "a family thing from Burroughs".[155] Such an interpretation seems at least understandable, given the Burroughs family's links with large scale American capital. Burroughs, however, insisted that such an explanation was "not necessarily correct."[156]

Although Burroughs denies an explicit connection to his own family, this particular identification of the "ugly spirit" does suggest, to quote Michael Paul Rogin's observation on Melville, Burroughs' sense of his own implication in the "decisive issues" of the white American society into which he was born.[157] Indeed, comparing the "decisive issues" in which Melville was "implicated", the "racial confrontations of antebellum America, Manifest Destiny, and slavery", with those represented by Burroughs' identification of the "ugly spirit", which is linked to the rise

of the mass media and of large scale entrepreneurial capitalism, suggests the important transitions made through a hundred years of white American history.[158] These transitions provide an important political and historical context for the fictional journeys into Mexico and South America depicted in *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*, and for Burroughs' own journeys through these areas, as recounted in his correspondence.

In Michael Paul Rogin's account, while Herman Melville "entered literature", with *Typee*, as "a spokesman for the aboriginal victims of Manifest Destiny", his brother Gansevoort "advocated the political sweep of America across the continent and to the shores of Asia."[159] As Charles Olson suggests, the extraordinary momentum of Manifest Destiny was written into *Moby Dick*, with "whaling" representing "FRONTIER, and INDUSTRY", and the Pacific as its "sweat-shop".[160] *Moby Dick* also addressed Melville's Calvinistic heritage. As Ann Douglas notes, while the "inscrutable thing" that drives Ahab towards revenge is "hardly the specific theological entity of earlier Calvinist creeds", it is "hardly less terrifying, less impressive, or even less Calvinist", for its "amorphousness and inaccessibility."[161] The demise of Calvinism, as traced by Douglas in *The Feminization of American Culture*, was hastened by the rise of "liberal Protestantism", which was critiqued in *Moby Dick*.[162] The role of Captains Peleg and Bildad as "major shareholders" of the Pequod suggest, as William V. Spanos notes, the authorization and legitimisation of the "capitalist spirit" by "New England Protestant theology".[163] Indeed, as Douglas notes, the transition to liberal Protestantism occurred in parallel with the "transformation of the American economy into the most powerfully aggressive capitalist system in the world."[164] In *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1986), Paul Kennedy notes that "even before the outbreak of the Civil War", the United States was already an "economic giant".[165] After the Civil War, the expanding nation was able to "exploit" its "many advantages": "rich agricultural land, vast raw materials, and the marvelously

convenient evolution of modern technology".[166] The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century saw a period of accelerated growth, and the consolidation of large companies, such as J.P.Morgan's "colossal organization" the United States Steel Corporation.[167] It was in this period of rapid capitalist expansion, described by Alan Trachtenberg as the "incorporation" of America, that Vanderbilt and Rockefeller flourished, and William Randolph Hearst built up his newspaper empire.[168]

As Michael Paul Rogin notes, at the "origins" of the "capitalistic world system" in the sixteenth century, capitalism, imperialism and slavery were "symbiotically intertwined."[169] Nineteenth and twentieth century American capitalism, which involved the "absorption of the mass of the population into commodity markets, and the significant spread of wage labor", was also implicitly linked to imperialism and slavery.[170] The "hyperproductivity of American factories and farms" in the post-Civil War period helped to create, in Kennedy's account, the "widespread fear" that even the "enormous domestic market" in the United States could not sustain its increasing levels of production, and "powerful interest groups" pressed for the opening up of overseas markets.[171] This pressure lead in turn to "more assertive diplomacy", and to further "calls for the United States to fulfill its 'Manifest Destiny' across the Pacific."[172] As Kennedy suggests, these calls were answered by the "redefinition of the Alaskan border", conflicts with Britain and Germany over Venezuela, the acquisition of the Philippines, and diplomatic and military intervention in "Latin American countries such as Nicaragua, Haiti," and "Mexico".[173]

The distinction between the imperially expanding United States and the relatively impoverished Mexican economy justifies Gloria Anzaldúa striking description of the Mexican/United States border as a location in which "the Third World grates against the first and bleeds".[174] As William G.Robbin writes, Mexico has "been for most of its existence a peripheral nation in the world capitalist system", and

its modern history has seen the "gradual penetration of the market system in the nineteenth century and the eventual integration of the area into multinational global financial strategies in the twentieth century."[175] Therefore, the "political boundary" separating the United States from Mexico has not represented an "impenetrable barrier" for the "forces of a modernizing capitalist system", and while the United States has not geographically extended its boundaries into Mexico since 1848, it has certainly fostered the dependency of Mexico on its wealthier neighbour.[176]

The Border-Crossing

In Gloria Anzaldúa's account, the Mexican wetbacks who successfully cross the border into the United States "find themselves in the midst of 150 years of racism in Chicano *barrios* in the South West and in big northern cities."[177] The "illegal refugees", "some of the poorest and most exploited of any people in the U.S.", live in a "no-man's borderland, caught between being treated as criminals and being able to eat, between resistance and deportation".[178] What of the white, middle-class American who crosses the border in the other direction? Here the border-crossing becomes a rites-of-passage, a step nearer liberation. "Something", as Burroughs would write later in *Naked Lunch*, "falls off you when you cross the border into Mexico, and suddenly the landscape hits you straight with nothing between you and it". (*Naked Lunch*/26)[179] This something that "falls off you" is represented in a variety of different ways, social, political, economic, and psychological, in Burroughs' writing, and these different meanings of this border-crossing will be examined in the following section.

An important part of the appeal of Mexico to Burroughs was, as his correspondence makes clear, its apparent lack of social restraints. There was, he thought initially, a "general atmosphere of freedom from interference,"[180] since "no limits are imposed on experience."[181] His early letters compare the Mexican ease of

life with the tightly regulated United States. As Allan Johnston notes, in *Junky* Lee's behaviour also shifts considerably when he moves from the United States into Mexico, as if he had shed the Reichian character "armour" he "relates with in structured society" of the United States, and revealed the "perverse secondary drives" beneath that "armour".[182] Johnston's inclusion of "homosexuality" among these "perverse" Reichian "secondary drives" is clearly problematic, reflecting Reich's own homophobia,[183] but it is certainly true that the only homosexual encounter in *Junky* is in the Mexico City section (*Junky*/113-4). The first references in Burroughs' correspondence to homosexuality also comes after Burroughs' border-crossing. In a letter to Ginsberg, dated May 1950, Burroughs notes that in Mexico, "Boys and young men" can "walk down the street arm in arm" without attracting attention.[184] Mexico was also more tolerant of junkies. Although Burroughs' correspondence from Mexico avoids the subject of narcotics, *Junky* presents Mexico as a refuge from the "nationwide hysteria" in the United States with drug addiction. (*Junky*/142) "Refugee hipsters trickled down into Mexico" from the United States, providing Lee with the latest news on the "anti-junk campaign". (*Junky*/143).

Closely related to the lack of social restraints in Mexico was the psychological freedom it offered. That psychological freedom, however, was profoundly ambiguous. As has already been noted, Herman Melville's *Typee*, which depicts travels to the South Sea Islands, presents its protagonist, in Michael Paul Rogin's description, with "a choice between patriarchy, law, Christianity, and restraint, on one hand, and matriarchy, nature, paganism, and pleasure on the other."[185] As Rogin notes, while Tommo is allowed "more freedom and gratification" than any of Melville's later protagonists, his "pleasure" awakens the "danger that drives him from his paradise".[186] Typee therefore becomes an 'exotic' substitute for the pre-oedipal mother, and the "danger" awakened by Typee is the infantile fear of "merging and dissolution".[187]

Typee ends with Tommo leaving the island, and with the book's solitary act of violence. A Typeean, not wanting Tommo to leave the island, swims after him, and Tommo "smashes a boat hook into the savage's throat", thereby destroying the "primitive threat to his self."[188] Despite the evident differences between the South Sea Islands in the 1850s and Mexico in the 1950s, the psychological responses of Melville's and Burroughs' protagonists to their 'exotic' surroundings and cultures are markedly similar.

Although, Burroughs' correspondence never makes the link explicit, it was in Mexico City that Burroughs first began writing seriously. Burroughs began writing "Junk", while still using morphine, at the encouragement of his friend, Kells Elvins. He wrote "Junk" in "chronological order, as if writing a diary."[189] This literary breakthrough was also a psychological breakthrough, thereby implicitly linking Mexico with creativity, and the positive aspects of the unconscious. As Oliver Harris notes of Burroughs' later writing in Tangiers, the "autonomy" of his work "depended on the suspension of his inhibiting conscious self and the constricting identity he felt it imposed."[190] Expressing this notion in Freudian terms, in his essay "Freud and the Unconscious", Burroughs claims that the "best writing is done when the ego is superseded or refuted", since the "artist" is "transcribing from the unconscious".[191] The "general atmosphere of freedom from interference" in Mexico may well have encouraged this necessary "suspension".[192]

Dreams also involve this supercedence of the ego, and in his Introduction to *Queer*, Burroughs describes Mexico as "sinister and gloomy and chaotic, with the special chaos of a dream." (*Queer*/6) Indeed, in *Queer* Mexico City is barely registered as a definite and realistic location. The narrative concentrates on Lee's expatriate acquaintances, and his compulsive search for contact, and Mexico City is very much the backdrop to Lee's search. When he first establishes himself with

Allerton, for example, the city's "violet haze" is evoked, along with the "warm spring wind" which blows "through the trees in the park"(*Queer*/59), as if the city shares the relief of his "warmth and laughter". (*Queer*/64) Similarly, in *Junky*, Lee claims that in Mexico "your wishes have a dream power", as if the city is a mirror reflecting his desires. (*Junky*/114) At this point, this dream-like quality is expressed in positive terms: Lee feels suddenly "calm and happy", imagining that he is in a "dream relationship with the City", and knowing that he will "score for a boy that night." (*Junky*/114) Here, Mexico City becomes, like Melville's Typee, a zone of gratification. Allan Johnston notes, in "The Burroughs Biopathy", that Mexico City in *Junky* is presented, like Melville's *Typee*, as a matriarchal zone, presided over by Lupita the pusher, who doles out "papers like an Aztec goddess."[193] (*Junky*/116) However, while Lupita may be a goddess, to quote Rogin, of "nature, paganism and pleasure" in that she dispenses shots, she tightly controls, and cuts with "milk sugar", the gratifications she offers.[194] (*Junky*/116) In *Junky*, Lee's dream "wishes" lead him to start "scoring for Lupita's papers" (*Junky*/116), and returns him to the state of static addiction, "staying home with three or four shots a day".[195] (*Junky*/122) Like Tommo in *Typee*, then, Lee's own "wishes" leaves him stranded like a dependent infant.

Another important element of what "falls off you when you cross the border into Mexico" is language. (*Naked Lunch*/26) In "St. Louis Return", a piece published alongside Burroughs' *Paris Review* interview in 1965, the narrator tells his companion, B.J., about the "shadow" that falls between the "eye and the object".[196] That "shadow", the narrator claims, is the "*pre-recorded word*".[197] Writing in "Electronic Revolution" (1971), Burroughs would affirm the "option of silence" as a means of resistance to the "virus mechanisms" of "syllabic Western languages".[198] In *Queer*, Lee describes a "silence peculiar to Mexico", a "vibrating soundless hum." (*Queer*/30) This "soundless hum" is a recurrent trope in Burroughs' writing,

reappearing in "Hassan's Rumpus Room" in *Naked Lunch*, as a "Vibrating, soundless hum of deep forest - sudden quiet of cities when the junky copes. A moment of stillness and wonder." (*Naked Lunch*/74), and in the "Composite City" sequence in *The Yage Letters* (46) and "The Market" in *Naked Lunch* (93). In the deleted section on Reich in "Junk", Burroughs linked the "special silence that you sometimes feel in deep woods, sometimes on a city street, a hum that is more a rhythmic vibration than a sound" to his experiments with his own "orgone accumulator", and to the "aphrodisiac effect" of the orgone.[199] However, in the account of Lee's border-crossing in *Naked Lunch*, this falling away of the "shadow" between the "eye and the object" does not lead to a state of "stillness and wonder", but to a violent immediacy of sensation, in which "the landscape" is revealed to be predatory: "desert, mountains and vultures; little wheeling specks and others so close you can hear wings cut the air (a dry husking sound), and when they spot something they pour out of the blue sky, that shattering bloody blue sky of Mexico, down in a black funnel." (*Naked Lunch*/26) Here, the "rhythmic vibration", rather than being linked to the "copulating rhythm of the universe" (*Naked Lunch*/74) or the "aphrodisiac effect" of the orgone, is linked to "shattering" and sudden violent activity.[200]

Violence and Mexico are closely related in Burroughs' writing. In *Queer*, Lee tells Cochan that homicide "is the national neurosis of Mexico." (*Queer*/56) He reads Cochan a story from a Mexican newspaper about "a man who murdered his wife and children." (*Queer*/36) In his correspondence, Burroughs differentiated his own view of Mexico, which stressed chaos and violence, from Jack Keroauc's more sentimental perspective. "Mexico", he told Kerouac, "is not simple or gay or idyllic."[201] It was "nothing like" a "French Canadian naborhood", with "extended 19th century families", and the "whole families" Kerouac pictured "eating together late into the night" usually ended up "staggering around blind, stupid, sullen, murderous drunk, but still able to

get in there with knives and machetes and broken bottles and score for three or four stiffs."[202] Burroughs' Introduction to *Queer*, which was composed in part out of Burroughs' correspondence written in Mexico City during his residency there, but was edited prior to the publication of *Queer* in 1985, reiterates this view of Mexico as a zone of chaos and violence, reflecting "two thousand years of disease and poverty and degradation and stupidity and slavery and brutality and psychic and physical terrorism." (*Queer*/6)[203]

While Burroughs represents Mexico as a site of violence, Burroughs, and his fictional protagonist, bring their own non-Mexican terror and violence into Mexico with them. In *Junky*, with his inhibitions obliterated by alcohol, Lee forces "distastefully intimate confidences on perfect strangers", makes "the crudest sexual propositions to people who had given no hint of reciprocity", and threatens several people with a gun. (*Junky*/128) In his correspondence, Burroughs refuted Ginsberg's notion that his "fantasies of shooting cops" also applied to Mexican cops, arguing that "Mexican cops don't qualify" as "authority figures", and that you "might as well occupy yourself with fantasies of shooting down elevator operators."[204] In a later letter, Burroughs returned to the theme, dismissing Ginsberg's "father symbol crap": "A drunk Mex. cop is not shooting a father symbol. His ego is dissolved in alcohol, leaving a mass of irritable and random protoplasm."[205] However, in the account given in *Junky* of Lee's drunken month in Mexico City, Lee, his own "ego dissolved in alcohol", does shove a gun in a "cop's stomach", and claims to be "not talking to a solid three-dimensional cop" but the "recurrent cop of my dreams - an irritating, nondescript, darkish man who would rush in when I was about to take a shot or go to bed with a boy." (*Junky*/130)[206] If the "recurrent cop of my dreams" is the Freudian reality principle that circumvents illicit pleasure, the pleasure being circumvented here involves the threat of violence, even murder. Lee, who finds himself in a "hysterical

rage" having lost his gun, has gone back to his house to find a "heavy revolver" with which to threaten the man he believes has stolen the first gun. (*Junky*/129-130) It is at this point that the cop intervenes, and is also threatened by Lee.[207] Lee's violent behaviour contrasts starkly with the subdued behaviour of the Mexican bartender, who looks on with "puzzled disgust", and the cop, who leads Lee out of trouble. (*Junky*/131)

In a letter to Jack Kerouac, Burroughs described himself as "now virtually a Mexican citizen", and expressed, throughout his Mexico City letters, his relief "to be rid of the U.S. for good and all, and to be in this fine free country!"[208] While Burroughs thought of himself as "virtually a Mexican citizen", the representations of actual, as opposed to virtual, Mexican citizens in *Junky* and *Queer* suggest, to quote Robert Holton's parallel observation on Jack Kerouac, an "inability to penetrate the stereotypes that frame his cognition of the marginalized other".[209] This "inability", as Holton notes of Keroauc, "establishes very constricting limits for the understanding" of those people's lives.[210] As the Mexican cop in *Junky* becomes the projection of the "recurrent cop" of Lee's "dreams", Mexicans in general become projections of Lee's, and Burroughs', darkest desires, both sexual and violent.

In *Queer*, when Lee initially fails to establish contact with Allerton, he goes instead to the "Chimu", a "fag bar frequented by Mexicans", and spends a night with "a young boy" he meets there. (*Queer*/35) The impression created is of a hierarchical social structure, with Lee, rejected by one of his own, being forced down to a lower level in order to make sexual contact. As has already been noted, three Mexican fags in a queer bar in *Junky* are associated with an archaic depravity, "at once beautiful and repulsive", and with regression to a state of "stupid animal serenity." (*Junky*/113) However, when Allerton is with Lee, Lee's response is different. When a Mexican calls out to Lee on the street as he walks drunkenly home with Allerton, Lee insults

him, saying "'Here I come to your little jerkwater country and spend my good American dollars and what happens? Insulted inna public street.'" (*Queer*/59) The Mexican hesitates, and Lee reaches for his pistol, before the Mexican walks on. Lee says, as if to himself, "'Someday they won't walk away,'". (*Queer*/59) Lee here is courting a confrontation, or encouraging some act of sudden violence, with his racial other.

What Oliver Harris terms Burroughs' "final calamitous transgression", the shooting of his wife Joan Vollmer, also took place in Mexico City.[211] In "Freud and the Unconscious", Burroughs acknowledges that the "non dominant brain hemisphere", while being the source of the "best writing and painting", can also be a "source of pathological and destructive behaviour".[212] Indeed, writing itself, in Burroughs' depiction of it, can become a sort of pathology. Oliver Harris notes the sinister "shift from active to passive mood" in Burroughs' description of his first two texts: "While it was I who wrote *Junky*, I feel that I was being written in *Queer*." (*Queer*/12) This abjuration of authorial responsibility, by, to quote Harris, "crediting his creative capacity to a unlocatable source"[213], recalls the claim of "William S. Burroughs", in the "Introduction" to *Naked Lunch*, to have "no precise memory of writing the notes" that constituted the text itself. (*Naked Lunch*/7) As Harris notes, Burroughs' descriptions of the "definite possessing entity", the "separate invading creature" (*Queer*/16) that he claims shot Joan are markedly similar to his descriptions of the "hostile independent entity" he would later hold responsible for dictating sections of *Naked Lunch*.[214] Mexico, in Burroughs' retrospective presentation of it, becomes an "extremely dangerous", "pathological and destructive" unconscious realm, a world of flickering violent shadows that reflects back on the white, male, middle-class writer who presents it thus. While, at one level, given the tragic events of Joan Vollmer's shooting, such depictions became understandable, they also should be seen

in the wider context of white American perceptions of Mexico. As Gloria Anzaldúa puts it, Mexico has become an unacknowledged "double", existing "in the shadow" of the white America, and "irrecoverably tied to her."[215] Anzaldúa challenges the "Gringo" to accept this "doppledanger in your psyche."[216]

Another important aspect of the something that "falls off you when you cross the border into Mexico" is linked to economic, rather than psychological or social, freedoms. (*Naked Lunch*/26) The poor Mexican economy ensured a low cost of living for the upper-middle class American, and Burroughs noted how far his currency could go in Mexico City. "You can get the clap cured for $2.40", he informed Jack Kerouac, "or buy the penicillin and shoot it yourself."[217] "Prices" were about "a what they are in the States."[218] Income tax was only "3%".[219] It was one of the "few places left where a man" could "really live like a Prince."[220] If the Rio Grande Valley offered a disappointing simulacrum of the "glorious frontier" lifestyle, Mexico promised "real pioneer conditions."[221] In Mexico City, Burroughs planned another identity change, again in the form of a regular job, and again with echoes of the American frontier past. He would try his hand at "ranching":

> Most of these countries import food, though they have millions of acres of land not even cleared - land you can buy here for $2 per acre, land that would cost $500 per acre in the States. And you live like a king on a ranch while you are making the $. Hunting and fishing, and a hacienda full of servants for about nothing a year in expenses [...] Unlimited opportunities and any kind of life you want to live you can find.[222]

Typically, for one of Burroughs' "money making enterprises",[223] there is a seamless movement here from a pragmatic presentation of economic possibilities, based entirely on the calculated exploitation of the poor Mexican economy, to the expression of a dream lifestyle, a "hacienda full of servants" who do not even require adequate wages.[224]

However, Burroughs' initial optimism faded. His search for a location in which "a man" could "get something for his money" was not fulfilled in Mexico City.[225]

While it was not "bogged down", like the United States, by the "octopus of bureaucratic socialism", Mexico had its own complex bureaucracy, in the form of bribeable officials.[226] Burroughs received a visit from the Immigration Office, and began to realise the expenses he might incur if he "really had an investment in Mexico City." (*Queer*/9) He wrote to Ginsberg announcing that he had "decided to move South - probably to Panama or possibly Ecuador", since he was tired of spending time in a country "that does not want American immigrants".[227] There were, he felt sure, "plenty of countries down here that want Americans to come in and farm."[228] "Old style imperialism is done", Burroughs told Ginsberg. "It doesn't pay."[229] He tried instead to convince Ginsberg of the possibilities of new style imperialism:

> One thing I am sure of. If you want to give yourself a chance to get rich in a style that the U.S. has not seen since 1914, "Go South of the Rio Grande, young man." Almost any business is good down here, since markets are unlimited.[230]

Burroughs' re-writing of the 'Go West, young man' motif, as 'Go South, young Ginsberg', inevitably brings to mind the earlier white American expansion across the North American continent, another search for an "unlimited" market.[231] Burroughs' search for an "unlimited market" continued into South America, and his expeditions there were fictionalised in the second half of *Queer*, and formed the basis for *The Yage Letters*, which is the subject of the following section.

III South America, 1953

The Yage Letters, finally published in 1963, is, in the words of its back-cover blurb, an "epistolary" novel, constructed in considerable part from the letters Burroughs had sent to Allen Ginsberg on his 1953 expedition to South America. Following the publication of *The Letters of William Burroughs 1945 to 1959*, there are now in effect two published versions of *The Yage Letters*: the version published by City Lights in 1963, and the original letters sent by Burroughs to Ginsberg ten years before. Columbia University also hold a "Yage" manuscript, which was compiled in 1955 in Tangiers, and is not in epistolary form. The published version of *The Yage Letters* combines materials from Burroughs' original yagé letters with the 1955 manuscript. The implications of these shifts in form, and of the accompanying shifts in relationship between author and protagonist, and author and text, will be examined in more detail in the following chapter. However, it is important to note at this stage that the original letters contain material not included in the published text of *The Yage Letters*, and that the publication of this material retrospectively shifts the reader-response to *The Yage Letters*.

The original letters retain a variety of useful references to the mechanics of writing and publication, for Burroughs was after all writing to his literary agent, and these references reflect back helpfully on the published yagé letters. In one particular brief paragraph, contained within a P.S., Burroughs gives a précis of the expedition thus far, in terms that are both literary and personal:

> This expedition is so far more picaresque and Abneresque than Ahabesque. Imagine a reporter from *Life* taking pictures of Ahab from a helicopter or televising the pursuit of the White Whale. The reporter did arrive in a plane and my first knowledge of his presence was when I saw him taking my picture.[232]

This quick synopsis seems to confirm that *The Yage Letters* will be a lighter book than

Junky or *Queer*.[233] Burroughs is making a distinction here between two possibilities for his expedition, and his text. On one side, there is the "picaresque" and the "Abneresque".[234] Clearly, *The Yage Letters* does have a picaresque structure, its narrative momentum carried by the accumulation of odd details noticed by a narrator in motion, and the reference to the "Abneresque" nature of the book recalls the equally picaresque notion of the narrator as lovable rogue. Lee, in *The Yage Letters*, is an indestructible cartoon figure, undergoing a series of setbacks and discomforts, but always coming through unscathed. A quite different set of associations, however, are raised by the alternative possibility that Burroughs' expedition might be "Ahabesque".[235] A curious train of thought is set in motion by this idea. The vision of the reporter photographing Ahab "from a helicopter" or of the "televising of the pursuit of the White Whale" is an image of a relentless, violent search, experienced at second hand by the reporter.[236] Yet by noting that "the reporter did" in fact "arrive in a plane", and that "my first knowledge of his presence was when I saw him taking my picture", Burroughs seems to confuse the distinction he has just made so confidently.[237] It is as if the "expedition", suddenly seen in a different but extremely vivid light, does have "Ahabesque" undercurrents, and that by taking Burroughs' photograph, the Life reporter might indeed have snapped a modern Ahab, in pursuit of his own white whale.[238]

This vivid image also works in another way. Lee, rather than being Ahab himself, could be the "reporter", who, by "televising the pursuit of the white whale", serves as Ahab's publicity agent, just as Burroughs' uncle, and Lee's namesake, had done for Hitler.[239] As Ivy Lee's earlier work for Rockefeller suggested, the rise of public relations, the mass media and advertising were closely connected to the rise of American capitalism. Burroughs references to Henry Luce, the newspaper magnate, in his *Paris Review* interview, conducted in 1965, suggest that Burroughs saw Luce as

the contemporary equivalent to Rockefeller and Hearst. Luce's "control system", the vast "word and image banks",[240] had replaced "the old laissez faire capitalism" represented by Rockefeller.[241] The 1950s saw the emergence of Henry Luce's nationwide magazines, *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*, which became available in many countries, and often served as the publicity agents for the United States. According to Hugh Brogan, Luce had begun proclaiming "the opening of 'the American century'" before the Second World War had finished.[242] Burroughs' vivid glimpse of the "reporter from *Life* taking pictures of Ahab" or "televising the pursuit of the White Whale" implicitly raises certain questions about the status of his own "expedition".[243] Was his own expedition, for example, replete with suppressed "Ahabesque" violence? Or did the letters and fiction Burroughs wrote in and about South America serve, like the *Life* reporter, to unquestioningly accept or even celebrate the economically aggressive United States presence in the area? It is these "Ahabesque" aspects of *The Yage Letters* that will be foregrounded here.[244]

The Space of Death

It is useful, at this point, to return to *Love and Death in the American Novel*, and to Fiedler's construction of his American archetype, the "questing lover".[245] The quester, Fiedler writes, is a "renegade from respectability and belongingness" who "has cut himself out of the community that bred him in a desire to embrace some alien shadow-figure symbolizing the instinctive life despised by his white, Anglo Saxon parents."[246] Lee's expedition fits the first part of this formulation, the journey away from home and respectability, although as Oliver Harris notes, "Burroughs' explicitly homoerotic quest" lacks the "prerequisite paradigm", a "Dean Moriarty", or a "Jim".[247] Where, then, is the "alien shadow-figure", the symbol of instinct and of the uncivilized?[248] In *Moby Dick*, the negotiation between the "questing lover" and the

"alien shadow-figure" begins early in the narrative, in the Spouter Inn, with Ishmael and Queequeg the Polynesian harpooner sharing a bed.[249] Ishmael is initially appalled by his bed-companion, an "abominable savage" with tattooed markings, and a "peddler of heads too".[250] "Ignorance is the parent of fear", Ishmael notes, and he confesses that "I was now as much afraid of him as if it was the devil himself who had thus broken into my room".[251] However, Ishmael's fears dissolve, and they spend a peaceful night together, Ishmael awaking to find "Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner."[252] There is no sign, in either *Junky* or *Queer*, of such an "alien shadow-figure".[253] In *The Yage Letters*, however, Lee is constantly negotiating cultural otherness, and this negotiation comes to a head in his experiences with yagé.

In *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, Michael Taussig evokes the Putamayo area through which Burroughs travelled as a "space of death", where "the Indian, African and white gave birth to a New World."[254] As Taussig points out, the "space of death" has a "long and rich culture".[255] It has been represented within the "Western tradition" by "Homer, Virgil, the Bible, Dante, Hieronymus Bosch, the Inquisition, Rimbaud, Conrad's heart of darkness."[256] The "space of death" is "preeminently a space of transformation", and to journey into it, to descend into "the world of the dead, and of evil" is to reenact the "age-old movement from despair to grace".[257] Taussig uses the "great journey of the *Divine Comedy*" as a paradigm of the journey into the "space of death" within the Western tradition, noting its "smoothly cadenced harmonies and catharsis", and its final point of resolution: "through evil, good."[258] The journey into the space of death was a "descent through the circles of race down the rungs of civilization."[259] Indeed, through this journey down into the "dark woods" and the "underworld", Dante reaches "paradise", but only by first reaching the "lowermost point of evil", and by "mounting the shaggy back of the wild man."[260]

Thus far, the Western tradition has been discussed in literary terms, but clearly there is also a closely related Western tradition in historical terms. Taussig recalls that Columbus had evoked the mouth of the Orinoco river as one of the "four rivers flowing from the Garden of Eden", and that the sight of the "swirling" river had provided "further testimony" of the proximity of the "terrestrial paradise" for which he was searching.[261] The Amazon basin, through which the Orinoco runs, became the focus, fifty years later, of a "frenzied search" for the city of El Dorado.[262] In this search, the "angelic natives" that Columbus had seen on the shoreline, "suffered dearly."[263] Initially evoked as angels, these natives were now represented as demons. Here, the dark side of this Western tradition emerges, for to approach paradise by "mounting the shaggy back of the wild man" was not to learn from him, but to make him suffer.[264]

The Yage Letters is another journey into the unknown, conducted by another Westerner with ambiguous intentions. Prior to leaving on his second expedition to South America, its author had described his own forthcoming trip, about which he had "forebodings", as a "sort of final attempt to 'change fact.'"[265] Burroughs' travels in South America, like Melville's voyages to the South Sea Islands, were travels back in time, attempts to retrieve something lost. Charles Olson, in *Call me Ishmael*, describes Melville as a "a migrant backtrailing to Asia, some Inca trying to find a lost home."[266] Melville, Olson continues, "had a pull to the origin of things, the first day, the first man, the unknown sea, Betelgeuse, the buried continent."[267] These regressive pilgrimages echo the investigations of the anthropologist J.J. Bachofen, who believed that the "symbols" of Greco-Roman "antiquity" held the "traces" of a lost matriarchal civilization that had been "deliberately obliterated" by the patriarchal society that "eventually overthrew it."[268] In a letter to Allen Ginsberg, sent in 1957 during the writing of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs explained that he had written a "section about the

wanderings" of an "adolescent queer hipster through the jungles and mountains of South America".[269] The "adolescent queer hipster", Burroughs continues, "was really looking for the fecund green CUNT in the middle of S.A., and disappears like Colonel Fawcett so we never know did he find the cunt or not."[270] This section, which featured the Burroughs protagonist Carl Peterson, would eventually emerge in *The Soft Machine* (1961). Clearly, however, this section of writing also reflected back on Lee's travels in *The Yage Letters*, and on Burroughs' own expeditions in South America, presenting these expeditions as journeys back to the mother.

In November 1954, as if to make Olson's metaphor literal, Burroughs announced to Ginsberg that he was planning a expedition to find the "Lost Inca City".[271] "Independent accounts", Burroughs wrote, "place it" in the "same approximate area" where the famous explorer, Colonel Percy Harrison Fawcett, "disappeared."[272] Fawcett, Oliver Harris writes in a footnote to Burroughs' letter, had "set off in 1925 to find Atlantis in the Río Xingu area of Amazonian Brazil and was never heard of again."[273] This area, Burroughs claimed, was "still" the "most dangerous spot in the Amazon basin. Hostile Indians, etc."[274] In fact, Burroughs goes on to add that while "in 1900" the area "was inhabited by light-skinned Inca descendants", it was "probably empty now", but "loaded with gold."[275] "If you run into anybody wants to look for The Lost City and all that Inca Gold", Burroughs told Ginsberg, "and can put up a few thousand $, let me know."[276] Therefore, as with the white European search for a terrestrial paradise, Burroughs' search for the lost Inca City had a clear economic sub-text.

There is a dogged persistence to Lee's travels in *The Yage Letters*, as if he is seeking out something he sees traces of. In *Queer*, traveling through Ecuador, Lee "felt there was something going on", some "undercurrent of life that was hidden from him." (*Queer*/92) He sees traces of this mysterious "undercurrent" in the South American people. (*Queer*/92) "I am speaking", Lee writes in *The Yage Letters*, "of the

South American at best, a special race part Indian, part white, part God knows what. He is not, as one is apt to think at first, fundamentally an Oriental nor does he belong to the West. He is something special, unlike anything else." (*Yage Letters*/33). Another hint of this "something special" (*Yage Letters*/33) is evoked when listening to "mountain music" on a jukebox in Pasto. (*Yage Letters*/13) Lee recalls hearing "similar music in the mountains of Albania where pre-Greek, Illyrian racial strains linger." (*Yage Letters*/13) The identification of the music with the residue of "pre-Greek" culture suggests an implicit correspondence with J.J. Bachofen's belief in still existing traces of a pre-Greco-Roman matriarchal civilization. (*Yage Letters*/13) Lee discerns a "phylogenetic nostalgia" that "is conveyed by this music", and wonders if it is "Atlantean?" (*Yage Letters*/13)[277] Lee describes the music as "archaic" yet "strangely familiar", "very old and sad." (*Yage Letters*/13) This sense of strange familiarity recalls Freud's conception of the "uncanny", the reemergence of the "long familiar", and again suggests, alongside the reference to Atlantis, the return of the repressed mother-world.[278]

In Ecuador, the "undercurrent of life" that Lee senses but cannot locate is linked to the "nameless obscenities" engraved on "ancient Chimu poetry". (*Queer*/92) This line of thought makes Lee wonder what "happens when there is no limit? What is the fate of The Land Where Anything Goes?" (*Queer*/92) This is one of the first references in Burroughs' writing to the "centipede", a recurrent motif of repressed terror and lust: "Men changing into huge centipedes ... centipedes besieging the houses ... a man tied to a couch and a centipede ten foot long rearing up over him." (*Queer*/92) "Is this literal?", Lee asks. (*Queer*/92) "Did some hideous metamorphosis occur? What is the meaning of the centipede symbol?" (*Queer*/92) Here, the "archaic" is not "very sad", but terrifying. (*Yage Letters*/13) In *Junky*, Lee had visualized "New York" in ruins, with "centipedes and scorpions" crawling among the

wreckage, and "no one in sight." (*Junky*/28). Neal Oxenhandler identifies the recurrent centipede motif in Burroughs' work as "images of the enveloping or choking mother".[279] The centipede, then, represents the terrifying loss of identity and control, the darker side to the return of the repressed mother.

As with Burroughs', and Lee's, identifications of Mexico as a zone of uninhibited pleasures and unconscious violence, the link here between Ecuador and the "Land Where Anything Goes" reveals more about Lee's psychological anxieties than it does about Ecuador. (*Queer*/92) Such distortions have been recurrent in Western investigations of 'primitive' cultures from Columbus' search for a "terrestrial paradise",[280] to Frederick Jackson Turner's ambiguous eulogy to the "simplicity of primitive society".[281] As Gayatri Spivak notes about Kristeva's "bid to recover the mother" in ancient Chinese writings, while "the 'classical' East is studied with primitivistic reverence", the "'contemporary' East is treated with real politikal contempt".[282] Spivak's "final question" about Kristeva's "macrological nostalgia for the pre-history of the East is", in her own words, "plaintive and predictable": "what about us?"[283]

There was a careful balancing act in Burroughs' position in South America, as there was in Mexico City, between the transgression of white middle-class American social and moral norms, and the wish to "maintain position".[284] Burroughs' concluding judgments on South America, included in his original letters, were favourable, being based on points of contrast with his home country. "South America", he claimed, "does not force people to be deviants", while "in the U.S. you have to be a deviant or die of boredom."[285] In South America, it was possible to be "a queer, or a drug addict, and still maintain position."[286] Burroughs also noted the "deep respect for education" and "good manners" in South America.[287] Bourgeois family values and a Harvard education had their uses.[288]

While Ecuador is represented as the "Land Where Anything Goes", a zone of chaos, Burroughs and his fictional protagonist are careful to retain their links to the United States, so as to avoid the more frustrating or dangerous aspects of that chaos. (*Queer*/92) On one level, Lee relished the difference of South America, yet, at another level, Lee remained resolutely American throughout.[289] Indeed, much of the comedy of *The Yage Letters* arise from the exasperation of the lone American traveler at what he is forced to endure en route.[290] The ambiguities of Lee's position in South America are highlighted by his brief encounter with the reporter from *Life* magazine, who is "doing a story on Yage. Looks like I am scooped."[291] The reporter is described as a "shameless mooch", who is "shaking down the South American continent for free food and transport, and discounts on everything he buys with a 'We-got-like-two-kinds-of-publicity-favourable-and-unfavourable-which-do-you-want,-Jack?' routine." (*Yage Letters*/22) One month later, however, faced with a bureaucratic crisis in Guayaquil, Lee talks his way out in "half an hour", using an oddly familiar "We-got-like-two-types-publicity-favourable-and-unfavourable [...]" routine. (*Yage Letters*/32) Likewise, encountering the unfavourable conditions endured by the natives, Lee often chooses instead the more comfortable conditions enjoyed by his fellow Americans. On a trip to Bogota, Lee finds he is treated like "visiting royalty" when he is mistaken for a "representative of the Texas Oil Company traveling incognito" (*Yage Letters*/22). This means free "boat rides", "plane rides" and "chow", and the relative luxury of "eating in officers' mess, sleeping in the governor's house." (*Yage Letters*/22) In a letter to Ginsberg, having described the "*Life* character" as a "bit of a shit", Burroughs acknowledges that he had been something of a "shameless mooch" himself: "Case of the pot and the kettle, what?"[292]

In Cali, Lee meets "some old time American residents" who tell him the "country was in a hell of a shape":

> They hate the sight of a foreigner down here [...] It's all this Point four and good nabor crap and financial aid.

"If you give these people anything", the Americans tell Lee, "they think 'oh so he needs me.' And the more you give, the nastier they get." (*Yage Letters*/11) As Gabriel Kolko suggests in his study of American foreign policy in Latin America, however, America's "financial aid" to the area did not arise out of an innocent benevolence. According to Kolko, nowhere more than in Latin America "were the underlying bases and objectives of U.S. foreign policy revealed so starkly".[293] Those "bases and objectives" were "power and gain for the United States in economic terms."[294] The United States government conceived of Latin America, in potential at least, as a "treasure trove of raw materials", although Columbia and Ecuador were not as attractive as Venezuela, which was rich in oil.[295]

Senior American officials, however, became increasingly dismissive of Latin America, describing it as "an aberrant, benighted area inhabited by helpless, essentially childish peoples."[296] U.S. official George Kennan, sending a dispatch back to Washington, said he regarded the Latin American people with a mixture of "amusement, contempt and anxiety", and proposed that the only solution to the Latin American problem might be "harsh governmental measures of repression."[297] Such conclusions find definite echoes in Burroughs' own judgments on Latin America, as recorded in the original yagé letters. He sensed in Ecuador and Columbia, for example, a "determination to be stupid and jerk water."[298] "As a matter of fact", wrote Burroughs, "the whole region is on the down grade": the "rubber business is shot, the cocoa eat up with broom rot", the "land is poor and there is no way to get produce out."[299] The author's judgments on South America are echoed by his fictional protagonist in *The Yage Letters*. Commenting on the unreliability of the mail service from Pasto, Lee exclaims: "These people do not have even the concept of responsibility." (*Yage Letters*/14)

Having announced that "Ecuador is really on the skids", Lee irritatedly expresses his wish that Peru should "take over and civilize the place so a man can score for the amenities." (*Yage Letters*/32)[300] Lee finds in Lima all the "amenities", such as heroin and young boys, he failed to find in Ecuador. (*Yage Letters*/32)[301] In civilized Lima, the young boys are "all wise and available to the yankee dollar - (one)" (*Yage Letters*/33) In Puerto Assis, a boy asks Lee for "$30 evidently figuring he was a rare commodity in the Upper Amazon." (*Yage Letters*/19) All of Lee's negotiations with boys revolve around the "yankee dollar" and the "rare commodity", despite the romantic notions that Lee brings to these negotiations.(*Yage Letters*/19)[302] Lee's wish that Peru would invade Ecuador "so a man can score for the amenities" is the anger of a consumer separated from his commodities. (*Yage Letters*/32) This annoyance echoes distinctly the annoyance of his own country, unable to extend its economic market into South America. As Burroughs writes in his introduction to *Queer*, Lee's first expedition for yagé ends in a "Dead end" in Puyo, a "dead, meaningless conglomerate of tin-roofed houses under a continual downpour of rain." (*Queer*/14) Puyo is a "dead end" to Lee, the "end of his line, an end implicit in the beginning" (*Queer*/14), and it was also an end of the line for American investment, Shell having pulled out, leaving "prefabricated bungalows and rusting machinery behind." (*Queer*/14)

The Auca

In *Moby Dick*, Ishmael, the book's "questing lover", survives his descent into the underworld, and central to his survival is his relationship with Queequeg.[303] Having descended into the "*closing vortex*" left in the Pequod's wake, Ishmael clings to Queequeg's "*coffin life-buoy*" until he is rescued by the "devious cruising Rachel".[304] In this, of course, Melville's epic novel echoes the wider Western tradition of reaching paradise by first having "reached the lowermost point of evil, mounting the shaggy

back of the wild man."[305] While noting that Ishmael's rites of passage does not lead him to paradise, it is important to recognise the "codependence", stressed by Taussig, of going to the "Indian for their healing power, and killing them for their wildness."[306] "To what extent", asks Taussig, "can the Indian carrier's perspective provide a point of release from the power of conquest mythology", when the "carrier [...] has little option but to act out the role enforced by colonization"?[307] Such a question is relevant to Burroughs', and Lee's, fascination with the "Auca" Indian.

The "Auca" are an invisible presence in *The Yage Letters*, as they are in Burroughs' original letters. They are a source of fascination and terror, a means for us to read Burroughs' motives and desires, while the Auca themselves remain invisible. Burroughs describes the Auca as the "hostile Indians of Ecuador".[308] They have, throughout Burroughs' writing of this period, the status of an exotic, dangerous tourist attraction. In a letter to Ginsberg, Burroughs explained that the Auca would "provide a combination of features."[309] A brief excerpt from *The Yage Letters* combines, albeit in comic form, many aspects of a colonial approach to the Auca: awe, fear, greed and violence. The Auca are described, as usual, as "a tribe of Hostile Indians." (*Yage Letters*/31) "It seems", writes Lee, that the "jungle traders periodically raid the Auca" in order to "carry off women they keep penned up for the purposes of sex." (*Yage Letters*/31) Lee decides this sounds "interesting", and wonders if he should "capture" his own "Auca boy." (*Yage Letters*/31) "Shell", Lee notes in parenthesis, "lost about twenty employees to the Auca in about two years." (*Yage Letters*/31)[310]

The word "Auca", as Taussig points out, has a variety of meanings reflecting the ambivalent status of the Auca themselves. Initially meaning "infidel, traitor, barbarian", in contemporary usage it connotes the "unrepentantly 'other' world of savagery", a world "quintessentially pagan, without Christ, Spanish words [...] inhabited by naked, incestuous, violent, magical, and monstrous people [...]".[311] While

considered "subhuman", even by highland shamen, the "lowland" Auca are also thought of as profoundly powerful, their magic vital to the process of healing.[312] The paradox is, of course, that the process of healing is dedicated to removing the "*auca*-like" demons, like those "lodged in the innards of the white folk who come to the healers", and that it is these "white folk" who consider the Auca with most terror.[313] As Taussig notes, white colonists went to the Indians for a variety of reasons. They exploited them as labourers, they used them as objects of torture, but they also went to them as healers. They photographed them, too, and studied them, putting their "baskets and blowpipes in museums".[314] "Where does the heart of darkness lie," asks Taussig, "in the fleshy body-tearing rites of the cannibals or in the photographing eye [...] exposing them naked and deformed piece by piece to the world?"[315] As Taussig observes, going to the Indians to be healed, and using them as "mythic objects of torture" were "not so far apart. Indeed, these actions are not only intertwined but are codependent".[316] In a letter Burroughs sent to Ginsberg from Tangiers in 1954, Burroughs enclosed some notes concerning the "Huabdropoza Indians of Orinoco", who "live in darkest jungle and flee from light."[317] They inhabit the "lowest plane of existence, but show signs of intelligence."[318] Burroughs quotes a "French explorer": "'Strange, pathetic desires and emotions pass over their faces.'"[319] "What a kick", Burroughs writes, "to adopt one and mold him to specifications, or what would happen?".[320] "It is essential", Burroughs continues, "to do these things while there is still time. I mean studies of the hostile and queer indians and of those who are excessively timid and fear the light."[321] Burroughs' fascination with these "hostile and queer indians" tells us far more about Burroughs himself than about the "indians" themselves.[322] With their timidity and "fear" of "the light", their hostility and propensity for violence,[323] they are, as Taussig suggests, Burroughs' own "antiself", projected onto the "other", the "savage".[324] After all, it is Burroughs who gleefully

imagines these scenarios of violence, and Burroughs who entertains the self-annihilatory fantasy of disappearing in the jungle amongst the "Hostile Indians".[325]

Taussig claims, in his opening chapter, that his "concern is with the mediation of terror through narration, and with the problem of writing against terror."[326] One source of written representation that Taussig examines is a series of articles in "the Iquitos newspapers *La Sanción* and *La Felpa*", written in 1907 and collected in translated form in Walter's Hardenburg's *The Putamayo: The Devil's Paradise. Travels in the Peruvian Amazon Region and an Account of the Atrocities Committed Upon the Indians Therein*. In the following quotation, the "they" referred to are the company employees of the Colombian rubber companies:

> They force the Pacific Indians of the Putamayo to work day and night at the extraction of rubber, without the slightest remuneration; that they give them nothing to eat; that they keep them in complete nakedness; that they rob them of their crops, their women and their children [...]; that they flog them inhumanely until their bones are visible; that they give them no medical treatment but let them die, eaten up by maggots, or to serve as food for the chief's dogs; that they castrate them, cut off their ears, fingers, arms, legs ...[327]

While the events described here occurred thirty five years before Burroughs' expeditions in the area, they do vividly suggest the historical context in which those expeditions took place. As Taussig suggests, such cruelty cannot be fully explained by reference to "notions of market-pressure, the capital-logic of commodities," or "the rationality of business."[328] Labour was already scarce in the Putamayo region, and torturing and murdering employees is not a rational means of retaining their labour, especially not in a large forested area, in which the "Indians" could "usually escape and live on the natural products of the forest".[329] It is also important to understand the mythic patterns that underwrite such terror. While the barbarity of the Putamayo rubber-boom may seem a long way away from Dante, and the "age-old movement from despair to grace"[330], such barbarity, Taussig convincingly demonstrates, seems to arise inevitably from the Western tradition of the descent into the underworld, from

the "ship and course that is Western history."[331]

The white colonists attributed "healing power" and "wildness" to the Auca.[332] The colonists lived in a culture of terror: they sensed they were "surrounded by vipers, tigers and cannibals."[333] Taussig notes the repetitive pattern by which the "more powerful class" in a culture impute "mystery and the demonic" onto those below them: "by men to women, by the civilized to the primitive, by Christian to pagan".[334] The colonists, clearly the "more powerful class" in the Putamayo region, associated the incredible powers of the "demonic" with the "Hostile Indians."[335] "Like children", Taussig writes, "they had nightmares of witches, evil spirits, death, treason and blood. The only way they could live in such a terrifying world," Taussig continues, "was to inspire terror themselves."[336]

The Search for Yagé

As Gabriel Kolko suggests, behind the general United States interest in South America, presented in the benevolent form of "financial aid" and the "point Four" program, was the pursuit of untrammeled access to "essential raw materials", with no "invidious distinctions between domestic and foreign capital"[337] The "raw material" that Lee is searching for is yagé, and even in this apparently romantic adventure after forbidden knowledge, Lee is not alone.[338] At the end of *Junky*, where the quest for yage is first announced, it is made clear that Lee had already been superseded. "I am not the only one interested in yage", he writes. "The Russians are using this drug in experiments on slave labor. They want to induce states of automatic obedience and literal thought control." (*Junky*/152) In a letter to Allen Ginsberg, Burroughs announced that he had learnt from a friend that the "U.S. Army" was also "conducting secret experiments with this drug."[339] This discovery confirmed Burroughs' suspicion that yagé was "a deal of tremendous implications" and strengthened his resolve that he

should be "the man who can dig it."[340]

Burroughs was careful to distinguish his own quest for yage, based on "contact on the nonverbal level of intuition and feeling", and the superpower's interest, which was destined to produce "armies of telepathy-controlled zombies marching about."[341] The ambiguity of Lee's search for yagé are, however, suggested in *Queer*, where, talking to Allerton, Lee becomes tellingly over-excited about the possibilities that yagé might present:

> 'Think of it: thought control. Take anyone apart and rebuild to your taste [...] I could think of a few changes I might make in you, doll. [...] You're nice now, of course, but you have those irritating little peculiarities. I mean, you won't do exactly what I want you to do all the time.' (*Queer*/89)

There are distinct and disturbing echoes here of the intentions that the superpowers had for yagé: the creation of "states of automatic obedience and literal thought control." (*Junky*/152) Lee notes in passing that yagé was also an "efficient confession drug", thereby adding interrogation and torture to the uses of yagé. Yagé was, then, a potential pact with the devil, and a perfect example of the "Western white civilization" reaching out, as Fiedler claims Ahab did, to "the uncorrupted sources of natural life" in pursuit of "power and fear."[342] Interest in yagé was not only military, however. As has been noted, Lee is mistaken for a representative of "the Texas Oil Company". (*Yage Letters*/22) Burroughs himself was linked to "Squibb [Pharmaceuticals]" who were "about to have a Yage boom."[343] The expedition to which Burroughs was briefly attached, itself comprised of a "variety of purposes and personnel", complete with "boats and tents and movie cameras and guns and rations", was then only a minute part of a far wider international interest in yagé.[344]

One of the many stories told in Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, is an account of the advice given by an old "lowland [...] shaman", Patricio, to a younger shaman, Santiago.[345] Santiago approached Patricio asking him for "luck for hunting", and Santiago was pleased:

> That is the good one. That brings everything, he who asks for hunting. Other people come and ask; I want to *chontear* [to kill people with magic blowpipe darts] and to kill *brujos* [witches, shaman]. But it's bad to learn that.' That's what Patricio explained. [...] Magic for money is only good for money.[346]

The use of magic to make money, as Taussig explains, is known as "*magia*": the "noxious power that comes from a pact with the devil from books of magic."[347] The concept of "*magia*" came with the colonists, as did the concept of magic as a commodity, since "*magia*" is sold in book form.[348] With the book of "*magia*", magic became identified with the power of "knowledge and words, words and their ability to effect things."[349] Taussig distinguishes between "the buying of magic by buying a book", which is a "quintessentially anonymous and individualistic act, a market transaction by which cash is turned over for standardized knowledge", and the "buying of *pinta* from a *yagé* healer", in which knowledge "is acquired through immense privation and is quintessentially the accentuation or extension of the substance of the donor, the shaman."[350] The knowledge derived from the shaman, Taussig continues, is "the antithesis of standardized knowledge and draws its power from the ineffable, from the feeling-tone of shadow and light, innuendo and sudden transformations."[351] Clearly, most of the international interest in yagé bore more relation to buying "*magia*" than to buying "*pinta*".[352] What, however, of Lee's, and Burroughs', interest in yagé?

The dialectic of fascination and repulsion, inherent in colonist attitudes towards the "hostile Indians" in general, was repeated in Burroughs' responses towards the Indian brujos, to whom he went, in part, to be healed.[353] Burroughs' initial attitude towards the brujos was highly distrustful. "I have been surrounded by medicine men", Burroughs complained in his letters, and he found them to be a "horrible crew".[354] "The most inveterate drunk and liar and loafer of the village", Burroughs writes, "is always the medicine man."[355] Burroughs' initial experiences with yagé did not disperse these suspicions. In an unpublished section of the "Yage" manuscript, held at Stanford

University, Burroughs wrote an initial conclusion to his yagé expedition. "When I started looking for Yage", the conclusion begins, "I was thinking along the line" that "the medicine men have secrets the whites don't know about."[356] "Most of these secrets", he continued, "turn out to be a con the Brujo puts down on the public so he can preserve a semblance of monopoly".[357] In fact, "anyone" could "prepare" the yagé mixture "if he has enough of the Yage vine."[358] He couldn't decipher whether yagé was telepathic since all he "received" was "waves of nausea".[359] Burroughs pictured the naïve whites and Indians sitting around under the influence of yagé, claiming to be in a "telepathic state."[360] "Any drug used in common with others", Burroughs points out dryly, "conveys mutual empathy."[361] This was not the same as telepathic contact. These initial judgments were made in March 1953. By June, Burroughs had decisively changed his mind.[362] "Hold the presses!" he wrote to Allen Ginsberg.[363] "Everything I wrote about Yage subject to revision in light of subsequent experience."[364] Burroughs informed Ginsberg that he was now "prepared to believe that the *brujos* do have secrets" and that it was the "leaves and plants" that the brujos added that "made all the difference."[365]

According to Taussig, the European colonist believes in the "mode of salvation", and his idealised version of a journey moves "from a foul and horrible beginning to a desirable and joyful end".[366] This "mode of salvation", Taussig argues, "is closely connected to the quality of evil with which he [...] paints the underside of the world - in tones melodramatic and mysterious in depth."[367] This desire to conclude desirably and joyfully is evident in Allen Ginsberg's experience with yagé, described in the section of *The Yage Letters* titled "Seven Years Later", which provide a useful counterpoint to Burroughs' own experience. What is immediately striking about Ginsberg's experiences with yagé are their dualistic nature. They are either beatific or horrific, a split response neatly summarized by the two drawings Ginsberg provided

for *The Yage Letters*: "The Great Being" and "The Vomiter"[368]. Ginsberg's initial experience was beatific. He began "sensing or feeling what I thought was the Great Being, or some sense of It, approaching my mind like a big wet vagina". (*Yage Letters*/49) It was a "black hole surrounded by all creation", and it was attended by a "great feeling of pleasantness in my body, no nausea." (*Yage Letters*/49) If, in the simplest terms, Ginsberg's first yagé experience brought images of creation, "The Great Being", his second experience brought him into contact with its terrifying opposite. "I felt faced by Death", he writes, "my skull in my beard on pallet on porch rolling back and forth and settling finally as if in reproduction of the last physical move I make before settling into real death". (*Yage Letters*/51) Ginsberg felt terrified by this "single mysterious Thing that was our fate and was sooner or later going to kill us."[369] (*Yage Letters*/53) Discussing his yagé experience with Ekbert Faas in *Towards a New American Poetics* (1978), Ginsberg explains that he had been "insistently imposing" on himself an "ideal of a state of consciousness that was ecstatic and celestial".[370] As a result, however, of that push towards the celestial, the insistence on the "universal application" of his state of consciousness, Ginsberg "was coming up with the opposite side of that", personified by *The Vomiter*, "which was non-celestial and murderous."[371] Ginsberg's initial experiences, then, repeat the pattern of the Western tradition. Indeed, a parallel can be drawn between Columbus' identification of the "swirling mouth of the Orinoco" as "one of the four rivers flowing from the Garden of Eden" and Ginsberg's "big wet vagina", (*Yage Letters*/49), and between Ginsberg's "non-celestial and murderous"[372] state of consciousness and the "frenzied search for El Dorado".[373]

Burroughs' first satisfactory experience with yagé was similar to that of Ginsberg. In the 1955 manuscript version of "Yage", Burroughs wrote that he "experienced at first a feeling of calm and serenity like I could sit there all night."[374] In

his serenity, Burroughs "glimpsed a new state of being."[375] "I must", he continued, "give up the attempt to explain, to seek any answer in terms of cause and effect and prediction, leave behind the entire structure of pragmatic, result seeking, use seeking, question asking Western thought. I must change my whole method of conceiving fact."[376] Taussig contrasts the colonist's "mode of salvation", the "heavenly catharses of colonizing narrativity", with the Indian mode, in which a "rippling teasing sets the world on its oscillating course."[377] Their sense of journey "stretches not from hell to heaven but oscillates back and forth between laughter and death in a montage of creation and destruction".[378] Burroughs, by abandoning, or attempting to abandon the "result seeking use seeking" tradition of Western thought,[379] did not push for an "ideal state of consciousness",[380] and therefore did not fall completely into the trap of the "mode of salvation".[381]

In many ways, however, Burroughs was looking for salvation in yagé. In his introduction to *Queer*, thinking, no doubt, of his first unsuccessful expedition to find yagé and the tragic events that followed it, Burroughs "wonders if Yage could have saved the day by a blinding revelation." (*Queer*/16) Furthermore, in many ways yagé did provide a form of salvation, although not with the "smoothly cadenced harmonies and catharsis" of the Western tradition.[382] Yagé, in its way, did fulfill all the hopes that Burroughs had for it. "Yage", Burroughs wrote, echoing the final passage of *Junky*, "is the final kick and you are not the same after you have taken it. I mean literally."[383]

As has been noted, Burroughs had expressed his wish, in a letter to Ginsberg, to experience "consciousness without a body or life after death, and before birth."[384] This desire was connected with his interest in "telepathy", which was "independent of space-time."[385] "Yage", Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg three years later, "is space-time travel."[386] Burroughs compared the "vertigo" produced by yagé to that evoked by H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine*.[387] Burroughs felt he was experiencing the "phylogenetic

memory of a migration from Middle East to South America to South Pacific."[388] "You make migrations", Burroughs wrote, "incredible journeys through jungles and deserts and mountains", or, in an echo of the first Polynesian explorers, "across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island."[389]

Burroughs had attempted to investigate, through his travels, what "happens when there is no limit", and his regressions in time were attempts to escape the repressive morality of his own culture. (*Queer*/92) Again, yagé fulfilled its promise. It was the "most complete negation possible of respectability."[390] "Convulsions of lust" had "accompanied" Burroughs' experience with yagé.[391] He had felt himself "change into a Negress complete with all the female facilities."[392] He imagined a "small town bank president turning into a Negress and rushing to Nigger town to solicit sex from some Buck Nigra. He would never recover that preposterous condition known as self respect."[393] He would also never be able to project his own fantasies of violence and sexual transgression onto the "hostile Indians".[394]

Burroughs had also been searching for "telepathic contact" (*Junky*/152), and while Burroughs was, as we have noted, initially unconvinced, he did note in a letter to Ginsberg that yagé produced a "delayed reaction, an hallucinated period, the illusion or actuality of telepathic contact."[395] "Today", Burroughs wrote, "I had a premonition like the first teasing chill of malaria, that I was in hot writing form."[396] Burroughs "went to a café and began to write like I was taking dictation."[397] The result was one of his most famous sequences, a "panorama" of a city, later to be titled "Interzone", which would be included in *Naked Lunch* as "The Market".[398] Yagé also, therefore, fulfilled Lee's earlier search, signalled in the Prologue to *Junky*, for "contact with the life of the city." (*Junky*/xii)

Above all, however, the salvation that yagé brought to Burroughs was as a writer. It is appropriate, therefore, that, in the process of reediting the yagé letters for

publication, Burroughs' dramatic confirmation that yagé was indeed the "final kick" was omitted.[399] The effect of this omission was, as Oliver Harris notes, to "defer the quest beyond the drug's acquisition", as if "in recognition that the botanical Grail could not satisfy" the "search for transforming knowledge."[400] To some extent, this was an authorial decision: the momentum generated by Lee's picaresque adventures would grind to a halt if the picaro reached his final destination, and the deferment of the quest allowed the narrative to continue. However, the narratives that Burroughs wrote after his experiences with yagé were very different from those that preceded them, as is evident from the "anti-narrative" form of *Naked Lunch*.[401] As will be suggested in the following chapter, which deals with Burroughs' residency in Tangier between 1954 and 1958, the "delayed" reactions Burroughs had experienced immediately after having taken yagé continued after his return from South America, at least in the sense that the "insane overwhelming rape of the senses" created by yagé had a considerable impact on the important transitions in aesthetic Burroughs made during this period.[402] By the time of its publication, as Harris also notes, *The Yage Letters* had itself been transformed by "a process of writing - through additional texts that [...] radically [...] reedited the old ones".[403] Indeed, the alchemy of writing, with its processes of transformation, and its refusal of stasis and fixity, was the greatest legacy of Burroughs' search for yagé.

1 Burroughs, *Letters*, 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
2 Ibid.
3 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.
4 Burroughs, *Letters*, 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
5 Potter, "How to Make Double-Talk Speak", *New Essays on Moby-Dick*, 73.
6 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.
7 Ibid., 12.
8 Potter, "How to Make Double-Talk Speak", *New Essays on Moby Dick*, 73.
9 Ibid., 73.
10 Ibid., 101.
11 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 362.
12 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 101.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 98.
15 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 341.
16 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.
17 Ibid., 108.
18 Ibid.
19 Stephen Fredman, *The Grounding of American Poetry: Charles Olson and the Emersonian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 69.
20 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 108.
21 Will Self, review of *Junky*, (Sunday Times, 2nd May 1993, *Books* section) pp. 6/9.
22 Timothy S. Murphy, "William Burroughs Between Indifference and Revalorization: notes towards a political reading", *Angelaki* (Vol.1, 1993), 118.
23 Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 17.
24 Ibid., 21.
25 Spanos, *The Errant Art of Moby Dick*, 206. While, as Olson says, Melville didn't "stress [...] whaling as industry" and *Moby Dick* is rarely considered as a book about the wider American economy, Ishmael does note, in "The Advocacy", the scale of the American whaling business, with its "navy of upwards of seven hundred vessels; manned by eighteen thousand men; yearly consuming 4,000,000 of dollars; the ships worth [...] $20,000,000, and every year importing into our harbours [...] $7,000,000." Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, pp. 20-1 and Melville, *Moby Dick*, 99.
26 Burroughs, *Letters*, 25. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.30, 1948.
27John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace*, 208.
28 Ibid. According to Diggins, Whyte was "opposed" to the "individual's acquiescence to the all-absorbing systems of social organization". His solution was "not to challenge society, but to infiltrate it [...] to take it over by playing by its own rules." Ibid., pp. 208-9.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Lears, "A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass-Consumption Society", *Recasting: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War* ed. Larry May (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 45.
33 Ibid.
34 Burroughs, *Letters*, 120. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 22, 1952.
35 Lears, "A Matter of Taste", *Recasting: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War*, 45.
36 Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence", *The Oxford History of the American West*, 396.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 404.
39 Ibid., 410.

40 Ibid., 418.
41 Carl Abbott, "The Federal Presence", *The Oxford History of the American West*, pp. 470-1.
42 Ibid., 471.
43 Burroughs, *Letters*, 51. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated June 24, 1949. "D of A" is Department of Agriculture.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
46 Ibid., 52. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated June 24, 1949.
47 Jonathan Paul Eburne, "Trafficking in the Void: Burroughs, Kerouac and the Consumption of Otherness", *Modern Fiction Studies* (Spring 1997), 60.
48 Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 139.
49 Ibid., 44.
50 Ibid., 48.
51 Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 69.
52 Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 44.
53 Ibid., 135.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 136.
59 Ibid.
60 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 9
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 138.
65 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 91.
66 Ibid., 4.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 5.
70 Ibid., 8.
71 Ibid.
72 Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 244.
73 Ibid.
74 Burroughs, *Letters*, 25. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.30, 1948.
75 Ibid., 28. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Dec.2, 1948.
76 Burroughs gave Ginsberg the example of a processing plant for cotton-picking, which cost "circa $300,000." Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 25. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.30, 1948.
79 Burroughs, Correspondence (Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library: Ginsberg coll.), from newspaper extract included in letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Dec. 2, 1948.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Burroughs, *Letters*, 25. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.30, 1948.
86 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 101.
87 Potter, "How to Make Double-Talk Speak", *New Essays on Moby Dick*, pp. 93-4.

88 Burroughs, *Letters*, 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
89 The "Angle Bar on Eight Avenue", for example, is a "meeting place for 42nd Street hustlers, a peculiar breed of four-flushing would-be criminals. [...] inept, unlucky, and unsuccessful, they go on looking, fabricating preposterous lies about their big scores, cooling off as dishwashers, soda jerks, waiters [...]" Burroughs, *Junky*, pp.2-3. "Junk", Lee tells us, is "often found adjacent to ambiguous or transitional districts", such as "East Fourteenth near Third in New York; Poydras and St. Charles in New Orleans; San Juan Létran in Mexico City." Ibid., 111. Such "transitional districts", home to sellers of "artificial limbs, wig-makers, dental mechanics, loft manufacturers of perfumes, pomades, novelties, essential oils", were a point of connection between "dubious enterprise" and "Skid Row", (Ibid., 111) where distinctions between "legitimate" and "criminal activity" were confused. Burroughs, *Letters*, 25. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.30, 1948. Lee also finds traces of this lost frontier world in New Orleans, with its "chili joints, decaying hotels, oldtime saloons with mahogany bars, spittoons and crystal chandeliers. New Orleans is depicted, however, as a false frontier town, a "stratified series of ruins": "Along Bourbon Street are the ruins of the 1920s. Down where the French Quarter blends into Skid Row are ruins of an earlier stratum [...] The ruins of 1900." Burroughs, *Junky*, 69.
90 Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 136.
91 Burroughs, *Letters*, 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
92 David J. Weber, "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands", *American Historical Review* (No. 91, February 1986), 79, quoted in William G. Robbins, "The Emergence of New Paradigms", *Trails: Towards a New Western History*, 194.
93 William G. Robbins, "The Emergence of New Paradigms", *Trails: Towards a New Western History*, 194.
94 Burroughs, *Letters*, 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
95 Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence", *The Oxford History of the American West*, 393.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Burroughs, *Letters*, 42. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 15, 1949.
100 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 129.
101 Burroughs, *Letters*, 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept. 1, 1946. Burroughs and Elvin's money-making schemes are parodied in *Naked Lunch*:

> Recollect when I was traveling with K.E., hottest idea man in the gadget industry. "Think of it!" he snaps. "A cream separator in your own kitchen!"
> "K.E., my brain reels at the thought." Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 104.

102 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, pp. 128-9.
103 Burroughs, *Letters*, 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept.1, 1946.
104 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 129.
105 Ibid., 15.
106 Burroughs, *Letters*, 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept.1, 1946.
107 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 15.
108 "I am concocting an aphrodisiac", Burroughs told Ginsberg, "which the Dept. will probably regard with even less enthusiasm." Burroughs, *Letters*, 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept.1, 1946.
109 Ibid., 8. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.10, 1946.
110 Ibid.
111 "I am afraid this seed I have", Burroughs complains to Ginsberg, "has been sterilized by the government. What a dirty, underhanded, bureaucratic trick." Burroughs, *Letters*, 11, Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb. 19, 1947.
112 Ibid., 21. Letter to Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, dated June 5, 1948.
113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., 49. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated May 27, 1949.
115 Ibid., 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
116 Ibid., 21. Letter to Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, dated June 5, 1948.
117 Ibid., 22. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.14, 1948.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 23. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.9, 1948.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid. Burroughs appeared to have been genuinely irritated by Ginsberg's doubts about his farming project. "You evidently have a deep block on the subject of farming", he informed Ginsberg sternly. "Mere lack of knowledge could not account for your staggering ignorance of agricultural operations." Ibid., 40. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb.7, 1949.
122 Ibid., 44. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 18, 1949.
123 Ibid., 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
124 Brown, "Violence", *The Oxford Book of the American West*, 393.
125 Burroughs, *Letters*, 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
126 Brown, "Violence", *The Oxford Book of the American West*, 394.
127 Burroughs, *Letters*, 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
128 Brown, "Violence", *The Oxford Book of the American West*, 395.
129 Burroughs, *Letters*, 79. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.11, 1951.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
133 Ibid.
134 Burroughs quoted in Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxi. Letter not dated.
135 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337.
136 Sarah, Deutsch, George J.Sánchez and Gary Y.Okihiro, "Contemporary Peoples/Contested Places", *The Oxford History of the American West*, pp. 662-3.
137 Sarah, Deutsch, George J.Sánchez and Gary Y.Okihiro, "Contemporary Peoples/Contested Places", *The Oxford History of the American West*, 663.
138 Ibid., pp. 663-4.
139 Ibid., 664.
140 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 11.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 12.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid., pp. 12-13.
146 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxi.
147 Burroughs, *Letters*, 78. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.11, 1951.
148 Ibid., 61. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
149 Ibid., 65. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 10, 1950.
150 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337.
151 Burroughs, *My Education: A Book of Dreams*, 94.
152 Following the ceremony, which was conducted by a "Navajo Indian shaman named Melvin Betsellie", Ginsberg asked Burroughs specific questions about the ugly spirit. According to the shaman, the spirit had "a white skull face but no eyes and ... wings". The ugly spirit, then, appears as a literal demon, as the devil, in his later incarnations, appears to Christoph Haizmann, with "horns, eagle's claw and bat's wings." "Exorcising Burroughs", words and photographs by Allen Ginsberg, *The Observer*, magazine (26th April 1992), pp. 26,7. Freud, "A Demonological Neurosis", *Art and Literature*, 399. Burroughs has elsewhere evoked the "ugly spirit" as "the worst part of everyone's character." Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography*, 137. The quote was taken from the Howard Brookner television documentary on Burroughs.

153 Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 265.
154 "Exorcising Burroughs", *The Observer*, magazine, (26th April 1992), 30.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 21.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid., 48.
160 Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 23.
161 Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, pp. 305-6. Ahab's "superheated vision" reprised that of Cotton Mather, who perceived the wilderness, to quote Richard Slotkin, as a "nightmarish dream-kingdom." Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 179.
162 Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 306.
163 Spanos, *The Errant Art of Moby Dick*, 207.
164 Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 6.
165 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, 179.
166 Ibid., 242.
167 Ibid., 243.
168 Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 4.
169 Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 121.
170 Ibid., pp. 121-2.
171 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 245.
172 Ibid,. 246.
173 Ibid.
174 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 3.
175 William G. Robbins, "Laying Siege to Western History: The Emergence of New Paradigms", *Trails: Towards a New Western History*, 195.
176 Ibid.
177 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 12.
178 Ibid.
179 The final "Mexico City" section of *Junky* links the book to the classic picaresque text of the period, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, since both conclude with a journey out of America, across its borders. The final section of *On the Road* is an account of the thousand mile journey through Texas, to "the border at Laredo", and "another 767 miles" through Mexico. The final destination of this self-consciously epic trip was "the great city near the cracked Isthmus and Oaxacan heights" and the direction travelled "was no longer east-west, but magic *south*." Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, 265. The border-crossing in *On the Road* is described in momentous tones, with Sal distinguishing between the "bottom and dregs of America", as represented by the border-town Laredo, where the cops "were red-faced and sullen and sweaty" and the waitresses "were dirty and disgusted", and the promise of "official Mexican soil". In Laredo, Sal and Dean felt "awful and sad", but "everything changed" when they "crossed the mysterious bridge over the river" and their "wheels rolled" into Mexico: "Just across the street Mexico began. We looked with wonder. To our amazement it looked exactly like Mexico." Ibid., 274. To move across the border, in Kerouac's account, is to be reborn, to "leave everything behind us" and to "enter a new and unknown phase of things." Ibid., 276. The protagonists of *On the Road* are evoked as pioneers, who desire to "*understand* the world, as really and genuinely speaking, other Americans haven't done before us." This attempt to "*understand*" Mexico is contrasted with the imperialism of previous American pioneers who, in the "Mexican war" went "across" the border "with cannon."

The journey into another culture, the "magic land at the end of the road" is approached

with wonder, though part of the wonder is expended on "our wonderful Mexican money that went so far". Finding themselves able to buy a pack of Mexican cigarettes for "six cents each", Dean and Sal "gazed and gazed" at their new currency, and "played with it and looked around and smiled at everyone." This new found wealth separates Dean and Sal from the poverty they observe from the safety of their car, as they travel down the "Pan-American Highway" towards Mexico City. Ibid., 297.

Kerouac clearly perceived the ambiguity of his protagonists' position, contrasting the "great grave Indians" with the "self-important moneybag Americans on a lark in their land." Ibid., 281. However, while Kerouac parodied conventional representations of the Indian, "the Pedros and Panchos of silly civilized American lore", his own perspective now seems, with the considerable privilege of a retrospective view, sentimental and overblown. The journey into Mexico is, supposedly, a journey "across the world" and an attempt to "finally learn ourselves among the Fellahin Indians", the Spenglerian "strain of the basic primitive, wailing humanity", found "in a belt around the equatorial belly of the world", from "India" to "Polynesia" to "Arabia" to "Morocco". Ibid., 280. In Mexico, Sal claims, life was "dense, dark, ancient." Ibid., 299. Yet the road on which they travel, the "Pan-American highway", in itself "partially civilizes" the tribes who live alongside it, and the protagonists bring their own civilized values with them. Ibid., 297. Dean gives a "soulful" young girl a "wristwatch" in exchange for a "little piece of rock crystal", and is treated by her companions as a "Prophet that had come to them", a prophet, presumably, of the future of cheap time-keeping. Ibid., pp.298-9.

The concept of the "Fellahin" is so central to Kerouac's representation of Mexico that it becomes the representation itself, as if Mexico were a blank space onto which the idea is being projected. This might explain the shock of recognition ("it looked just like Mexico") that is described when Mexico is first glimpsed. Ibid., 274. The journey ends in Mexico City, which is declared to be "the great and final wild uninhibited Fellahin-childlike city that we knew we would find at the end of the road." Ibid., 302. As is characteristic of the text as a whole, however, this final journey ends not in liberation but in disarray. Sal contracts dysentery, and is deserted by Dean, his supposed companion, who, having secured the divorce that was his real reason to be in Mexico City, takes the car back to America. Dean's attempts to "*understand*" Mexico, then, are as imperialistic and selfish as any American border-crossing, and earlier description of him as a "mad Ahab at the wheel" takes on, in retrospect, darkly epic overtones. "My God", shouts Dean as they travel through Mexico, "We can go right on to South America if the road goes. Think of it! Son-of-a-*bitch*! Gawd-*damn*!" Ibid., 277.

180 Burroughs, *Letters*, 62. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.

181 Ibid., 71. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Sept.18, 1950.

182 Allan Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy: William S. Burroughs' *Junky* and *Naked Lunch* and Reichian theory", *Review of Contemporary Fiction* (Spring 1984), 114.

183 Ibid. Reich linked homosexuality to addiction, observing that addicts are "sadistic, mystical, vain, homosexual". Reich, *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 138n, quoted in Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114. Burroughs' resistance to Reich's "straight genital" analysis has already been noted. Burroughs, *Letters*, 19. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb.20, 1948.

184 Burroughs, *Letters*, 69. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950.

185 Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 44.

186 Ibid., pp. 44-5.

187 Ibid., 48.

188 Ibid.

189 Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 55. Elvins' indirect involvement in "Junk" recalls Burroughs' earlier "collaboration" with Elvins on the story "Twilight's Last Gleamings" in 1938, which, as Burroughs recounts in his essay "The Name is Burroughs", had "broken temporarily" his writer's block, caused by a childhood anxiety that his diary was being read by his school mates in his absence. Burroughs, "The Name

is Burroughs", *The Adding Machine*, pp. 8-9. Burroughs' claim concerning the involuntary nature of the composition of "Twilight's Last Gleamings", "the words seemed to come through us, not out of us", also echoes the comparison between Lee's routines in *Queer* and taking "dictation". Burroughs, *Queer*, 70.
190 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 53.
191 Burroughs, "On Freud and the Unconscious", *The Adding Machine*, 88. In the case of both Burroughs' collaboration with Elvins for "Twilight's Last Gleamings", and Lee's "routines", the "ego" had been "superseded or refuted", allowing the "unconscious" to reveal itself. Burroughs, "Freud and the Unconscious", *The Adding Machine*, 88. Burroughs described the "laughing jags" that the writing of "Twilight's Last Gleamings" produced, and his own "slow shameless chuckles" on re-reading the manuscript. Burroughs, "The Name is Burroughs", *The Adding Machine*, 9. "We laugh", Burroughs wrote in a letter to Allen Ginsberg in October 1955, "when anxiety is aroused and then abruptly relieved". The "classical anxiety situation", he continued, is "the complete surrender of control to the id", and "this surrender is condoned" by "laughter." Burroughs, *Letters*, 341. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.29, 1956. Burroughs' collaboration with Kells Elvin allowed this "complete surrender of control to the id", and "condoned" it with "slow shameless chuckles".
192 Burroughs, *Letters*, 62. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
193 Allan Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (Summer 1984), 114.
194 Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 44. In *Naked Lunch*, Lee links junk to "magic and taboos, curses and amulets", and describes how he could "find" his "Mexico City connection by radar". The "connection is described in strikingly maternal terms: "there he is, toothless old woman face and canceled eyes." Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 20.
195 Lee does later swap from Lupita's overpriced papers to securing scripts from "Mexican croakers", but this does not liberate him from the infantile dependency of addiction. Burroughs, *Junky*, 118.
196 Burroughs, "St Louis Return", *The Burroughs File*, 83.
197 Ibid.
198 Burroughs, "Electronic Revolution" (1971), in *Ah Pook is Here And Other Texts: The Book of Breething, Electronic Revolution*, 155. "Electronic Revolution" first published in Burroughs, *The Job* (1971). The context is Burroughs' advocacy of hieroglyphic language. Strikingly, the hieroglyphs referred to in *Junky* and *Queer* are also terrifying: the vision the drunken Lee sees of "hieroglyphs" in *Junky* leads to "the final place where the human road ends, where the human form can no longer contain the crustacean horror that has grown inside it." Burroughs, *Junky*, 133. In *Queer*, Lee notes the hieroglyphs on "ancient Chimu pottery", which are "nameless obscenities", evoking the absence of limits. Burroughs, *Queer*, 92.
199 Burroughs, "Chapter Twenty Eight" of the "Junk" manuscript (Stanford University. Department of Special Collections: "Ginsberg Papers", Call no. M733, Box 2, Folder, 39), 143.
200 Ibid.
201 Burroughs, *Letters*, 91. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated May 1951.
202 Ibid.
203 In his *Paris Review*, Burroughs again claimed that Mexico was a "sinister place", and represented Mexicans as sinister and murderous: "If you walked into a bar, there would always be at least 15 people in there who were carrying guns. [...] They got drunk and they were a menace to any living creature. I mean, sitting in a cocktail lounge, you always had to be ready to hit the deck. I had a friend who was shot, killed." Burroughs, "The Art of Fiction XXXVI", *Paris Review* (1965), 40. According to Ted Morgan, however, Burroughs himself "always carried a gun", and on one occasion, in a bar, "shot a mouse that someone had caught and was holding up by the tail. The bullet had gone through the mouse and lodged in the wall, and the bullet hole was shown to visitors as

part of the Bounty's decor." Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 184.
204 Burroughs, *Letters*, pp. 83-4. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1951. He also added, and later crossed out, the proviso "except perhaps to someone hopelessly rigid and armored. Another thing about living here, you lose even the possibility of concerning yourself with neurotic that is to say defensive issues." Ibid., 84.
205 Ibid., 88. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1951.
206 Even Eric Mottram, who elsewhere refuses "spurious psychoanalyzings", identifies this incident as "one of the origins" of Burroughs' "adult probings into the sexuality of power." Mottram, *The Algebra of Need*, 30.
207 Bearing in mind the "accidental shooting death" of Joan Vollmer, many of Burroughs' observations about Mexican violence are tragically ironic. Burroughs, *Queer*, 14. In a particularly unfortunate remark in a letter to Ginsberg, Burroughs claimed that "shooting anyone without reason is a stupid Mexican trick - Mexican cops, army officers, and private citizens are subject to get themselves lobotomized drunk and shoot some unfortunate character, who has committed no other offense than propinquity." Burroughs, *Letters*, 88. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1951.
208 Burroughs, *Letters*, 65. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 10, 1950.
209 Robert Holton, "Kerouac Among the Fellahin: *On the Road* to the Postmodern", *Modern Fiction Studies* (Summer 1995), 278.
210 Ibid.
211 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxiii.
212 Burroughs, "Freud and the Unconscious", *The Adding Machine*, 95. Similarly, in "The Retreat Diaries", Burroughs notes that the "*nagual* is by its nature unpredictable" and "extremely dangerous". Burroughs, "The Retreat Diaries", *The Burroughs File*, 191.
213 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 53.
214 Burroughs, *Letters*, 262. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb.7, 1955.
215 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 86.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 62. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.1, 1950.
218 Ibid., 54. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.13, 1949.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., 56. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.2, 1949.
221 Ibid., 75. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.1, 1951.
222 Ibid., 78. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.11, 1951.
223 Ibid., 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept.1, 1946.
224 Ibid., 78. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.11, 1951. There was another plan to open "an American Bar on the border", a project which expressed the ambiguity of Burroughs' position in Mexico. The bar, while being "American", would be on the "Mexican side, of course.", since Burroughs was "*no sabe*" on the "U.S. side of The Border." Ibid., 56. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.2, 1949.
225 Ibid., 27. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Nov.30, 1948.
226 Ibid., 43. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 15, 1949.
227 Ibid., 75. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.1, 1951.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid., 78. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.11, 1951.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid..
232 Burroughs, *Letters*, 157. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
233 Indeed, in many ways *The Yage Letters* is a lighter book than *Junky* and *Queer*. Just as the final Mexico City section of *Junky* prefigures and illuminates *Queer*, so too the final section of *Queer* anticipates *The Yage Letters*. The first South American expedition, as presented in *Queer*, is a dry run for *The Yage Letters*. *Queer* ends, as Burroughs somberly notes in his introduction, in a "dead end": the "search for Yage"

had "failed." In *The Yage Letters*, however, contact with yagé is made, and while the contact is ambiguous in nature, Lee does not face the same "dead end". Burroughs, *Queer*, 13.
234 Ibid., 157. The reference, as Oliver Harris points out in a footnote, is to "Little Abner", the "comic strip character", also referred to in *Naked Lunch*: Lee claims the "Only thing I read is Little Abner." Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 17.
235 Burroughs, *Letters*, 157. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
240 Burroughs, "The Art of Fiction Interview", *Paris Review* (1965), 35.
241 Ibid., 38.
242 Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* [1985] (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 606.
243 Burroughs, *Letters*, 157. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
244 Ibid.
245 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 335.
246 Ibid., 337.
247 Lee instead is "haunted by the unwelcome character of junk", the "Chinaman". Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 30.
248 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337.
249 Ibid., pp. 335, 337.
250 Melville, *Moby Dick*, pp. 29-30.
251 Ibid., 29.
252 Ibid., 32.
253 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337
254 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 5
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid., 288.
258 Ibid., 7.
259 Ibid., 95.
260 Ibid., 7. Taussig compares this Western version of the "space of death" with a verbal account given by "an old Ingano Indian" from the "Putumayo hot lands in the south west of Columbia":

> With the fever I was aware of everything. But after eight days I became unconscious. I knew not where I was. Like a madman I wandered, consumed with fever. They had to cover me up where I fell, mouth down. Thus after eight days I was aware of nothing. I was unconscious. Of what people were saying I remembered nothing; only the space of death - walking in the space of death. Thus, after the noises that spoke, I remained unconscious. Now the world remained behind. Now the world was removed. Well, then I understood. Now the pains were speaking. I knew I would live no longer. Now I was dead. My sight had gone. Of the world I knew nothing, nor the sound of my ears. Of speech, nothing. Silence. And one knows the space of death, there ... And this is death - the space that I saw. I was in its center, standing. Then I went to the heights. From the heights a starpoint seemed my due. I was standing. Then I came down. There I was searching for the five continents of the world, to remain, to find a place in the five continents of the world - in the space in which I was wondering. But I was not able."

No final resolution here, as Taussig notes, no "cadenced harmonies", but instead "Struggle and pieces of possible wholes. No more." Ibid., 7.
261 Ibid., 289.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid., 127. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 23, 1952. Behind the dogged persistence of Lee's quest in *The Yage Letters* is a horrifying restlessness. "This feeling

of urgency has followed me", Lee writes, "all over South America." "Where am I going in such a hurry?" he asks himself. "Appointment in Talara, Tingo Maria, Pucallpa, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico City? I don't know. Suddenly I have to leave right now." In Guayaquil, Lee had "dragged the Peruvian consul out of his house after office hours" to secure a visa and therefore "leave a day earlier." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, pp.42-43. Burroughs' correspondence suggests that he shared the restlessness of his fictional protagonist, and the images of decay and death that haunt Lee in *Junky* continued to haunt Burroughs himself. On his first visit to Lima, Burroughs had acclaimed it as the "promised land for boys", noting its "extensive Chinatown" and "pleasant climate." "In short", he wrote to Ginsberg, "I wouldn't mind settling down here". Burroughs, *Letters*, 162, Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 12, 1953. On a second visit, however, fictionalised in *The Yage Letters*, Lee finds it "cold, damp and depressing." He sits in a bar which he had previously liked, and finds "nobody there I know or want to know". He imagines a nightmarish version of the future, in which every night the "people" become "uglier and stupider, the fixtures more hideous, the waiters ruder, the music more grating on and on like a speedup movie into a nightmare vortex of mechanical disintegration and meaningless change." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, 42.

In their depiction of terrifying stasis, Melville's and Burroughs' protagonists echo each other. In the chapter of *Moby Dick* titled "The Whiteness of the Whale", Ishmael describes "tearless Lima" as the "strangest, saddest city thou can'st see". Lima, Ishmael explains, has "taken the white veil and there is a higher horror in this whiteness of her woe." This "whiteness" keeps her "ruins for ever new", since it will not admit the "cheerful greenness of complete decay". Melville, *Moby Dick*, pp. 167-8. In Guayaquil, Lee notices "the kids who sell Luckies in the streets", and wonders "if they will still be saying 'A ver Luckies' a hundred years from now?" He feels the nightmarish "fear of stasis", the horror "of being finally *stuck* in this place." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, 32. Melville and Burroughs' writings also express a horror of "whiteness". D.H. Lawrence described *Moby Dick* as the hunt of the whale by the "maniacal fanaticism of our white mental consciousness." Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 169. In "The Whiteness of the Whale" chapter in *Moby Dick*, Ishmael implicitly links the "nameless horror" of the whale to "the very veil of the Christian's Deity". Melville, *Moby Dick*, 169. Indeed, Ishmael association of whiteness with horror, in the context of the racially mixed Pequod, and of his close relationship with Queequeg, which undermines the assumption of white missionaries, is suggestive of racial self-hate.

Similar links between the white race and horror are present in the "Astronaut's Return" section of Burroughs' *Exterminator!*. The hypothesis is put forward here that the "white race results from a nuclear explosion in what is now the Gobi desert some 30,000 years ago." The radiation from this explosion leads to a "white virus", which, incubated for thousands of years, has affected the "present inhabitants of America and western Europe". This "ancient parasite", related to "what Freud calls the unconscious", makes its victims "basically different" from other races. Carriers of the white virus have to "kill torture conquer enslave degrade as a mad dog has to bite." Burroughs, *The Exterminator!* [1973] (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 24.

Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands|La Frontera*, also shares this notion: she writes of the "white sterility" that "Anglos" have "in their kitchens, bathrooms, hospitals, mortuaries and missile bases." Anzaldúa, *Borderlands|La Frontera*, 69.

266 Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 14.

267 Ibid., 15.

268 Richard Noll, *The Cult of Jung*, pp. 162-3.

269 Burroughs, *Letters*, 369. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.8, 1957.

270 Ibid.

271 Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 14.

272 Burroughs, *Letters*, 239. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.12, 1954.

273 Details on Colonel Fawcett from Oliver Harris' footnote. Harris, footnote 49,

Letters, 239.
274 Burroughs, *Letters*, 239. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.12, 1954.
275 Ibid.
276 Ibid., 240. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.12, 1954. Burroughs also briefly planned "an expedition to penetrate the hinterland" of the "Río de Oro", which "is a trackless desert with a few oasis cities." The area, Burroughs explained to Ginsberg, was "inhabited by the Blue Men", a group of people of "are blue because of a dye they use in their robes which gets in the skin and dyes the skin blue so they are blue." "Nobody", Burroughs continued, "has been back in the [...] Río de Oro. Two intrepid explorers found "unspeakably mutilated," presumably by the Blue Men. A mysterious figure known as the Blue Sultan is the key man in the area." Burroughs, *Letters to Allen Ginsberg 1953-1957*, 36. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May/June, 1954.
277 In his corrections to the first version of *The Yage Letters*, sent by Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg in 1955, Burroughs clarified his inability to convey the music in words. "That's the best I can do", he wrote. "It doesn't begin to give the feeling of antiquity + (phylogenetic nostalgia) conveyed by this music, which is unlike anything I ever heard. Perhaps Atlantean?" Burroughs, "Yage", (Columbia University: Ms Coll. Burroughs). Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.9, 1955. The Pacific, it will be recalled, was Melville's "Atlantis, the buried place." Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 115.
278 Freud, "The 'Uncanny'", *Art and Literature*, 340.
279 Neal Oxenhandler, "Listening to Burroughs' Voice", *Surfiction*, 192.
280 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 289.
281 Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 200.
282 Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, pp. 138, 140. Quoted in Edmunds, *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis and Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems*, pp. 12-13.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Burroughs, *Letters*, 185. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 23, 1953.
286 Ibid.
287 Ibid.
288 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337. These ties to the "reigning race and class", to quote Fiedler, also help to secure the "position" of Burroughs' fictional protagonist, Lee, and Burroughs' positive judgments were included as Lee's in *The Yage Letters* (34).
289 In describing the new territory he traverses, Lee often draws comparisons with more familiar reference points. The "Upper Amazon jungle" he notes, has "fewer disagreeable features than the Mid-West stateside woods in the summer." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, 16. Lee notes that the "Texas Oil Company" had surveyed the Putamayo area "a few years ago" and, having found no oil, "pulled out". Dismayed by the naiveté of "everyone in Putamayo", who believed that the "Texas Oil Company" would return, he compares this false optimism to the "dawdling psychophrenia of small town boosters" in America, an observation that imperiously flattens out the evident cultural difference between Putamayo and small-town America. Ibid., 22.
290 "For some reason these end of the road towns are always God awful [...] I arrived in Macao late at night and consumed a ghastly Colombian soft drink [...] God awful greasy food. Rice and fried platano cakes three times a day. I began slipping the platano in my pocket and throwing them away later [...] The ship was rusty and dirty. The water system did not work and the W.C. was in an unspeakable condition. The Colombians run a mighty loose ship." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, pp. 15,27,28.
291 Burroughs, *Letter*s, 156. Letter to April 22, 1953. In *The Yage Letters*, the reporter is working for "*Exposure*" magazine. Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, 22.
292 Burroughs, *Letters*, 158. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated 12,1953.
293 Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy 1945 -*

1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 35.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid., 37.
296 Ibid., 39.
297 Ibid., 40.
298 Burroughs, *Letters*, 179. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 8, 1953.
299 Ibid., 173. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated *Early* July 1953.
300 Peru had indeed invaded Southern Ecuador, in July 1941, and after a "brief, uneven struggle" between the "well-equipped and highly trained Peruvian army and airforce units and the almost defenceless Ecuadorians", Ecuador was made to hand over large areas of land to Peru as part of a 1942 agreement, linked to the Conference of Western Hemisphere Foreign Ministers. Lilo Linke, *Ecudaor: A Country of Contrasts* (London and New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1954), 159-60.
301 Lee had claimed: "I never yet lay a boy in Ecuador and you can't buy any form of junk." Burroughs, *Yage Letters*, 32
302Of his boy in Puerto Assis, Lee wrote that he had "beat him down to $10 bargaining under increasingly disadvantageous conditions. Somehow he managed to roll me for $20 and my underwear shorts (when he told me to take my underwear all the way off I thought, a passionate type, my dear, but it was only a maneuver to steal my skivvies.)" Burroughs, *Yage Letters*, 19.
303 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 335.
304 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 470.
305 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 7.
306 Ibid., 100.
307 Ibid., 342.
308 Burroughs, *Letters*, 156. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
309 Ibid., 161. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1953.
310 Lee goes on to claim that he has "precise instructions for Auca raiding. It's quite simple. You cover both exits of Auca house and shoot everybody you don't wanna fuck." Burroughs, *Yage Letters*, 31.
In his original letters, Burroughs describes attempting to "talk the *Life* reporter" into writing "an article on the Auca", with Burroughs to go along as "guide and interpreter". Burroughs told the reporter that he knew "the Auca like the palm of my hand, and speak the indigenous dialects fluently [...] I can always rattle off some kind of gibberish and then say, 'These are the Chickua Indians from the North. They speak a different dialect.'" Burroughs, *Letters*, 156. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
311 Ibid., 97.
312 Ibid., pp. 97-8.
313 Ibid., 99.
314 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 113.
315 Ibid., 117.
316 Ibid., 100.
317 Burroughs, *Letters to Allen Ginsberg 1953-1957*, 45. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 8, 1954. Additional section written July 10.
318 Ibid.
319 Ibid.
320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
324 , 211.
325 Burroughs, *Letters*, 240. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.12, 1954.
326 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 3.
327 quote from Walter Hardenburg, *The Putamayo: The Devil's Paradise* (London:

T.Fisher Unwin, 1912), 153-4. Taussig continues Hardenburg's "indictment":

> they also tortured the Indians with fire, water, and upside-down crucifixion. Company employees cut the Indians to pieces with machetes and dashed out the brains of small children by hurling them against trees and walls. The elderly were killed when they could no longer work, and to amuse themselves company officials practiced their marksmanship by using Indians as targets. On special occasions such as Easter Saturday, Saturday of Glory, they shot them down in groups or, in preference, doused them with kerosene and set them on fire to enjoy their agony. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 34.

328 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 53.
329 Ibid., 58. Quotes from Charles C. Eberhart, the U.S. consul in Iquitos, in 1916. U.S. Department of State, *Slavery in Peru, Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting Report of the Secretary of State, with Accompanying Papers concerning the Alleged Existence of Slavery in Peru ...* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913.), 112.
330 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 288.
331 Ibid., 9.
332 Ibid., 100.
333 Ibid., 122.
334 Ibid., 215.
335 Ibid., 215.
336 Ibid., 122.
337 Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 37. The quote is from a U.S *Department of State Bulletin*, dated September 28, 1947.
338 Ibid., 37.
339 Burroughs, *Letters*, 125. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 15,1952.
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
342 Fielder, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 351. Lee, it is important to note, describes the Russian experiments as "the basic con", a con that is bound to fail because "telepathy is not in itself a one-way set up". Burroughs, *Junky*, 152.
343 Burroughs, *Letters*, 173. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated *Early* July 1953.
344 Ibid., 154. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 5,1953.
345 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 256.
346 Ibid., pp. 256-7.
347 Ibid., pp. 257-8.
348 Ibid., 258.
349 Ibid.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
353 Burroughs, *Letters*, 156. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
354 Burroughs, *Letters*, 151. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 1, 1953.
355 Ibid.
356 Burroughs, "Yage" manuscript, (Stanford University, Department of Special Collections: "Ginsberg Papers", Call no. M733, Box 2, Folder 41), manuscript page 16. Begins "run a mighty loose ship. [...]".
357 Ibid., 16.
358 Ibid., 16.
359 The "old bastard" who had "prepared this potion", Burroughs noted, had "killed a citizen a month before I picked up with him." Burroughs, *Letters*, 155. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
360 Burroughs, "Yage" manuscript, (Stanford University), manuscript page 17. Begins "to take less or take this amount slowly [...]".
361 Ibid., 17.
362 On the initial manuscript page, Burroughs has written, in the margin, the following:

"Revised in the light of subsequent experience. Addition of other leaves which I have identified as palicourea sp robeaccya is essential for full hallucinating effect." Burroughs, "Yage" manuscript (Stanford University), manuscript page 16.
363 Burroughs, *Letters*, 171. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated June 18, 1953. These series of responses, first extreme scepticism, then conversion, then the practice of what has been learnt, repeat themselves in Burroughs' relationship with Arabic culture during his stay in Tangiers. See Chapter Four.
364 Ibid.
365 Ibid.
366 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 343.
367 Ibid.
368 Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters*, pp. 50, 52.
369 Ginsberg "finally" had the sense that he "might face the Question there and then, and choose to die and understand", but "afraid to die yet" he draws back from "the Chance, (if there ever was a Chance, perhaps somehow there was)". Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters*, 53.
370 Ginsberg, *Towards a New American Poetics: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Ekbert Faas (Santa Barbara, Black Sparrow Press, 1978), 274. In a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, written in June 1851, Herman Melville had expressed his annoyance at a saying of Goethe's: "*Live in the all.*" Melville paraphrases this as meaning "get out of yourself, spread and expand yourself, and bring to yourself the tinglings of life that are felt in the flowers and the woods, that are felt in the planets". Melville imagines a "fellow with a raging toothache", to whom the advice "*Live in the all*" would be of no assistance whatsoever. Yet, he does allow, in an additional "N.B." to his letter, that there is "some truth" in "this 'all' feeling", experienced for example when "lying on the grass on a warm summer's day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. Your hair feels like leaves upon your head." What "plays the mischief with the truth", Melville concludes, however, is the insistence on the "universal application" of such a "temporary feeling or opinion." Melville, "Reviews and Letters by Melville", *Moby Dick: Norton Critical Edition*, 560. Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne dated June 1?, 1851.
In the "Mast Head" chapter of *Moby Dick*, Ishmael extends a similar warning to the "absent-minded youth" who might be "lulled into [...] an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reveries" by the "blending cadence" of the ocean with his own "thoughts", so that "at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; [...] In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space". In this enchanted state, there "is no life in thee", though "move your foot or hand an inch" and "your identity comes back in horror. [...] Over Descartian vortices you hover." "Perhaps", Ishmael suggests, "with one half-throttled shriek", the "absent-minded youth" might one day "drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise for ever. Heed it well, ye Pantheists!" Melville, *Moby Dick*, 140. Such advice may have diverted Ginsberg from his search for "cosmic consciousness".
371 Ibid.
372 Ibid.
373 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 289.
374 Burroughs, "Yage", (Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Coll. Burroughs), 17.
375 Ibid.
376 Ibid. Burroughs also wrote, in another draft version of "Yage", that he was "learning the South American way of letting things take their course. The Latin American manâna does not mean necessarily pointless delay and laziness. It means wait until the time is right." Rather than being a complete philosophical turn-around, however, this adoption of "manâna" was more an adoption to South American modes of

social behaviour. "I had reconciled myself", Burroughs continues, "to the South American practice of saving the important question until you are getting up to leave. [...] Why not? It is courteous not to force your necessities on someone else [...]" Burroughs, "Beginning (II)", 1, included in "Yage" manuscript, (Columbia University: Ms. Coll. Burroughs).
377 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 343.
378 Ibid., 444.
379 Burroughs, "Yage" manuscript (Columbia University: Ms. Coll. Burroughs), 17.
380 Ginsberg, *Towards a New American Poetics*, 274.
381 Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 343.
382 Ibid., 7.
383 Burroughs, *Letters*, 184. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 10, 1953.
384 Ibid., 68. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950.
385 Ibid.
386 Ibid., 182. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 10, 1953.
387 Ibid., 181. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 8, 1953.
388 Ibid., 180.
389 Ibid., 182. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 10, 1953.
390 Ibid., 180. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 8, 1953.
391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.
393 Ibid., 181.
394 Ibid., 156. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 12, 1953.
395 Burroughs gives the example of his "walking into a café", looking at "a boy", and thinking "He is a liberal who will sell my gun for me." "It turned out", Burroughs wrote, "he was a liberal, did try to sell the gun and I finally gave it to him." Burroughs, *Letters*, 182. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 10, 1953.
396 Ibid., 182.
397 Ibid.
398 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, pp.91-4.
399 Burroughs, *Letters*, 184. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 10, 1953.
400 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxv.
401 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxvii.
402 Burroughs, *Letters*, 180. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 8, 1953.
403 Ibid., xxvi.