Chapter Two
The Quest Narrative, 1950-1953

The primary subject of the following two chapters of this thesis will be the first three texts written by William Burroughs: *Junky*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*. To discuss at length Burroughs' first three texts is to go against the grain of recent Burroughs criticism. Robin Lydenberg, for example, hardly mentions *Junky* at all, and *The Yage Letters* receive even less recognition.[1] In her introduction she notes briefly Burroughs' transition from his "first conventional novel, *Junkie* (1953)" to the "more daring mosaic style of *Naked Lunch*", and then to the "overtly radical 'cut-up'" novels, which provide the primary framework for her analysis.[2] Given Lydenberg's post-structuralist agenda, her concentration on the later Burroughs' texts is understandable, but it does give the false impression of Burroughs as an avant-garde writer who emerged, in 1959, as if from nowhere, with his radical literary techniques fully formed. Here, Burroughs' early texts will be placed in a context that stresses both their continuity with, and their distinction from, Burroughs' later work.

When *Junky*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters* are discussed critically, two particular approaches are often employed. The first approach is to present Burroughs' first three works as a form of literary apprenticeship, after which Burroughs could achieve, to quote Jennie Skerl, "his mature voice."[3] This approach has been often employed by the author himself. In a *Paris Review* "Art of Fiction" interview in 1965, Burroughs stated the apparent simplicity of his approach to writing *Junkie*. He was, he claimed,

"simply [...] endeavoring to put down in a more or less straightforward journalistic style something about my experiences with addiction and addicts."[4] In the introduction to *Queer*, Burroughs again writes of the "comparatively simple" motivation for its writing: the attempt to "put down", in the "most accurate and simple terms", his "experiences as an addict." (*Queer*/11)[5] Ted Morgan, in *Literary Outlaw*, even suggests that *Junkie* was written, with the encouragement of Burroughs' friends Kells Elvins, as a "memory exercise."[6]

To approach Burroughs' early work as an apprenticeship inevitably involves presenting *Junkie* as a modest and relatively straightforward text. In his 1965 interview for *Paris Review*, Burroughs claimed that *Junky* was "not much of a book actually. I knew very little about writing at the time."[7]. Most critics of the text concur with this assessment calling it, at most, a "minor, twisted classic."[8] What is often seen as most noticeable about the text is its 'normality', when taken in the context of Burroughs' later work. Tony Tanner in *City of Words* (1971), for example, describes *Junky* as an "uncharacteristically traditional" novel, noting its "autobiographical candor" and "uncomplicated narrative simplicity".[9] Geoff Ward compares the "monochromatic" prose of *Junky* with the "virtuoso display of styles" to be found in *Naked Lunch*.[10]

The second recurrent critical approach to Burroughs' early work is to connect the texts together as a quest narrative. Jennie Skerl, for example, argues that *Junkie* "introduces the great theme which has been Burroughs' obsession as a writer: the quest."[11] William L. Stull, in his essay "The Quest and the Question: Cosmology and Myth in the Work of William S. Burroughs, 1953-1960", uses Joseph Campbell's construction of a "monomyth" in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* to argue that *Junkie*, "In Search of Yage" and *Naked Lunch* are "structured as a quest first for 'the final fix' and later for what Campbell calls 'the freedom to live' and 'the ultimate boon'

that can revive the dying world."[12] Tony Tanner, in *City of Words*, notes the presence of a "sort of inverted Holy Grail search for 'the final fix'", signalled at the close of *Junky* as the search for yagé.[13]

The attempt to read Burroughs' early work as a quest is a perfectly rational one, and such a reading will be conducted here. Burroughs himself conceived of the books as being closely linked, as is clear from his correspondence, which charts, for example, the gradual emergence of *Queer* as a separate text from *Junkie*. Initially, Burroughs thought of *Queer*, which in the earliest stages of its composition did not have a title, as an extension to his "Junk" manuscript, but he later began to conceive of "Queer" as a work that, while it "could be part II of *Junk*" was also "complete in itself".[14] Burroughs also wrote to Ginsberg in 1953 discussing the possibility of including the "Yage material", later edited and published separately as *The Yage Letters*, with "later additions" of *Junkie*.[15] When Robert Creeley, then editor of the *Black Mountain Review*, first received a manuscript copy of *The Naked Lunch* in 1957, it was made up of "three" different "books": "*Junky*", "*Queer*", and "*In Search of Yage*."[16] The three texts, then, can, and indeed should, be seen as a tentative whole. Perceived in this way, the three books constitute a narrative journey, at the very least in a geographical sense, from New York to Lima, destination for the final letter from "*William Lee*" to "Allen" in the "In Search of Yage" section of *The Yage Letters*.[17]

The tendency to represent *Junky*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters* as a quest narrative, however, often flattens out the singularities of the particular texts within that quest structure. In terms of narrative strategies, the texts vary significantly. *Junky* employs a detached, terse, first person narrative, while *Queer* is in the third person.[18] *The Yage Letters*, by contrast, is, for the most part, in an epistolary form, being presented as a series of letters to Burroughs' friend, Allen Ginsberg, dated in actual locations, and signed with recognisable, if various, pen-names. Paradoxically,

it is the changing narrative presence of "Lee", narrator of *Junky*, protagonist of *Queer*, and, more problematically, letter-writer in *The Yage Letters*, that tenuously links the three texts.

In terms of the presentation of their subject matter, the respective titles of the three texts suggest their different areas of concern: *Junky* is about addiction to morphine, *Queer* about homosexuality and *The Yage Letters* about an expedition in the South American jungle to find a supposedly telepathic hallucinogen, yagé. These titles are, as will be suggested later, deceptively simple, but they do suggest that the texts explore distinctive areas, both in terms of specific geographies (New York, Mexico City and South America) and specific cultures. To flatten these early texts into a "spiritual quest", as Jennie Skerl does, whereby the protagonist leaves behind "conventional middle-class American social existence" in search of "visionary" experience, is to ignore the specificities of the various 'exotic' landscapes through which the protagonist wanders.[19] Here, the movement of the white, male middle-class protagonist into Mexico and South America will be seen in the context of white American colonization and economic expansion, and the ways in which the protagonist reads the 'foreign' environments will be examined.

It is also important to note that Burroughs' first five texts have been published out of sequence: *Junkie* was first published in 1953, and later as *Junky* (1977). *Queer*, written in 1952, was published in 1985. It contains an "Introduction", written by Burroughs himself prior to publication, which considerably shifts the reader's response to the original text. Burroughs wrote a series of letters to Allen Ginsberg concerning his search for yagé in South America in 1953, but *The Yage Letters* were only published in 1963. The inclusion of two additional sections to *The Yage Letters*, "Seven Years Later (1960)" and "Epilogue (1963)", again juxtaposes materials from different periods, and inevitably changes a reader's response to the materials originally

written in 1953. *Interzone*, published in 1989, contains disparate materials from Burroughs' early manuscripts, often, but not always, presented in the order of their composition.[20] Ironically, *The Naked Lunch*, published in 1959 by Olympia Press, was the first published Burroughs text examined in detail here to receive literary attention.

The publication of Burroughs' correspondence, in *Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953-1957* and *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, *1945-1959*, adds to the sense of a quest-like continuity in Burroughs' early writing, since, as Oliver Harris notes in his introduction to the latter volume, Burroughs' correspondence through this period invites a "sequential reading".[21] At one level, as with Burroughs' first three works, this "sequential reading" involves Burroughs' geographical movements, which more or less echo those of his fictional protagonist in *Junky*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*, from New York to New Orleans to Mexico City to South America. At another level, the "sequential reading" concerns Burroughs' development as a writer. The letters themselves, as Harris notes, play a "central role" in this development, since Burroughs used his correspondence as a space in which to rehearse his routines, and expropriated the resulting material into his fiction.[22] Burroughs' letters, as Harris claims, "*do* tell a story," since "they themselves show, rather than tell, how Burroughs started from narrative and ended at anti-narrative."[23] Burroughs' correspondence, then, offers its reader an alternative narrative to his fiction, beginning with the first letter to Allen Ginsberg dated July 24, 1945 and sent from his parent's home in St. Louis, which can be read in parallel with Burroughs' early fictions, the correspondence providing another perspective on the fiction. This is an approach that will be employed here.

However, the use of an author's correspondence to illuminate and explicate his fiction has its dangers. The problematics of applying a quest narrative to Burroughs' early writing, even when based around the framework of Burroughs' correspondence, become most noticeable when *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs' most famous and most

difficult novel, is approached in this manner. William L. Stull's inclusion of *Naked Lunch* within an archetypal quest narrative, for example, is by far the least convincing aspect of his analysis. Stull's reading relies on the linear narrative of Campbell's monomyth, which runs through a "basic pattern" of "separation, initiation and return".[24] Such a framework fits relatively neatly onto the linear narratives of *Junkie*, *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*. However, that linear narrative does not continue, in any conventional sense, in *Naked Lunch*. In a letter to Allen Ginsberg written in the midst of the writing of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs insisted that the material "from *Queer*, *Yage*, etc." did "not belong" in his new "novel".[25] In the "Ginsberg Notes" section of *Interzone*, "*Junk*, *Queer*, *Yagé*", are linked by the claim that they "reconstructed" the author's "past", while the author's "present novel", *Naked Lunch*, is "an attempt to create", in the form of a "guidebook" or a "map", the author's "future". (*Interzone*/130). The contrast, as Oliver Harris notes, is striking: the first three texts are reconstructions, while the "abrupt transitions and contradictions" that formed the narrative of *Naked Lunch* were "deconstructions" of "time and identity."[26]

As Harris suggests, there is a striking contrast between the correspondence included in *The Letters of William S. Burroughs 1945-1959*, and the "fragmentary antinovel" that was published at the volume's temporal conclusion. Burroughs' correspondences, with their date and place marks, form a narrative that moves, in a conventional linear manner, through space and time. Even as Burroughs' "antinarrative" novel deconstructed time and identity, then, its author, who for the most part signed his letters "Bill", moved from, for example, "Tanger ... *Dec.4, 1957*"[27] to "*Oct.7, 1959* Paris".[28] Faced with one of the least penetrable of literary texts, the temptation for the critic is to turn instead to Burroughs' correspondence of this period in search of the linearity and consistent presentation of self that the novel repeatedly refuses its reader. However, although sections of Burroughs' correspondence were

expropriated into *Naked Lunch*, they were expropriated into the context of the novel's "antinarrative" mosaic form, which attempted to indicate the "simultaneity of past, present and emergent future." (*Interzone*/128). The only date and place mark that *Naked Lunch* supplies to its reader comes at the close of the main text: "*Tangier*, 1959." (*Naked Lunch*/184). Therefore, while Burroughs' correspondence will be used here to aid an interpretation of *Naked Lunch*, the resistance of *Naked Lunch* to such an interpretation will also be noted.

I: Junkie as Transgressive Text

As has been noted, the tendency to read *Junky* as the initial text in a quest narrative, or the first work of a literary apprenticeship, often distracts attention away from *Junky* itself. In the following section, the status of *Junky* as a hybrid text, with its own important set of narrative instabilities and tensions, will be noted. In this sense, *Junky* can be seen to anticipate *Naked Lunch*, and becomes less a modest starting point, and more an important Burroughs text in its own right.

"Genres", writes Frederic Jameson in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), "are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of particular cultural artifact."[29] *Junky*, in terms of its textual form and in terms of its presentation at publication, is composed of a number of different genre-types, and creates a number of different genre-expectations. However, as will be shown in the following section, the text is deceptively subversive of the "literary *institutions*" of genre, creating a confusion in the reader of this "particular cultural artifact" as to its "proper use".[30]

Literary Transgressions

In order to highlight *Junky*'s hybrid status, the development of the text will be traced from its original manuscript form to its eventual publication by Ace Books in 1953. To properly determine the effects of this transition, and in particular of the changes that Ace Books requested before publication, it is important to remember the three major phases that Burroughs' manuscript went through to reach the general readership as *Junkie*. In manuscript form, between March 1950 and March 1953,

Burroughs referred to his work as "Junk".[31] Unfortunately, the original manuscript of "Junk" was, as Barry Miles recalls, lost.[32] However, fragments of a manuscript of "Junk", attributed to "William Dennison", are currently held at Stanford University, and Columbia University hold a late version of the "Junkie" manuscript. By noting Burroughs' comments about "Junk", and by concentrating on the main text of *Junky*, and ignoring, at this stage, the Prologue and the final section that were added to the original manuscript at the request of Ace Books, "Junk" as manuscript can be usefully compared to *Junky* as published work.[33]

William Burroughs first mentions the writing of "Junk" in a letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 10, 1950, and place-marked Mexico City.[34] On January 1, 1951, Burroughs told Allen Ginsberg that he had sent the "finished MS." of the book to Lucien Carr in New York, and asked him to "peddle it for the best price he can get."[35] This "MS." was "Junk", attributed to "William Dennison." Divided into short chapters, "Junk" in its earliest manuscript form contained a six-page chapter, Chapter 28, based on Wilhelm Reich's *The Cancer Biopathy* (1948), from which Burroughs "developed ideas on cancer and addiction."[36] The manuscript also had a seven-page "Introduction", which contained trenchant criticism of the "police state legislation" applied to addicts.[37] Both the six-page chapter on Reich, and the "Introduction", were dropped from later versions of "Junk". Burroughs told Kerouac, in a letter dated April 24, 1951, that he was going to "cut out all the theory", all "reference to Reich" included, "except where it is a direct part of the narrative."[38]

Ginsberg eventually found a publisher for "Junk", via his friend Carl Solomon, at Ace Books.[39] The reputation of Ace Books, as Allen Ginsberg writes in his Introduction to *Junky*, was based primarily on "commercial schlupp", with the "occasional French romance or hardboiled novel nervously slipped onto the list" by Carl Solomon. (*Junky*/vii) As Geoff Ward notes, the distinction between hardbound

and paperbacked novels was absolute. *Junkie*, as a paperback, was destined to be "bought from neighbourhood stores and stations", not from bookshops.[40] Although the price had subtly increased, *Junkie* was, in its Ace Books incarnation, a dime-novel.[41] From March 1953, the manuscript title "Junk" was changed, at the request of Ace Books, to its first published title, *Junkie*, and *Junkie* only became *Junky* in 1977, when it was reissued by Penguin.

Junkie was published in May 1953, as a "thirty-five cent" paperback, back-to-back with *Narcotics Agent*, a "book by a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, Maurice Helbrant."[42] Its cover showed a "man struggling with a woman in a red dress for possession of a hypodermic syringe."[43] The confusion of cultural messages in this presentation is striking. According to Ted Morgan, *Junkie* was published back-to-back with *Narcotics Agent* so as to provide a properly balanced perspective, with the "law enforcer" and the "law breaker" allowed "equal time".[44] This move was designed to counter the negative publicity that *Junkie* might create. As Geoff Ward notes, at the time of *Junkie*'s first publication, the use of drugs was "inseparable in the public mind from serious criminality."[45] To further "cover themselves" against the suggestion they "might be advocating the use" of heroin, Ace Books appended a "publishers statement disassociating themselves from Burroughs' views on drugs".[46] At one level, then, *Junkie* was presented as a reformative work that had a moral distance from its subject matter.[47] However, when it eventually emerged, *Junkie* was subtitled "Confessions of an Unredeemed Drug Addict".[48] This subtitle, along with the garish cover, set up an entirely contradictory set of reader expectations, primarily involving vicarious melodrama, that, equally, bore little relation to the text itself. Jack Kerouac's blurb for the novel ("A learned, vicious, Goering-like sophisticate makes the first intelligent modern confession on drugs"), further added to the confusion with its mixture of sensationalism (the "vicious, Goering-like" William

Lee), and the assertion of the book's literary value: "the first intelligent modern confession on drugs ... Stands classic and alone."[49] The presentation of *Junkie*, then, along with its subject matter, set up a series of contradictory expectations. Its status as a paperback, along with the cover and the subtitle, promised vicarious adventure, while its juxtaposition with *Narcotics Agent*, and the editorial additions made to the text to avoid prosecution promised moral distance.

In terms of genre and textual form, *Junkie* was also presenting contradictory messages. As Geoff Ward points out, one point of origin for *Junky*'s unadorned prose was detective fiction.[50] Ward sees *Junky*'s "laconic monotone" as being "indebted chiefly to Dashiell Hammett", in its "ease with dead metaphor and repetition".[51] Hammett and Raymond Chandler's detective fictions, written in the "unsettled, doubtful" years after World War I were, in Chandler's words, "hard and cynical about motive and character", and depicted a world filled with "the smell of fear."[52] Their protagonists, Russell Nye writes in *The Unembarrassed Muse* (1970), "tended to be cynical, well aware of the weaknesses of human nature, unsurprised and unmoved by them".[53] Forced to "make their own code" in order to deal with the confusion of the society through which they moved, they were "hard, violent, even cruel men".[54] The "hard-boiled" detective story, Chandler claimed, provided the "simplest and yet most complete pattern of the tensions in which we live in this generation."[55] The post-World War II generation also looked to detective fiction to express the confusion of their own war and its aftermath. In 1945, Burroughs had collaborated with Jack Kerouac on a novel based around the killing of their acquaintance, Dave Kammerer, by Lucien Carr, a story that indirectly involved Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac.[56] The novel was, according to Ted Morgan, to be "written in a deadpan, Dashiell Hammett style," but it aimed to be "more than a detective story - it would be the first American existentialist novel."[57] The novel, initially titled "I Wish I Were You", but

changed at Burroughs suggestion, to "And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks", was "turned down by every publisher it was sent to."[58]

In its original manuscript form, "Junk" would have resembled hard-boiled detective fiction in its refusal to adopt a conventional moral position towards its subject matter. In a letter dated May 1951, Burroughs responded with annoyance to Ginsberg's suggestion that he had written a "'justification' for junk or myself taking junk".[59] "I don't justify nothing to nobody", he stormed.[60] Burroughs "didn't mean" "Junk" to be either a "justification" or a "deterrent".[61] Rather, it was an "accurate account of what I experienced during the time I was on junk."[62] "You might say", he went on, that it was "a travel book more than anything else. It starts where I first make contact with junk, and it ends where no more contact is possible."[63] "Junk", then, was to be a literary demonstration of "factualism", free from such "nonsensical considerations" as conventional moral discourse.[64] Following Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*, the prose of "Junk" was shorn of "over/under defined words", and in the face of behaviour that would be profoundly unacceptable to a 'mainstream' readership, refuses to adopt a moral discourse.[65] This refusal lends the prose its much-vaunted flatness, a flatness that can often seem cold. For example, the following story told by Lee's acquaintance Jack, early on in the narrative, casually takes the reader into a callous criminal underworld:

> "My partner was going through the joint. The guy was sleeping, and I was standing over him with a three-foot length of pipe I found in the bathroom. The pipe had a faucet on the end of it, see? All of a sudden he comes up and jumps straight out of bed, running. I let him have it with the faucet end, and he goes on running right out into the other room, the blood spurting out of his head ten feet every time his heart beat." He made a pumping notion with his hand. "You could see the brain there and the blood coming out of it." Jack began to laugh uncontrollably. "My girl was waiting out in the car. She called me - ha-ha-ha! - she called me - ha-ha-ha! - a cold-blooded killer." (*Junky*/6-7)

Faced with such an episode, the reader is forced to ask the questions Burroughs asked of Ginsberg: "what do you mean by evil? *What are your standards?*"[66] Will Self describes the narrative voice of *Junky* as swimming "into the reader's consciousness,

as if out of some indefinable darkness, an inchoate place where stories are begun but never completed."[67] Here is just such a story, "inchoate" because it refuses to conclude, is instead left hanging without the moral that might soften the blow for the reader.[68] The story is delivered by "Jack", but Lee presents it with an almost complete neutrality, a neutrality which may be as shocking to the reader as the murder itself.[69]

The detective in the traditional "hard-boiled" novel is "hard, violent and cruel", a reflection of his society.[70] However, Lee is defined not so much by these qualities of presence as by the quality of absence. As Ward suggests, another possible stylistic precursor to *Junky* is Hemingway, whose writing shares this quality of absence.[71] In his essay "Hemingway", Burroughs describes the Hemingway's technology of writing: describe a "scene from a viewpoint", then remove the "viewpoint" and leave the "description".[72] In short, take out the "I".[73] The absence of the "I" is striking in *Junky*. While other characters in *Junky* are described in some detail, the narrator never explains his motivations. He simply acts. Any character image that accumulates in the reader's minds, therefore, is based on reading between Lee's actions, and projecting this image onto Lee's blank persona. Nowhere in the narrative, for example, is Lee's appearance described. The only description of Lee is a remark made by Roy, Lee's some-time partner, while rolling drunks on the subway:

> we walked into the car, and I sat down beside the mooch, opening *The New York Times*. *The Times* was Roy's idea. He said it made me look like a businessman. (*Junky*/37)

That Lee could "look like a businessman" with the aid of a single additional prop suggests a certain aura of respectability, especially when taken alongside the narrator's often urbane tone. (*Junky*/37)

Lee's inner life is as oblique as his external appearance. He does not, for example, give any reason for taking one of the syrettes of morphine that he is supposed to be selling. The description of his momentous "first experience with junk" is completely devoid of internal motivation. (*Junky*/7) Instead the procedure used is explained in careful detail: "You push a pin down through the needle". (*Junky*/7). Then the effects of the injection are described:

> Morphine hits the back of the legs first, then the back of the neck, a

> spreading wave of relaxation slackening the muscles away from the bones so that you seem to float without outlines, like lying in warm salt water. As this relaxing wave spread through my tissues, I experienced a strong feeling of fear. I had the feeling that some horrible image was just beyond my field of vision, moving, as I turned my head, so that I never quite saw it. I felt nauseous; I lay down and closed my eyes. A series of pictures passed, like watching a movie: A huge, neon-lighted cocktail bar that got larger and larger until streets, traffic, and street repairs were included in it; a waitress carrying a skull on a tray; stars in the clear sky. The physical impact of the fear of death; the shutting off of breath; the stopping of blood. (*Junky*/7)

The description of this first injection begins with a matter-of-fact detailing of physical effects; relaxation, then nausea; moving on to the emotional effects, a feeling of dread. The description moves from a generalised discourse, similar to that of a medical textbook ("Morphine hits the back of the legs first [...]") to a poetic image of its effect: "You seem to float without outlines" (*Junky*/7). Here the narrative changes from the objective "you" to the subjective "I". (*Junky*/7) While the narrative tone remains calm and detached, the subject matter becomes increasingly ominous and haunted. The curiosity of the piece is in the manner in which scientific, rational discourse is combined with the presentation of bizarre psychological effects. For example, the image of the "huge, neon-lighted cocktail bar" that gets larger and larger is presented by the same dry narrative voice that presents the precise physiological details. (*Junky*/7) There is, therefore, a calm, deliberate insistence on an inter-relationship between the different levels of effect: the image of "stars in the clear sky" is as much a part of the "physical impact of death" as is the "shutting off of breath." (*Junky*/7)

Given the narrator's laconic refusal, within the main text, to provide its reader with explanations for Lee's behaviour, the reader is forced to read Lee through his narrative, to listen to his voice. Even in this, however, the narrative frustrates interpretation. For example, in the following brief passage, Lee describes the abrupt termination of a weed connection. The passage is typical in its employment of terse dialogue, interspersed with chards of dialogue:

> One day, the red-haired Lizzie opened the door and stood there, her face dead white and puffy with nembutal sleep. She shoved the package of weed at me. "Take this and get out," she said. "You're both motherfuckers." She was half asleep. Her face was matter-of-fact as if referring to actual incest.
>
> I said, "Tell Marian thanks for everything." (*Junky*/17)

Here, as throughout *Junky*, the prose is concealing as much as it is revealing. The reader, for example, is free, or is forced, to hear whatever tone he wishes in Lee's pay-off line: for example, hurt politeness, heavy sarcasm or world-weariness. The curiousness of the scene, the corpse-like face at the door, the "matter-of-fact" voice, the accusation that works on two levels - vicious insult and weary observation, complicates the "matter-of-fact" narrative, since the passage has dream-like, or nightmarish, qualities. The possibility that the "red-haired Lizzie" could be a ghost is

suggested by a subtle change in the narrative to a gothic style: "her face dead white and puffy". (*Junky*/17) However, the prose is also careful to delineate the reason for her ghost-like appearance, and the discourse here is completely contemporary: "nembutal sleep". (*Junky*/17) The prose changes subtly again in the next sentence to return to a terse, Dashiell Hammett style: "She shoved the package of weed at me". (*Junky*/17) The effect of these subtle changes is disquieting, constantly problematising the reader's identification with the narrator, since he, like the text he narrates, changes from sentence to sentence.

These shifts in discourse can also be detected in Lee's detached, precise depiction of the "criminals" and "42nd Street hustlers" he encounters. (*Junky*/2) The following description of "Jack", for example, concentrates on his "sudden fluctuations in weight":

> The effect was uncanny. You would see him one time a fresh-faced kid. A week or so later he would turn up so thin, sallow and odd-looking, you would have to look twice to recognize him. His face was lined with suffering in which his eyes did not participate. It was a suffering of the cells alone. He himself -the conscious ego that looked out of the glazed, alert-calm hoodlum eyes- would have nothing to do with this suffering of his rejected other self, a suffering of the nervous system, of flesh and viscera and cells. (*Junky*/3)

The description begins with a general observation ("thin, sallow and odd-looking"), not out of keeping with a "journalistic style"[74], but develops into a clinical dissection, using the language of psychiatry ("the conscious ego [...] his rejected other self"), and of anatomy: the "suffering of the nervous system [...]". (*Junky*/3*)* Combined with these "scientific" discourses are phrases more in keeping with experimental poetry: "His face was lined with suffering [..] the glazed alert-calm hoodlum eyes [...] (*Junky*/3) The prose of *Junky* is often poetic, yet the materials assembled to make the prose would, taken in isolation, often appear dry and scientific. *Junky*'s narrative, rather than being "monochromatic", is a hybrid of discourses pushed densely together.[75]

Another form of discourse employed idiosyncratically in *Junkie* is derived from the "how-to" book. There is a certain tension in the employment of this mainstream American form, since the subject matter of the text is not how to win friends and influence people, but how, for example, to secure a prescription for heroin. This adoption of one of society's dominant narratives for such marginalized and illegal behaviour is made more disconcerting by Lee's arch, parodic tone: "You need a good bedside manner with a doctor", Lee tells his reader firmly, "or you will get nowhere." (*Junky*/21) The deviant junkie has become the authoritative figure, and the doctors, supposed pillars of the dominant society, are presented as easily corruptible refugees

from reality, who have been "exclusively nurtured on exaggerated ideas of their position". (*Junky*/21) Here, Burroughs' parodic employment of a mainstream genre subtly undermines the distinctions, so important within cold-war America, between the conforming American 'us', as represented by the doctors, and the deviant un-American 'them', as represented by the knowing junkie.

The Return of the "I"

In its original form, as "Junk", the narrator of the text is given no past, no memory, no motivation for his actions beyond his relationship with junk. In the original manuscript, as Burroughs confirmed by letter to Jack Kerouac, the last line was to be "Do you want to score?"[76] "Junk", therefore, was the representation of a closed world, the world of junk, the narrative revolving until the last around its one subject matter. Such a narrative, sparse in its depiction of identity and concerned with a single subject, echoes Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* and Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Indeed, European models may seem more suited to explaining this world of dispersed inner lives. Milan Kundera, in *The Art of the Novel* (1988) argues that Kafka's fiction, with its refusal to portray uniquely differentiated interior lives, provided the "new orientation" for European fiction[77], since in twentieth century European history we are faced by "situations that no one can escape and that more and more make us resemble each other."[78] Kundera, in presenting the historical context for Kafka's interior-less view of self, is thinking in particular of the First World War, which brought with it the sense that "henceforward, nothing that occurs on the planet will be a merely local matter, that all catastrophes concern the whole world."[79] The "wideness of the world", and the possibility of escape that offered, had shrunk dramatically.[80] "Suddenly", writes Kundera, "in our century, the world is closing around us."[81] How much more that applied after the Second World War, and the catastrophe of the bomb. As Allen

Ginsberg recalls, the political and social repression of the cold war period saw the "imposition of a vast mental barrier on everybody".[82] In *Junky*, one of Lee's "first customers", Nick, is a painter whose canvases "were very small, and looked as if they had been concentrated, compressed, misshapen by a tremendous pressure." (*Junky*/43) This "tremendous pressure", as has already been suggested, had a similar effect on the inner life of Lee. (*Junky*/43)

Kafka, claims Kundera, "does not ask what internal motivations determine men's behaviour."[83] The "radically different" question that Kafka asks is: "What possibilities remain for man in a world in which the external determinants have become so overpowering that internal impulses no longer carry weight?"[84] The questions that Milan Kundera asks about "K.", protagonist of *The Trial*, can equally be asked of Lee in *Junky*. "What is it that defines K. as a unique being?" Kundera asks.[85] It cannot be his "physical appearance", since, as Kundera points out, we learn "nothing about that".[86] Neither can it be his "biography" since we have no details of that either, nor can it be his "name", since "he has none", nor "his memories, his predilections, his complexes".[87] Is it then "his behaviour", Kundera wonders, that lends K. his uniqueness?[88] Hardly, since K.'s "field of action", like Lee's, is "lamentably limited."[89] What of K.'s "thoughts"?[90] While Kafka "unceasingly" traces K.'s "reflections", his "interior life" is entirely absorbed by the external situation, a bureuacratic nightmare, in which he finds himself.[91] Therefore K.'s thoughts revolve wholly around bureaucracy: "Go to the interrogation or evade it? Obey the priest's summons or not?"[92] The same deprivation of interior life applies, of course, to Lee. "As a habit takes hold", Lee tells us, "others interests lose importance to the user. Life telescopes down to junk, one fix and looking forward to the next." (*Junky*/23)

The vision of a world defined by addiction and power is vital to an understanding of Burroughs' writing in general. As Eric Mottram notes, the "central

analogy" of Burroughs' work is "the relationship between addict and agent or pusher - who is himself an addict - where addiction is the compulsive consumption not only of heroin but also of aspirin, tobacco, alcohol, religion, TV, sex, and the rest."[93] This "central relationship" between "consumer, product and agent" is enacted, Mottram continues, against the backdrop of a "loveless and parasitic system in which people manipulate each other."[94] Kundera's observations about the "world closing around us" apply here, since Burroughs, in Mottram's reading, presents a vast network of power and control that presses us into "situations that no one can escape and that make us more and more resemble each other."[95] In the context of 1950s America, with the rise of the mass media, the increasing role of the federal government, and the transition to a globalised economy, such observations are clearly valid, and will be returned to in more detail in Chapter Three.

One important addition to "Junk" made by Ace Books, however, subtly complicates the application of such a reading to *Junky*. In order to further distance themselves from the subject matter of *Junky*, the criminal underworld, Ace had asked Burroughs to provide a "preface" to the text, explaining, in Allen Ginsberg's words, how "some supposedly normal citizen", from a "distinguished family background", could "arrive at being a dope fiend". (*Junky*/viii) Such a preface, Ace presumed, might "soften the blow for readers, censors, reviewers, police, critical eyes [...] god knows who." (*Junky*/viii) Writing to Allen Ginsberg in April 1952, Burroughs explained that he didn't care "what prefaces, apologies or explanations" Ace intended to "paste on the deal", so long as they "don't want to hash up the story itself."[96] Despite Burroughs' protestations, however, the additions that Ace requested would considerably complicate the "story itself."[97]

The request for a Prologue meant that the attention of the reader was being subtly diverted away from junk itself, and from the world in which it was used, and

towards the narrator, the junkie.[98] While Ace were diverting the reader's attention towards the junkie, Burroughs in turn seemed keen, at one level at least, to divert attention away from himself. Burroughs' mother had read Jack Kerouac's *The Town and the City*, and had recognised Burroughs' thinly disguised fictionalised persona, Dennison. Burroughs, therefore, abandoned plans to call his protagonist Dennison, and worked through a series of alternatives: "Sebert Lee"[99], "Bill Lee"[100], "Richard Lee".[101] "James", Burroughs declared, was "not bad", although he wanted "something with more of an old Anglo-Saxon ring to it."[102] [103] Burroughs claimed that, in taking an assumed name, he was "thinking of the Old Folks", and aiming to spare them further embarrassment, yet it is striking how all his possible names reflect back on the Burroughs family, and in particular on his mother's side of the family, the Lee's.[104] Burroughs liked "Lee", according to Oliver Harris, for its "Oriental overtones", but the adoption of his own "Anglo-Saxon forename" undercut the exotic effect: *Junkie* was eventually published under the name "William Lee", an extraordinarily transparent attempt at disguise. "It is hard", Burroughs explained to Jack Kerouac, "to get away from your name entirely."[105]

While Burroughs didn't care "what prefaces, apologies or explanations" Ace added to the main text of *Junkie*, his response to Ace's demands for a biographical note is telling.[106] "I can't write it", he declared in a highly colourful letter to Ginsberg, claiming that he had "no idea" what Ace required of him.[107] In this letter, dated April 22 1952, the variety of Burroughs' attempts to evade writing "this biographical thing" can be observed.[108] His first recourse is to parody. He provides an extreme satirical version of the "routine [...] you see on the back flap", deliberately drawing attention to the manner in which an authorial self can be created by listing the roles that this created self has previously played: a "towel boy in a Kalamazoo whore house, lavatory attendant, male whore and part-time stool pigeon."[109] Burroughs then claims

his "principal hobby" is cat-torturing:

> That long silky hair cries aloud for kerosene and a match. I favor kerosene over gasoline. It burns *slower*. You'd be surprised at the noises a cat can make when the chips are down [...][110]

Behind this parody is a deliberate refusal to play the game that Ace had set up, although it does contain, to quote Lee in *Queer*, a "modicum of truth", since Burroughs had fictionalised his own cat-torturing habits in *Junky*.[111] (*Queer*/99) Dissatisfied with this attempt, Burroughs then asks Ginsberg to "write the fucking thing. PLUMMM. There's a great big kiss for my favorite agent."[112]

In the third paragraph of the letter to Ginsberg, Burroughs further tries to fend off Ace's "vaguely menacing Kafkian demands", by asserting his status as a "writer not a prestidigitator."[113] He therefore briefly presents a picture of the writer at work: "I sit down" he explains patiently, "- preferably at a typewriter or pad and pencil", admitting that he has a particular preference for "number 2 pencils in a plain yellow Venus."[114] While Burroughs is clearly trying to present the act of writing in all its dullness, his explanation veers off towards the verbal extremities of one of his "routines", the scatological bursts of prose that would become Burroughs' primary form. "I do not" he exclaims, "manipulate a typewriter with my feet nor do I write on a blackboard with the pus drips outta my prick."[115]

Burroughs' final avoidance of the "biographical monster" is to offer to send some "material" along instead.[116] He could, he explains to Ginsberg, "take one incident" from his life, and use it as an "indicating set up".[117] As an example of this evasive strategy, Burroughs mentions the "short story" he had written about the "Anderson period", which was enclosed with the letter.[118] This story became "The Finger", eventually published in *Interzone*.[119] An account, based on an incident from Burroughs' own life, of a man cutting off a finger joint to impress his male lover, Jack Anderson, it contains, as Burroughs suggests, some "mighty sorry biographical material".[120] Again, this is a deliberately extreme response to Ace's demands: "They wanta hear about how I cut the end joint off my little finger? Wanta know how it feels and looks to cut off a finger joint? (You'd be surprised just how much blood comes

out.)"[121] Here, the paradoxical nature of Burroughs' responses becomes clearer. Extremely unwilling, apparently, to write about himself directly in even the most meagre detail, Burroughs is willing to present himself, within the confines of fiction, with shocking vulnerability, in a "mighty sorry" light.[122] Likewise, in choosing his fictional moniker, supposedly to conceal his identity, Burroughs chose a name that could only help to betray his identity. Burroughs writes in the Introduction to *Queer* that "Lee" was "being inexorably pressed into the world of fiction". (*Queer*/13) The confusion here between protagonist, "Lee", and author, "Burroughs", is striking: Lee is already a fictional character, and therefore it is surely Burroughs himself who is being "pressed into the world of fiction." (*Queer*/13). Especially since the Introduction to *Queer* is a retrospective account, this confusion suggests the deep investment of the author in his protagonist. Yet, paradoxically, it also suggests a considerable detachment from the process of aestheticisation described here, as if it was not happening to "William Burroughs". Alongside Burroughs' clear reluctance to reveal himself, yet willingness to reveal all in fictionalised form, this curious slippage between author and protagonist suggests that being "pressed into the world of fiction" provided the author, in the detachment it offered him from himself, with his only possibility of being himself. (*Queer*/13)

This paradox, fiction as both a mask and a means to reveal, is at the heart of the Prologue that Burroughs produced for *Junkie*. In his letters to Ginsberg, Burroughs complained that the "last minute scramble" to give Ace the "additional material" would ensure "some sloppy work".[123] The "scramble" came at a time in which Burroughs was "kicking, really kicking" the addiction that had formed the main narrative.[124] The Prologue, however, rapidly included only as a means to ease publication, in fact considerably complicates the "story itself", the main text of *Junky*.[125] It does, if grudgingly, provide Lee with a past, and thereby adds substance to

the ghostly absence of self, of Lee's "memories, his predilections, his complexes", that is found in the rest of the narrative.[126]

The Prologue appears, at first glance, to adopt the same factualist approach that Burroughs had used for the main text, but here the factualist focus is not on the junk world, but on the junkie himself. "I was born", it begins:

> in 1914 in a solid, three-story, brick house in a large Midwest city. My parents were comfortable. My father owned and ran a lumber business. The house had a lawn in front, a backyard with a garden, a fish pond and a high wooden fence all around it [...] I could put down one of those nostalgic routines about the old German doctor who lived next door and the rats running around in the back yard and my aunt's electric car and my pet toad that lived by the fish pond. (*Junky*/xi)

From this opening, it might be presumed that the narrator had an idyllic childhood, the solidity of the house suggesting a rooted sense of home, the "garden" and the "fish pond" a verdant scene, the "pet toad" a boy's happiness. (*Junky*/xi) Further reminiscences, the "lamplighter lighting the gas streetlights", the "huge black shiny Lincoln" and "drives in the park on Sunday", suggest a safe, affluent innocence, now lost and yearned for. (*Junky*/xi) Such a reading - the boy from a "distinguished family background" finds himself a "dope fiend" and looks back longingly to his lost home - might indeed "soften the blow" for prospective readers, and the opening paragraph appears to play up to these expectations. (*Junky*/viii) "All the props", Lee writes, "of a safe, comfortable way of life that is now gone forever." (*Junky*/xi)

However, the secure reality that is being evoked here is undercut somewhat by the dry tone of the narrative. The remembrances of childhood detailed here are described as "props". (*Junky*/xi) That is, they are a form of support which has now "gone forever." (*Junky*/xi) Or, alternatively, they are props in the theatrical sense, as if the "solid" house is only a set, lending the scene a cardboard unreality. (*Junky*/xi) A similar ambiguity attends the paragraph's closing flourish: "I could put down one of those nostalgic routines [...] " (*Junky*/xi) Central to the Prologue, and to the way that it problematises nostalgia, is its self-conscious sense of itself as a performance, and its wry resistance to the mechanics of that performance. "I could put down one of those nostalgic routines", writes Lee, drawing attention to the whole Prologue as one of those wearily familiar "routines" by which the self pretends to describe itself. The details that follow may be part of the "solid" reality of the house, or alternatively, they

are just a "routine", pure fabrication. (*Junky*/xi)[127] The effect of these resistive strategies is, as Geoff Ward points out, to "throw absolutely everything into doubt".[128]

With the second paragraph of the Prologue, the tone of the narrative subtly changes:

> Actually, my earliest memories are colored by a fear of nightmares. I was afraid to be alone, and afraid of the dark, and afraid to go to sleep because of dreams where a supernatural horror seemed always on the point of taking shape. I was afraid some day the dream would still be there when I woke up. I recall hearing a maid talk about opium and how smoking opium brings sweet dreams, and I said "I will smoke opium when I grow up." (*Junky*/xi)

The narrator has, with the word "Actually", supposedly cut through the mock idealisation of the safe, comfortable childhood to the haunted, fearful world that lies behind it; a world in which bad dreams may at any moment seep up into the daytime. The structure of this paragraph, with its insistent use of the word "afraid", builds up an intensity the first paragraph deliberately avoids, and there is, apparently, no wry irony to undercut this intensity. (*Junky*/xi) As Ward notes, the Prologue's description of "hypnagogic visions" and its "acutely literary invocation of opium" sit oddly with the "laconic monotone" that Burroughs employs elsewhere in the book.[129] Indeed, the opening two pages of the Prologue in particular seem indebted not to hard-boiled detective fiction, or the adventure dime-novel, but to a far more literary source: Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Addict*.[130] While these transgressive romanticisms are clearly performative, they also reveal something. The Prologue, for example, is hardly "softening the blow" for its readers, since the world of childhood, rather than being an idyll, is the cause of the "supposedly normal citizen" becoming a "dope fiend" (*Junky*/viii), for it is the fearful child who declares his intention to "smoke opium when I grow up". (*Junky*/xi) The third paragraph further confuses the convention being employed. Lee claims to have been "subject to hallucinations as a child":

> Once I woke up in the early morning light and saw little men playing in a block house I had made. I felt no fear, only a feeling of stillness and wonder. (*Junky*/xi)

Here it is the haunted world of visions, rather than the "safe, comfortable" world of suburban reality, that seems worthy of nostalgia, for this is the other side of the hallucinatory childhood, a source of "stillness and wonder" that causes "no fear". (*Junky*/xi) These childhood dreams and nightmares are not referred to again in the Prologue. Their inclusion within the Prologue, however, does considerably complicate the response of the reader to the main text of *Junky*.

Towards the end of the Prologue, Lee addresses a series of questions, presumably intended to preempt those of the reader. "Why does a man became a drug addict?", Lee asks, and answers that a man "does not usually intend to become an addict. You don't wake up one morning and decide to be a drug addict." (*Junky*/xv)

The follow-up question is "Why did you ever try narcotics?", and the answer to this is that "Junk wins by default." (*Junky*/xv) It is the absence of "strong motivations in any other direction" that leads to addiction. Again, Lee asserts that "You don't decide to be an addict." (*Junky*/xv) The narrative voice, at this point, is terse, weary, as if dealing with questions that have been asked too often and are, in any case, irrelevant. Here, the Prologue, like the main text, refuses to ask, echoing Kafka, "what internal motivations determine men's behaviour."[131] Compare this terse refusal to discuss motivation, however, with the earlier quote from the opening page of the Prologue, which speaks in a distinctly different register: "I recall hearing a maid talk about opium and how smoking opium brings sweet dreams, and I said: "I will smoke opium when I grow up." (*Junky*/xi) Here, a decision to "try narcotics" has been made, and a context for Lee's motivation has also been set up. (*Junky*/xv) Lee's declaration as a child that he "will smoke opium" follows on immediately after his description of a "fear of nightmares", and of the "supernatural horror" that haunts his sleep. (*Junky*/xi)

This link to childhood finds a solitary, but distinct echo within the main text. In this startling sequence, the reader is offered another nostalgic glimpse of childhood, again linked to junk. In a description of the effects of "junk sickness", the terse narrative voice opens out, becoming wistful and contemplative:

> One morning in April, I woke up a little sick. I lay there looking at shadows on the white plaster ceiling. I remembered a long time ago when I lay in bed beside my mother, watching lights from the street move across the ceiling and down the walls. I felt the sharp nostalgia of train whistles, piano music down a windy street, burning leaves.[132]
>
> A mild degree of junk sickness always brought me the magic of childhood. "It never fails," I thought. "Just like a shot. I wonder if all junkies score for this wonderful stuff." (*Junky*/125-6)

Eric Mottram, writing in *The Algebra of Need*, glosses over this sequence as a lapse into "spurious psychoanalyzings".[133] However, this nostalgic note in an otherwise unyielding narrative demands, by its singularity, interpretation. As Oliver Harris writes, if "all mental conflict derives from separation anxiety, as Freud suggests, and if alienation originates in the distinction between self and other, as Lacan suggests, then the scene in *Junky* identifies nostalgia as the compound of the restoration and loss of the original sense of oneness with the primal mother."[134] Harris adds that the

scene "signals a return to (and withdrawal from) a state of apparent omnipotence that existed prior to awareness of the division of subject from object, conscious from unconscious, and hence prior to individuation."[135] Harris' observations here, along with his claim that "addiction reproduces the infant's dependence on the mother",[136] signal the presence of a psychological dynamic that, while not strictly Freudian, given the primary importance of the mother, is nonetheless rooted in what Ann Douglas terms a "family romance".[137]

II Junkie as Quest Narrative

The addition of the "Prologue" to *Junkie* is important for three key reasons. Firstly, the Prologue sets up, if fleetingly, a psychological motivation for Lee's use of junk. This psychological motivation, as will be shown throughout this thesis, is a recurrent trope in Burroughs' writing, and does not relate only to the use of opiates. Secondly, the Prologue is important, because, despite its apparent refusal to consider "what internal motivations determine man's behavior", it nonetheless suggests a distinct sense of continuity in Lee's apparently patternless drift into the junk world.[138] The key word in the "Prologue" is "contact". (*Junky*/xii) Lee's childhood home is "cut off from contact with the life of the city." (*Junky*/xii) His account of his life ceases at the point he makes "contact with junk" (*Junky*/xv). Burroughs described "Junk" as a "travel book more than anything else"[139], and the Prologue's depiction of Lee's travels before making "contact with junk" remind us of the extent to which *Junky* itself has a picaresque structure. (*Junky*/xv) The first fifty-nine pages of *Junky* are set in New York, at which point Lee, fearing arrest, leaves for Texas by car. He attempts to quit his heroin addiction as he travels, but finds himself "out of junk and immobilized" (*Junky*/60) in Cincinnati, and takes a train to Lexington, where he attempts a cure in an institution. He then returns briefly to Cincinnati to buy paregoric, and then spends "four months" in Texas, a stay that is not described in *Junky*, beyond the fact that Lee was "off the junk". (*Junky*/68) From Texas Lee moves to New Orleans, where he recommences his addiction, and is arrested. Next, Lee relocates to the Rio Grande Valley, and leaves there for Mexico City, where *Junky* ends.

The text was also altered considerably by the addition of the quest narrative that is set up on the final two pages of *Junky*. As has already been noted, *Junky* was already linked to the first half of *Queer* because of the cross-over in the composition

of the two texts. The last page of *Junky*, however, links the text not only to *Queer*, but to Burroughs' third work, *The Yage Letters*, and encourages the reader to see the text as part of a trilogy, in which the search for yagé unfolds. The trilogy is connected by travel: the movement from America to Mexico to South America. "I decided", Lee writes, "to go down to Colombia and score for yage." (*Junky*/152) In the following section, the addition of this quest narrative will be used as the basis of a reading of *Junky* and *Queer*.

The third key way in which the Prologue complicates the text is because it introduces a linear presentation of Lee's life history. The reader is therefore given an earlier base, a "large Midwest city" in the 1920s rather than New York in the 1950s, for Lee's narrative. (*Junky*/xi) Having presented his childhood at the start of the Prologue, Lee also traces the further course of his life, through petty crime, university, the army and a tour of Europe, ending his account at the point when he first "came in contact with junk". (*Junky*/xv) This brief potted history is important, since it gives the main text of *Junky* a context within time and space, a context which the text itself, which revolves around the static world of the junky, is not rigorously concerned with. It is important to stress again that the additions made to *Junkie*, including what Burroughs referred to in a letter to Ginsberg as "that fucking Prologue" and the additional reference to the search for "yage", were added to the main narrative of *Junkie* at a late stage, and at the behest of the book's publishers, Ace Books.[140] However, these additions to *Junkie* position the book not only in relation to *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*, but also, to quote Susan Howe, in relation to "family, history and ideology."[141]

The Journey Away

The Prologue to *Junky* begins with an image of home: a "solid, three-story brick

house in a large Midwest City". (*Junky*/xi). The home offers safety: everything external to Lee's home is shut out by a "high wooden fence all around it", an image encapsulating the apparent triumph of civilization over nature. (*Junky*/xi) To Lee's parents, however, even the contained reality within the "high wooden fence" seems too exposed, so they "move to the suburbs", in order to get even further "away from people". (*Junky*/xii) The new house is a "comfortable capsule", an Edenic retreat with a "beautiful garden". (*Junky*/xii) Lee describes it as "cut off from contact with the life of the city." (*Junky*/xii) This initial location for *Junky*, the childhood home in the suburbs, is an illustration of the profound changes in environment that had transformed American life and literature through the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In his discussion of James Fenimore Cooper's novels, Leslie Fiedler claims that Cooper's best work was set on the "ideal boundary" between "two cultures", one of which was "civilized and cultivated," the other "wild and lawless."[142] The American location for that "ideal boundary" was, in Fiedler's account, the "frontier".[143] According to Harold Simonson, however, in Melville's work the frontier becomes a metaphor for closure and limitation. Simonson quotes Edwin Fussel's claim that the closing of the frontier was concurrent with the Civil War.[144] According to Fussel, the Civil War left Melville with the sense that "all the values the national culture had been optimistically attributing to the Western frontier were suddenly inverted, and harmony and reconciliation were revealed to be chaos and nightmare".[145] The trail West became, to Melville, a "trail of error, a continental mistake, the way to insanity."[146] Arguing that the frontier was to Melville a "boundary, an imprisoning wall", Simonson notes the recurrent images of imprisoning walls in Melville's writing. Captain Ahab, for example, asks how "the prisoner" can "reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?"[147] In "Bartleby the Scrivener", there is a "lofty brick wall,

black by age and everlasting shade" outside the lawyer's window,[148] and at the close of Bartleby's story Bartleby lies within the "surrounding walls", of "amazing thickness", of the Tombs.[149] Simonson also notes the "penal hopelessness" evoked in "The Encantadas".[150] These images of imprisoning walls have a number of different meanings, both philosophical and political. The "closed wall" represents, in Simonson's reading, human "finitude", and "the burden of history", but in "Bartleby the Scrivener" and *Moby Dick*, the images of walls are related to industrialisation, capitalism and urbanization.[151]

In the opening chapter of *Moby Dick*, "Loomings", the "landsmen" of "the insular city of the Manhattoes", who are "tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks", are described looking longingly out to sea.[152] The land here is the location of social and economic responsibilities: the "landsmen" are tied up by "commerce".[153] In *Moby Dick*, the "ideal boundary" that, according to Fiedler, separates civilization from lawlessness is that between the land and the sea.[154] *Moby Dick* begins on land, in 'civilization', with Ishmael, who can feel a "damp, drizzly November in his soul", stuck in a condition of death-in-life.[155] He finds himself "involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses" and "bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet".[156] Going to sea is his "substitute for pistol and ball", his own way of throwing "himself upon his sword".[157] Curiously, then, taking to sea is a form of substitute death, a way of avoiding actual suicide on land. The "forbidden" sea offers Ishmael what the "savage" side of the frontier offered Cooper's protagonists: "nameless perils [...] attending marvels [...]", a "wonder-world" of "wild conceits".[158] William Lee's initial location, however, the midwestern suburbs, are firmly rooted in the "civilized and cultivated" culture, the "wild and lawless" culture having been efficiently eradicated.[159] For Lee there was no longer a nearby geographical frontier to cross that would take him into the 'wilderness'. Unable to cross a nearby frontier, Lee would transgress instead,

through his identification with criminals and junkies, the borderlines that separated white America from its un-American others.[160] Taken alongside the decision, signalled at the end of the text, to "go down to Columbia and score for yage", *Junky* becomes an expression of exile, and the first part of an attempted journey away from home, both in terms of geography and morality. (*Junky*/152)

Lee's version of the journey away, the search for "contact", begins in the Prologue to *Junky*, and is extended into the quest for yagé, set up at the end of *Junky*. (*Junky*/xii) There are a number of key elements in this search for "contact". Yagé, a "drug [...] used by Indians in the headwaters of the Amazon", has an important quality: it is "supposed to increase telepathic sensitivity." (*Junky*/151) At this initial point in Lee's explanation of his quest, "usable knowledge" of telepathy seems to be the central point of the quest. (*Junky*/152) Lee goes on, however, to complicate this apparently straightforward aim with his next sentence. "What I am looking for in any relationship", he writes, "is contact on the nonverbal level of intuition and feeling, that is, telepathic contact." (*Junky*/152) This provides the reader with two key words: "relationship" and "contact". (*Junky*/152) Yagé, it seems, with its increased "telepathic sensitivity", is only a means to an end, since telepathy itself has been linked to the search for a "relationship". (*Junky*/151-2)

Burroughs, in explaining his intentions regarding telepathy in a letter to Allen Ginsberg, clarified that his own final destination was, to quote Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust Part Two*, "Enthroned beyond the world of place or time".[161] "Telepathy", he reminded Ginsberg, "is independent of space-time."[162] "The "facts" of "telepathy and precognition", Burroughs argued, therefore "point to the *possibility* of consciousness without a body or life after death, and before birth."[163] Burroughs believed that "everything that has ever or ever will be thought is *now* available to *all* minds ... Past and Future are purely arbitrary concepts."[164] His protagonist's intended

destination, then, lay outside of "space" and "time", and outside of "birth" and "death", the "arbitrary boundaries" that Burroughs claimed had been "set by others".[165]

The pursuit of "cosmic consciousness", as Harold Simonson notes in *The Closed Frontier* (1970) was a recurrent interest of American writers during the Victorian period.[166] Simonson argues that the "New Thought" movement, which was concerned with "occult transcendence", redefined and reopened the frontier as a "new existence, a rebirth, enabling man to transcend space and time, mortality and death."[167] Simonson cites in particular the attempts to "cross the metaphoric frontier" through "investigation of extrasensory capacities" in Hamlin Garland's *Forty Years of Psychic Research* (1936) and *The Mystery of the Buried Crosses: A Narrative of Psychic Exploration* (1939).[168] Although Burroughs makes no reference to the New Thought movement, he shared an interest in extension of consciousness, telepathy and precognition. The New Thought movement stood in opposition to the second law of thermodynamics, which posits inevitable decay without hope of transcendence, and to Freudian psychoanalysis, which saw the promise of "freedom from the burden of history" as a delusion.[169] As Susan Edmunds notes, Freud linked, and for the most part dismissively, "ancient cultures", and "'archaic' powers of visual and sensual thought to the vestiges of the infantile relationship to the mother."[170] Lee's search for contact, then, linked to telepathy and conducted amongst the "ancient cultures" of Mexico and South America, was a distinctly un-Freudian expedition.

The concluding sentences of *Junky* return to the search for yagé itself:

> I am ready to move on south and look for the uncut kick that opens out instead of narrowing down like junk.
>
> Kick is seeing things from a different angle. Kick is momentary freedom from the claims of the aging, cautious, frightened flesh. [...] (*Junky*/152)

The quest now has several additional elements. Firstly, it is connected explicitly with travel ("I am ready to move on south"), and to an abstractly expressed opening out, contrasted with the "narrowing down" of junk. (*Junky*/152) The last section of *Junky*, then, ends with Lee apparently looking beyond the closed system of addiction that

Junky had depicted. The word "Kick" further suggests the leaving behind of addiction, but the two definitions of the word suggested here do not relate specifically to heroin. (*Junky*/152) If kick is "seeing things from a different angle", then it is again an expression of "opening out", this time related somewhat more specifically to vision and perspective. (*Junky*/152) The second definition of kick relates to the leaving behind of the body, the "aging, cautious, frightened flesh", as if the mind seeks "momentary freedom" from its constrictive link to the body. (*Junky*/152) It is the last words of *Junky*, however, that are the most ambivalent. "Yage", concludes Lee, "may be the final fix". (*Junky*/152) The phrase "final fix" leads back to addiction, but also forward, ominously, towards a final release. (*Junky*/152)

Exile

As has been previously noted, the notion of exile is important to Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*. In Fiedler's analysis, exile is represented as a rejection of the family structure into which the archetypal protagonist has been born. Fiedler presents the archetypal white American exile as a "renegade from respectability and belongingness", who "has cut himself out of the community that bred him".[171] Michael Rogin notes in *Subversive Genealogy*, in the bifurcated world of nineteenth-century white American society, there was a increasing divide between the "calculating market place" and the "sentimental home."[172] The world of commerce, and of employment was therefore the realm of the father. In Fiedler's reading, the archetypal white male American protagonist often takes the status of an exile in order to avoid "a compromise with society, an acceptance of responsibility and drudgery and dullness", a "compromise" which would mean the "acceptance of the status of a father".[173] The protagonist therefore turns in "revulsion" from his "real father", who is perceived as "brutal or ineffectual or effete", and seeks out instead a new life, with a new "foster-father", free from "responsibility [...] and dullness."[174] The exile of Fiedler's American archetype is also, however, a rejection of the "sentimental home", the realm of the mother, since he goes in search of a male environment, in his "attempt

to escape the mothers of his world" and their "respectable codes of piety and success."[175]

It is Herman Melville, Fiedler claims, who develops most fully and continuously the figure of the "artist as outcast".[176] His early novels are a "series of portraits" of this "fugitive-lover-artist": the hero of *Redburn* (1849), for example, or Taji in *Mardi* (1849), the meaning of whose name is the "taboo man".[177] Similarly, Melville's novel *Omoo* (1847) is named after the "Polynesian word for the untouchable Wanderer".[178] Melville's later works are also populated by outcasts: "Bartleby", for example is described as seeming "alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in mid Atlantic."[179] According to Fiedler, however, it is with *Moby Dick* and Ishmael that the archetype of the exiled wanderer finds it most vivid expression. From its opening three words, *Moby Dick* signals itself as an exposition of rootlessness: "Call me Ishmael."[180] As Carolyn Potter notes, the biblical reference to the disinherited son of Abraham "directs our attention immediately to a narrative perspective identified by cultural dislocation", to a "displaced stance somewhere beyond the borders of both the normal and the normative."[181]

There are clear echoes of Fiedler's archetype, the "artist projected as pariah", in the Prologue to *Junky*.[182] Lee is described, for example, as a "chronic malingerer" who avoided "competitive team games", was "timid with other children", and whose taste in reading was decadently European: "Oscar Wilde, Anatole France, Baudelaire, even Gide" (*Junky*/xii). In *Junky*, Lee's homosexuality, a key aspect of his isolation from those around him, is implicit, suggested by this exotic reading list, and an innocent "romantic attachment" he had formed for "another boy", with whom he spent "Saturdays exploring old quarries, riding around on bicycles and fishing in ponds and rivers." (*Junky*/xii) Lee isolates himself at an early stage from the "future solid citizens" of midwestern America, and finds himself "a good deal alone." (*Junky*/xii-

xiii) Lee's other-worldliness is suggested early in the Prologue by his account of childhood fevers, nightmares and hallucinations. Indeed, in Lee's account, the "solid, three-story house" in which he lives seems less solid and real than the visions of "supernatural horror" or "stillness and wonder" that erupt around him. (*Junky*/xi) Lee is then, at least within the Prologue, a cerebral creature, oddly disembodied.[183]

Melville set his first four books, *Typee* (1847), *Omoo* (1847), *Redburn* (1849), and *White-Jacket* (1850), at sea or on exotic islands, locations which provided an arena, as Ann Douglas notes, for "the male occupations of acquisition and combat and a preserve for specifically masculine virtues."[184] James Creech, in his queering of Melville, *Closet Writing, Gay Reading* (1993), argues that these early sea novels were an "intense homoerotic initiation", and a "kind of exile from the norms of the bourgeois family."[185] By taking to sea, Creech claims, Melville was able to leave behind the "class position" that his mother "had always claimed", and the gender identity in which he was trapped.[186]

Douglas argues that these early fictions, *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Redburn* and *White Jacket*, which are almost entirely devoid of female characters, enact the "Oedipal" struggle of "son against father, not that of son against mother."[187] However, as Michael Paul Rogin notes in *Subversive Genealogy*, Tommo in *Typee* rejects patriarchal rule and responsibility for the pre-patriarchal ease of life on a South Sea island and thereby "returns to infancy".[188] His regression to "primitive bliss", though, draws Tommo into a struggle with the pre-oedipal mother: the island awakens the "boundaryless, devouring infant within him", and Tommo senses the "danger of a devouring maternal power."[189] As Rogin notes, this fear is registered not so much in the form of actual women, but through his fear of cannibalism, which "perfectly embodies Tommo's primitive fears" of "self-annihilation": the devouring "infant eats, and is afraid it will be eaten."[190]

In *Moby Dick* there are still virtually no female characters in the novel, and its location at sea is still a resolute denial of the domestic sphere.[191] Further, as Fiedler notes, *Moby Dick* contains a distinctively "Oedipal" plotline in Ahab's "frenzy", expressed in his soliloquies, against "the fiery father".[192] Entwined within this oedipal plotline in *Moby Dick* is a matricidal plotline, with Ahab's sharing of his flagon with the crew in "The Quarter Deck" representing, in part, the act of matricide ritualised.[193] A number of critics, including Leslie Fiedler and Pamela A. Boker, have noted that a childhood memory recounted by Ishmael concerning his "step-mother" serves to link Ishmael to Ahab's matricidal plotline.[194] This link between Ishmael and Ahab is implicit in Ishmael's initially horrified response to sharing a bed with Queequeg, the Polynesian harpoonist. Ishmael attempts to describe to his reader his reaction, on waking the morning after his first meeting with his bedfellow, to find that Queequeg "was hugging me."[195] In explaining his "sensations", Ishmael makes recourse to a childhood memory, although Ishmael is unsure "whether it was a reality or a dream", in which a "somewhat similar circumstance [...] befell me".[196] The memory is of Ishmael being punished by his "step-mother" for attempting to "crawl up the chimney".[197] The stepmother, who "was all the time whipping me, or sending me to bed supperless", sends Ishmael upstairs to his room, and he is to stay there for "sixteen entire hours" before he can "hope for a resurrection."[198] In Fiedler's reading, Ishmael's attempt to "crawl up his mother's chimney" is an attempt to reestablish, in Slotkin's words, the "foetal or infantile relationship with the lifesource", a journey back to the mother prevented, paradoxically, by the forbidding figure of the step-mother.[199] By taking to sea, claims Fiedler, Ishmael, like Ahab, "rejects his cruel step-mother and the whole world of security she represents".[200]

Ishmael's rejection of, and indeed rejection by, the step-mother world has many echoes throughout white American literature. Ann Douglas, in *Terrible Honesty*, for

example, stresses the importance of the act of matricide to a generation of modernist writers. Douglas uses the term "matricide" to describe the symbolic "cultural" murder of the Victorian matriarch, enacted through the modernists' attempt to "ridicule and overturn everything" that the Victorian matriarch "had championed."[201] This act of cultural murder, Douglas acknowledges, "gave fresh access" to an "adventurous new world of uninhibited self expression and cultural diversity".[202]

While the misogyny and hatred of the "matriarchal figure" that Robin Lydenberg discerns in Burroughs' later work were not as insistent in his early work and correspondence, there are nonetheless distinct signals that Burroughs and his contemporaries in 1950s America were reacting against their own "Mother God".[203] Helen Hinckle, who stayed briefly with the Burroughs family in Louisiana in 1949, was reminded "of a catchphrase of the period: Mother, please, I'd rather do it myself."[204] "That" she concluded, "was Neal, that was Jack, that was Burroughs, all fighting Momism."[205] As Catharine R. Stimpson notes, Burroughs and Ginsberg "knew Freud", and they "recognized" the potential "entanglement" of the "Oedipal drama".[206] Kerouac, who remained, to quote Stimpson, in "the shadow of his blood mother", "proved" the point: in Barry Miles' account, Burroughs told Kerouac that his attachment to his "mother's apron strings" meant he would move in ever-decreasing circles round his mother until he was "unable to move away".[207] In a letter to Carolyn Cassady, written in 1954, Kerouac imagined Ginsberg and Burroughs criticising "American puritanical matriarchal etc. repression and squareness".[208] According to Morgan, Burroughs was particularly harsh about the "that bitch mother of Kerouac's", who was portrayed by Burroughs as "an evil old woman, domineering, and making Jack feel guilty about everything he owed her."[209] In his later correspondence, Burroughs would describe Kerouac's mother as a "stupid, small-minded vindictive peasant, incapable of a generous thought or feeling."[210]

The precise source of this deep-rooted animosity is impossible to fathom. A partial explanation can be found in Burroughs' St. Louis childhood. Burroughs would later describe the St. Louis of the 1920s as a "malignant matriarchal society."[211] Ted Morgan describes the "revelation" that the young Burroughs had about women: they were "either evil", like his nurse, Mary Evans, who had introduced him to black magic, or they were "great wasters of time, content to spend all eternity reading magazines or playing bridge."[212] Burroughs' own mother, however, remains an enigmatic figure, both in Burroughs' own writing, and in the accounts of his life. As Skerl notes, in an account of his childhood Burroughs has described his mother as "enigmatic", "complex", "intuitive", "extremely psychic" and "abhorrent of bodily functions".[213] In Burroughs' case, the fight against matriarchy is always expressed in general, cultural terms, rather than in specific, personal terms. Indeed, Burroughs' account of his childhood suggests more his partial identification with his mother than his dislike of her: like her son, she was a "a complete alien to the icy, remote strata of the serene, rich matrons she saw everyday" in her "shop".[214] Indeed Burroughs came to share both her "tremulous" sense of "doom and sadness", and her interest in "magic".[215]

Linked to the Beat's distrust of the "American puritanical matriarchal" system was their celebration of male brotherhood.[216] Catherine R. Stimpson notes how important the "reconstitution" of these "male bonds" were to the Beats.[217] In forming these "male bonds", as has been already suggested, Ginsberg in particular looked back to two key periods: the 1920s modernist era and the 1850s American Renaissance. Ginsberg's poetry was encouraged and influenced by William Carlos Williams, and in Walt Whitman, Stimpson argues, Ginsberg found a "cultural father" who offered to his "declared sons" a "radiant vision of psychic, literary and national brotherhood."[218] Burroughs, unlike Ginsberg, never made any such explicit connection, in his correspondence or in his writings, between the literary movements of the 1850s and

the 1920s and the attempt to reconstitute male bonds. However, Burroughs' correspondence, as Oliver Harris notes, betrays his deep-rooted need for "Whitmanesque affection",[219] and *Junky* and *Queer*, like Melville's early novels, do take their reader into strikingly masculine environments, in keeping with Fiedler' claim that the archetypal American protagonist seeks a "world of male companions".[220]

As described in the Prologue to *Junky*, Lee's initial wanderings away from home are modest in their scope, both in terms of geography and of his new "way of life". (*Junky*/xiii) Although Lee claims to enjoy such outdoor pursuits as "fishing, hunting and hiking", he does not complain of being cut off from the lawless world of nature. (*Junky*/xii) It is "contact with the life of the city" that he seeks. (*Junky*/xii) Propelled from his home by this need for "contact", Lee drifts off into "solo adventures". (*Junky*/xiii) When he takes up briefly with the "international queer set", he sees their "way of life" with the cold, detached eyes of the exile:

> I saw [...] a vocabulary, references, a whole symbol system, as the sociologists say. (*Junky*/xiii)

The only location Lee finds to his liking is a fictional one, found within the pages of "an autobiography of a burglar, called *You Can't Win*." (*Junky*/xii) The idea of its author having "spent a good part of his life in jail" compares favourably, as has already been noted, with the "dullness of a Midwest suburb". (*Junky*/xii) Here, Lee's intentions coincide with the American archetype Fiedler describes, since, like his fellow exiles, Lee seeks "a way of life hostile to the accepted standards of the American community: a counter-family that can only flourish in a world without women or churches or decency or hard work".[221]

Oliver Harris emphasises the importance of Jack Black's *You Can't Win* as an influence on *Junky*. Black, writes Harris, "allied the journeyman's life of crime on the open road to the addict's struggle with 'Opium, the Judas of drugs, that kisses and betrays.'"[222] He was an "investigator into the obsessive force of the opium habit, and into the brotherhood of criminal outcasts."[223] In his later "Foreword" (1988) to *You Can't Win*, Burroughs confessed he was "fascinated by" the "glimpse" Black's book allowed him of the "underworld of seedy rooming-houses, pool parlors, cat houses and opium dens".[224] He felt that the "good bums and thieves" Black presented

possessed a "code of conduct" that "made more sense" than the "middle class St. Louis mores" he had been born into.[225] Burroughs himself, following Black, became an investigator of the criminal underworld. Barry Miles describes Burroughs' "half-serious anthropological study of the Times Square area", fueled by his fascination for the "low life as described by Jack Black".[226] Sometimes, notes Miles, Burroughs "found some traces of the old camaraderie remaining", and "certainly the characters were just as interesting as he had expected them to be."[227]

As Michael Paul Rogin suggests in *Subversive Genealogy*, Melville's protagonists often betray the class origins of their author. In *Moby Dick*, for example, Ishmael notes that being ordered about by sailors "touches one's sense of honor, particularly if you come of an old established family in the land".[228] These identifications are complicated by the Melville family's fallen position: as James Creech notes, Melville himself had taken to sea out of "financial necessity as much as anything else", following the "financial ruin and death of his father".[229] The protagonist of *Redburn*, as he leaves the mainland for the first time, resolves not to "think of those delightful days, before my father became a bankrupt and died, and we removed from the city".[230] Burroughs' family was also somewhat displaced in terms of class. Rendered comfortable by the "bright" financial "afterglow" of the first William Seward Burroughs' invention of the Adding Machine,[231] they were, according to Burroughs, nonetheless excluded by the "icy remote strata" of the St. Louis aristocracy.[232] The exclusion of his family from social circles left Burroughs with the "feeling" of "living in a world in which I was not accepted", a feeling also extended to Burroughs' fictional protagonist Audrey Carsons in *Port of Saints* (1973)[233] Despite this feeling of exclusion, Burroughs did intermittently, although unsuccessfully, make use of his links to what Allen Ginsberg describes as the "elite aristocracy".[234] In conversation with John Tytell in 1974, Ginsberg claimed that Burroughs attempted to

join the O.S.S. via his connection to "Wild Bill Donovan from Harvard".[235] According to Ted Morgan, Burroughs was also armed with "a letter of introduction from his well connected uncle Wideman Lee", son of the inventor of public relations, Ivy Lee.[236] Despite these connections, Burroughs was refused.[237] Ginsberg suggests, perhaps playfully, that Burroughs' "hatred of the American secret-police-bureaucracy grows from the fact that they wouldn't have him in it."[238]

Issues of class are raised implicitly by the Prologue to *Junky*. Lee's story, whether deliberately or not, is a highly ironic reversal of Horatio Alger's 'rags to riches' myth. Lee begins at the end of the story, in the "comfortable" house, impervious to the necessities that poverty induce. (*Junky*/xi) Therefore, Lee's upper-middle class origins are revealed and this links him further to Fiedler's archetypal quester, the "disaffected child of the reigning race and class".[239] Lee, in the Prologue, is described attempting to act out the criminality that he reads about in Black's *You Can't Win*, but what distinguishes the resulting criminal acts are their disembodied purposelessness. He breaks into houses to wander about "without taking anything." (*Junky*/xiii) Since Lee has at this stage no need for money, his criminal acts are merely "gestures", that do not necessarily lead anywhere in themselves. Even away from the "comfortable capsule" of home, (*Junky*/xii) Lee remains cocooned by the "hundred and fifty dollars" that was "always there" for him every month. (*Junky*/xiv) Lee drifts in this cocoon through a series of "solo adventures": University, Europe, psychoanalysis, briefly the Army, and then a "variety of jobs": "a private detective, an exterminator, a bartender." (*Junky*/xiv) Lee's contact with junk gives him a new role, another solo adventure, this time as an "addict". (*Junky*/xv) "The years of indulgent drifting were over", Oliver Harris writes, and "a decision had been made", a 'special need' acquired, a direction - downward - found, and its dictates followed."[240] It was only when Lee "came in contact with junk" that he rejoined the economic world and

"gained the motivation, the real need for money I never had before." (*Junky*/xv) The need for junk and hence the need for money takes Lee down into the economic underworld, lush-working on the subway, (*Junky*/33-8) and then pushing junk himself. (*Junky*/41) Junk ensures that Lee is "not in a position to turn money down", that he has "no margin." (*Junky*/45)

As has already been noted, in David Campbell's account the "junky" in 1950s America was often the target of "anti-communism's discursive practices", and were subject to the stigmatisation also applied to women, blacks, foreigners, the insane and the sexually deviant.[241] Lee's investigation of the criminal underworld and the sub-culture of the addict is therefore a form of transgression, a crossing of the borderline between the American and the un-American. However, while using junk may bring Lee into contact with economic realities, it did not allow him entry into Fiedler's "counter-family", or Black's Johnson Family. Burroughs has said of his own "criminal activities" that they were "as hopelessly inept" as his "efforts to hold a job in an advertising agency or any other regular work."[242] Echoing his author, Lee's attempts to lush-work on the subway end in an episode of violence and flight when a lush wakes up. The following morning, Lee tells his companion that he is "through as a lush-worker." (*Junky*/40). The New York junky underworld is not populated by the "good bums and thieves" presented in *You Can't Win*.[243] Pushing junk also ties Lee to people for whom he would normally feel no trust, such as "Nick" the potential "stool pigeon" (*Junky*/45) or Doolie, who Lee describes as the "focal point for a hostile intrusive force". (*Junky*/48)

Neither does Lee's status as deviant junkie take him outside the hierarchies of race, gender and class within American society. While the junkie was a demonised other within American Cold War society, women and homosexuals were also subject to demonisation within that society and, as Catherine Stimpsom points out, Burroughs'

writing often reaffirms the "traditional construction of the female and the feminine" found in other Beat writing.[244] Ironically, given Burroughs' homosexuality, and the reference to Lee's "romantic attachment" for "another boy" in the Prologue to *Junky* (xii), let alone the title of Burroughs' second work, *Queer*, the depictions of homosexuality in his early writing are unstable. As Stimpson notes, for example, one way in which Burroughs repeats the "traditional construction" of the "female and feminine" is in his negative attitudes towards "fags", and the use of "feminized invective" with which to "scorn the fag."[245] In the letter to Allen Ginsberg, already discussed, in which Burroughs refuses, at length, his publisher's demands for biographical material, Burroughs distinguishes between the "queer" and the "Fag".[246] He is quite happy, he tells Ginsberg, with being represented as "queer", since "T.E. Lawrence and all manner of right Joes [...] was queer."[247] He would rather see Carl Solomon "castrated", however, before he will be "called a Fag".[248] He then differentiates between "us strong, manly, noble types", and the "leaping, jumping, window dressing cocksucker."[249] There is a level of self-evasion in this distinction of Burroughs'. He describes, revealingly, how he has "been trying to put down uh I mean *over*" this "distinction" between "fag" and "queer".[250] To "*Put Down a Hype or Routine*" is, to quote the glossary provided with *Junky*, to "give someone a story, to persuade, or con someone." (*Junky*/157).

Two sequences in *Junky* reveal a similarly ambivalent attitude towards the "fag". In the New Orleans section, Lee claims that a "room full of fags gives me the horrors", and describes "Fags" in general as resembling "ventriloquists' dummies who have moved in and taken over the ventriloquist." (*Junky*/72). Again, the invective is feminized: the fag is evoked sitting in a "queer bar", "uncontrollably yapping out of a rigid doll face." (*Junky*/72) In a scene in a Mexican queer bar, Lee's ambivalence is more marked. The "fags" here move with a "depraved animal grace at once beautiful

and repulsive." (*Junky*/112-3). Lee imagines seeing their "archaic" and "stylized movements" as they move "in the light of the campfires," their "ambiguous gestures fading out of the dark", as if they exist in some dark, timeless ritual, and he then speculates that the act of sodomy "is as old as the human species." (*Junky*/112-3) Here, the "fag" becomes the symbol of an ambiguous, and pre-historical act of sinfulness.

Bearing in mind its apparently explicit title, *Queer* is curiously ambivalent in its treatment of homosexuality. At one level, the orbit of the world depicted in *Queer* is not around junk, but queerness, and its opening section is full of "queer talk". Part of the intrigue of this opening section, however, is the much discussed question of who is, and who isn't, "really queer". Many of the people Lee meets with are "borderline characters". (*Queer*/26) This confusion over sexual identity even, or perhaps especially, encompasses Lee, supposed protagonist of this "queer novel":

> Guidry was accusing Hyman of being queer and pretending not to be. Lee was trying to explain to Guidry that Hyman wasn't really queer, and Guidry said to him, 'He's queer and you aren't Lee. You just go around pretending you're queer to get in on the act.' (*Queer*/47)

Guidry's suspicion that Lee too is a "borderline character", and that his queerness is an "act" is contrasted with the apparent urgency of Lee's "homosexual" needs. The ambiguity inherent in this search for "contact" is apparently clarified by Carl's acceptance of "Lee's sexual interest in his person." (*Queer*/21-2).[251] However, Lee's initial reaction to Allerton ("Perhaps I can accomplish something in that direction") similarly appears to be an expression of lust, and yet the words Lee uses could have a variety of non-sexual meanings: what exactly is the "something" that could be "accomplished", and in exactly which "direction" is it to be found? (*Queer*/33) As Richard Dellamora notes, while "*Queer* is a novel about Lee's attempts to achieve 'contact' with Allerton", Allerton, like Carl, is a "straight-identified man".[252] Timothy S. Murphy criticises David Cronenberg's cinematic adaptation of *Naked Lunch* for its "treatment of homosexuality", noting that its description as a "cover story" denies it the "critical force with which Burroughs endows it".[253] It is a valid point, and yet Burroughs' own treatment of homosexuality is often evasive, suggesting the internalisation of mainstream 1950s notions about homosexuality, or, as Dellamora suggests, the lack of a "concept of minority sexual identity".[254]

The most surprising reference to homosexuality in *Queer* occurs in a sequence in Ecuador, in which Lee watches some boys swimming in a river. Feeling the "tearing ache of limitless desire", Lee begins to hallucinate, initially about sexual

situations involving boys. (*Queer*/93) Imagining himself in "a bamboo tenement", however, Lee writes that he can "feel desire" for a woman "through" an other person's "body." (*Queer*/94) "I'm not queer", Lee thinks to himself, "I'm disembodied."(*Queer*/94) Lee asks rhetorically what it is these young boys "have [...] got that I want". (*Queer*/95) Lee attempts to answer his own question are startling. The boys "have maleness, of course", but, Lee reasons, "so have I." (*Queer*/95) His next statement further confuses the issue. "I want myself", he tells Allerton, "the same way I want others." (*Queer*/95) "I'm disembodied", he continues, "I can't use my own body for some reason." (*Queer*/95) The main protagonist of a novel titled *Queer* thereby denies, or at least undercuts, his own queerness.

The evasiveness about sexuality in *Queer* is compounded by the "Introduction" to the text Burroughs wrote for its publication in 1985. In this "Introduction", Burroughs provides a number of authorial interpretations of the text, all of which distract attention away from the issue of homosexuality. The first interpretation links *Queer* to *Junky* by presenting *Queer* as a depiction of withdrawal from junk. Lee in *Queer* therefore becomes a "withdrawing addict", and an "organism" gradually reaching a point of post-withdrawal "stabilization". (*Queer*/11) The second interpretation presents *Queer* as a preparation for the relationship between "writer" and reader, with Lee seeking in Allerton the "acknowledgment of his performance", to hold off his own "painful dispersal." (*Queer*/12-13) In this interpretation, Lee is described as a "photon" that emerges from a "haze of insubstantiality" to "leave an indelible recording in Allerton's consciousness." (*Queer*/12) While Lee appears to be searching for a "suitable sex object", Burroughs argues, in fact "he does not want to succeed", and will indeed go "to any length to avoid the realization that he is looking for sex contact." (*Queer*/12) Burroughs' final, and most troubling, interpretation of *Queer* is to foreground the "accidental shooting death" of his "wife, Joan, in

September 1951." (*Queer*/14) Here, *Queer* becomes preliminary to a personal tragedy, and Lee's relationship with Allerton is secondary to the "event towards which Lee feels himself inexorably driven". (*Queer*/15) Lee's routines, which "set one's teeth on edge because of the ugly menace just behind or to one side of them", (*Queer*/15) are placed in the context of Burroughs' own "lifelong struggle" to "escape from possession" by his "invader, the Ugly Spirit" (*Queer*/18). Lee, presented as "addict", "organism", (*Queer*/11), "writer", "photon", (*Queer*/13) and victim of dark and terrible forces, is never presented as a homosexual.

Alongside Burroughs' expressions of disdain, in his early correspondence and fiction, towards fags, there are a number of sharply negative references to American women. Burroughs wrote to Jack Kerouac, for example, explaining that his friend Kells Elvin's wife and he "don't hardly say hello. I gather she don't like me. Well wives generally don't."[255] Another letter to Jack Kerouac contains an extended repudiation of another friend's wife:

> My God is she an American bitch that won't quit. I never yet see her equal. Frank does not have one friend he can take to the house. She was forbidden him to eat out as she does not want he should take in any nourishment unless she is there to watch him eat it. [...] Needless to say my place is strictly out of bounds to Frank and he always has that hunted look when he comes to see me. I don't know why American men put up with such shit from a woman.[256]

This passage was expropriated into *Queer*, and presented as a speech by Lee, an alternation made, according to Oliver Harris, "during Burroughs' final manuscript revision in 1985."[257] The speech fits perfectly neatly, given the other representations of women in Burroughs' first two texts. *Junky* almost entirely ignores the world of women. Note, for example, how the Prologue mentions Lee's "father", who "owned and ran a lumber business", but makes no mention of Lee's mother. (*Junky*/xi) *Junky* and *Queer* are located in predominantly male environments. In *Junky*, the only female characters are Mary, who is described as being "like a deep-sea creature" (*Junky*/13), Marian the Lesbian "poetess" (*Junky*/16), and Lupita, who sits imperiously at the top of the Mexico City junk pyramid "like an Aztec Goddess." (*Junky*/116). In *Queer*, Mary, Allerton's some-time companion, is important to the narrative only as an obstacle to Lee's relationship with Allerton. Lee's wife appears intermittently in *Junky*, at one stage throwing his junk on the floor in exasperation when Lee resumes his addiction, but she is defined more by her absence: "My wife was in Acapulco" (*Junky*/139), Lee explains in Mexico City, and on the final page of *Junky*: "My wife and I are separated." (*Junky*/152) "I did not go into my domestic life in *Junk*",

Burroughs explained by letter to Ginsberg, "because it was, in the words of Sam Johnson, 'Nothing to the purpose.'"[258] Ace wanted Burroughs to write about the "death of Joan", but Burroughs asked Ginsberg to "talk them out of that."[259] "I will take care of her disappearance", Burroughs insisted, referring to Joan's presence in the text.[260] Bearing in mind the "accidental shooting death" of Joan Vollmer, killed by a bullet from Burroughs' gun in September 1951, the phrasing is chilling. (*Queer*/14) Nonetheless, it is important to also note that this refusal to include the "death of Joan" in the narrative was a dignified gesture in the face of the publishers' garish demands.[261]

The Land of the Dead

A number of critics have described the presentation in *Junky* of an archetypal underworld. William Stull, for example, describes the "hallucinatory clarity" of images representing a "realm of the dead",[262] and Oliver Harris describes *Junky*, and also the later *Naked Lunch*, as a "passage through not just a social, but a mythical Underworld, realm of dead souls."[263] Lee in the Prologue to *Junky* is described acting in ways which court danger, even death. "I made the roads unsafe with reckless driving", he claims, "until an accident, from which I emerged miraculously and portentously unscathed, scared me into a normal caution." (*Junky*/xiii) This is the fearlessness of one detached from reality, sleepwalking without the awareness of death that is at the route of "normal caution". (*Junky*/xiii) It would seem that, with this accident, Lee's first contact with death had been made. Contact with junk also brings contact with death. Simultaneous with the picaresque narrative of *Junky*, which leads from New York to New Orleans to Mexico City, is a downward journey, begun officially with the first injection of morphine and yet implicit from the first word of *Junky*. The journey of morphine is apparently a journey down into the body, the junky listening down into himself:

> Morphine hits the back of the legs first, then the back of the neck, a spreading wave of relaxation slackening the muscles away from the bones so you seem to float without outlines. (*Junky*/7)

This journey downwards does not necessarily represent actual contact with the body or the self, since the junky listens down into himself to hear the junk, to feel himself "float without outlines." (*Junky*/7) Clearly, however, some sort of contact has been made. As has been noted, the initial effects of the morphine, which leave the user

floating "without outlines, like lying in warm salt water", give way to a series of movie-like images, "a waitress carrying a skull on a tray", for example, that convey the "physical impact of the fear of death; the shutting off of breath, the stopping of blood." (*Junky*/7)

The images of death associated with Lee's first injection have their correspondences throughout *Junky*. As Stull and Harris suggest, while explicity moving from place to place, the narrative of *Junky* also descends inexorably into a deathly underworld. In some ways the descent is described as a descent under water, echoing the description of junk on the body: "you seem to float without outlines, like lying in warm salt water." (*Junky*/7) Mary, for example, is described as being "like a deep-sea creature", whose "eyes were cold fish eyes that looked at you through a viscous medium she carried about with her." (*Junky*/13) The descent also leads into a land of the dead, populated by ghosts. Bill Gains is described as "lifeless". (*Junky*/42) Observing some "fags" in a New Orleans "queer bar", Lee writes that the "live human being had moved out of these bodies long ago." (*Junky*/72)

In the main text of *Junky* there a number of key moments, in which the terse, contained narrative breaks down, and images of uncontainable terror, often evoked as dreams or visions, emerge briefly before subsiding back into the book's submerged depths. For example, Lee describes the "depression" that accompanies withdrawal:

> One afternoon I closed my eyes and saw New York in ruins. Huge centipedes and scorpions crawled in and out of empty bars and cafeterias and drug stores on forty second street. Weeds were growing up through cracks and holes in the pavements. Noone else was in sight. (*Junky*/28)

The horror in this glimpse of a nightmare is encapsulated in the last line: "Noone else was in sight." (*Junky*/28) This is a vision of a city that has been reclaimed by nature. Civilized territories, the "empty bars and cafeterias and drug stores", have been usurped by creatures, and vegetation, that acknowledge no human limits. (*Junky*/28) In the final, Mexico City section of *Junky*, towards the end of his horrifying month of drunkenness, Lee finds himself, on the verge of sleep, visualizing "an Oriental face", its "lips and nose eaten away by disease." (*Junky*/133) He watches the "disease spread", the face "melting [...] into an ameboid mass" in which the "dull crustacean" eyes "floated":

> Slowly, a new face formed around the eyes. A series of faces, hieroglyphs, distorted and leading to the final place where the human road ends, and where the human form can no longer contain the crustacean

horror that has grown inside it.

Lee watches these images "curiously." (*Junky*/133) "I got the horrors", he thinks to himself, "matter of factly."[264] (*Junky*/133) The image of the diseased face is appropriate to a text that continually depicts the erosion of human distinctiveness, people becoming like insects or undersea creatures. There is not so much a class hierarchy in *Junky* as an eco-system, with those on the bottom dragging the unwary down to their level. Mary, described as a "boneless [...] sea-monster", casually remarks: "I get a kick out of taking a proud chick and breaking her spirit, making her see she is just an animal." (*Junky*/16) Pleasure seekers in New Orleans are like "white rats and guinea pigs" in a laboratory experiment, and the city's drivers "orient themselves largely by the use of their horns, like bats." (*Junky*/69) Following Lee's experience with peyote, he has a dream in which he has come down with "rabies." (*Junky*/147) Looking in the mirror, he finds his face has changed, and he begins "howling." (*Junky*/147) In second peyote-inspired dream, Lee has become a "chlorophyll addict". (*Junky*/147) He and his fellow addicts begin to "turn green" and start "turning into plants." (*Junky*/147) *Junky*, then, enacts a downwards transition: from humans to animals to vegetables.

In Wilhelm Reich, Burroughs found a linguistic and quasi-scientific base for his nightmare visions of entropic decay. In a deleted section on Reich included in the original manuscript of "Junk", Burroughs explained his interest in Reich's book *The Cancer Biopathy*.[265] According to Burroughs, Reich claimed that "Life is a charge", and the "charged particles" on which "life depends" he termed "Orgonnes".[266] These "Orgonnes" are "everywhere in the atmosphere, and in all living and dead matter."[267] An "Orgonne envelope surrounds the earth, and Orgonnes charge the sunlight", giving "off a blue color."[268] "Philosophers", Burroughs continues, have always been "talking about 'life-force' and 'cosmic energy'" but Reich's discovery of the Orgonne was different, since the "Orgonne" was a "definite force" that could "be measured, concentrated and used."[269] While all "reference to Reich" were supposed to have been "cut" from *Junky*, traces of Reichian theory remain.[270] Reich's unit of cosmic energy provided Burroughs with the terminology with which to present America in *Junky* as a deadened country.[271] In his description of the Rio Grande Valley, for example, Lee describes the absence of "orgones" or "lifeforce". (*Junky*/106) "Whatever it is [...]", he writes, "that we all have to score for all the time, there is not much of it in the Valley." (*Junky*/106)

In his summary of Reich's theories in the essay "The Burroughs Biopathy:

William S. Burroughs' *Junky* and *Naked Lunch* and Reichian Theory", Allan Johnston notes that Reich, while still a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Association in the early 1920s, postulated a "theory of orgastic potency," in which "true orgastic potency" was defined as the "capacity for surrender to the flow of biological energy without any inhibition, the capacity for complete discharge of all damned up sexual excitation through involuntary pleasurable contractions of the body."[272] In Reich's view, the "neuroses common in Western civilization" were caused by "sexual repression", and Reich linked repression of sexuality to the rise of "mass movements", such as fascism.[273] The early theory of "orgastic potency" was later linked to Reich's 'discovery' of the "orgone", a "type of energy" that "caused spontaneous animation of inert matter".[274] In his later theories, "life/pleasure/orgasm became expressions of the free flow of orgone energy", while "death/anxiety/impotence" were caused by the "blocking of orgone energy flow".[275]

As Allan Johnston notes, however, Burroughs' combination of junk and Reichian theory is an odd one. The "junky himself", Johnston argues, is the "ultimate negation" of the "orgastic potency" that Reich proclaimed. Jack Kerouac described *Junkie*, in a letter to Burroughs in 1955, as a "prophecy" of "sexless American heroes."[276] Reich himself argued that "addicts are always orgastically impotent", and while "they attempt to get rid of their excitations artificially, they are never completely successful."[277] Reich added that addicts are usually "sadistic, mystical, vain, homosexual, and are tortured by consuming anxiety, which they work off by brutal behavior."[278] Burroughs, by contrast, expressed his distrust of "straight genital Reichians" in a letter to Allen Ginsberg in 1948.[279] "Feller say", Burroughs wrote, "when a man gets too straight he's just a god damned prick."[280] Burroughs' employment of Reichian theory, then, was decidedly non-Reichian in its intentions.

According to Allan Johnston, Burroughs only came "gradually" to the

"realization that junk basically disconnects the user from life".[281] In his original introduction to *Junkie*, Burroughs' protagonist Dennison had described junk as being "transitional between living and dead matter, between animal and vegetable life."[282] "You cannot avoid the feeling", Dennison adds, "that junk is in some way alive."[283] In the "Preface" to *Junky*, Lee claims that the cycles of addiction and withdrawal that a periodic user of junk goes through create a "continual state of shrinking and growing" (*Junky*/xv). In a sense, then, junk postpones death. "When you stop growing", Lee argues, "you start dying." (*Junky*/xv) As Johnston notes, this cycle of "shrinking and growing" suggests some relationship between junk and the orgone, which "expresses itself through expansion and contraction of the organism."[284] According to Johnston, however, junk is more associated with "anorgonia", the "condition of diminished orgonity."[285] Junk is therefore, in Johnston's reading, both a "substitute gratification" for, and a "negation" of, "life energy", being a "frustration of orgastic release through a reversal of the flow of energy."[286] Burroughs' later work showed a shift in his attitude towards junk: in contrast to Lee's description of junk as postponement of death, "William S. Burroughs", in the "Introduction" to *Naked Lunch*, written in 1959, describes addiction as a "tired death route", and "THE KICK" as its only "excuse". (*Naked Lunch*/12)

Throughout Burroughs' writings, junk is gendered as female, and the relationship between junk and addict is implicitly related to that between infant and mother. Since, as Oliver Harris notes, to the addict "need is within and gratification and nourishment without," "addiction", therefore "reproduces the infant's dependence on its mother."[287] The "young hipsters" in Mexico City, for example, "slump into a chair" having taken a shot, and wait for "life to bring the bottle again." (*Junky*/147) Many of Burroughs' various representations of junk - junk as regression, as death, junk with maternal characteristics, and junk related to class and racial anxiety - are

combined in the image of the "type person" Lee observes in Mexico City. (*Junky*/112) This mysterious "type" has "connections with junk", but is "neither a user or a seller." (*Junky*/112) His "place of origin" is exotic and other to the white American: the "Near East, probably Egypt." (*Junky*/112) Lee finds this "type", like the "fag" in the Mexican queer bar, "basically obscene". (*Junky*/112) Neal Oxenhandler notes the "strongly maternal characteristics" of this "type", arguing that the "substance to prolong life" which is stored "in his body" (*Junky*/112) is a "transparent identification with the mother."[288] The "lost trade" that the type practices has "something to do with the dead". (*Junky*/112) In the "Prologue" to *Junky*, it will be recalled, Lee decides to "smoke opium" because he overhears a "maid" talking about it, suggesting an identification between the use of opium and the servant classes (*Junky*/xi), and the "type" is also described as being linked to the "servant class", and has a lowly position within a hierarchical structure: he is "periodically milked by his masters." (*Junky*/112)

The links suggested here between the servant classes, maternal characteristics and suggests a related fascination with and fear of junk, the lower classes, and women.[289] Indeed, the depictions of homosexuals and women in Burroughs' early fiction and correspondence suggest that his responses to the excluded others of American cold-war society were complex and rarely stable. Some borders were transgressed, but in many important ways the distinctions between the American and the un-American, "them" and "us", remained in place. This subject will be returned to in Chapter 3, where Burroughs' responses to the native inhabitants of Mexico and South America society will be examined in more detail.

III Queer *and The Faustian Commitment*

Re-birth

As has been noted, post-war American culture was a site for considerable anxiety concerning the perceived absence of a patriarchal figure, both within individual families, and within society as a whole. This anxiety was reflected in literary criticism of the period. Echoing Fiedler's claim that the archetypal American protagonist searches for a "foster-father", Charles Olson in *Call me Ishmael* (1947) presented *Moby Dick* as a search for the mythic lost father.[290] Olson discerned in Melville a "mythic" sense of "exile".[291] "Space", writes Olson, was the "First", existing "before time, earth, man", and it was the "paradise of "Space" that "Melville was exile of."[292] Melville could only be truly happy in the company of a "god of Prime."[293] He "had lost the source" and now he "demanded" once more "to know the father."[294] These observations have some autobiographical credence: Pamela A. Boker also acknowledges that Melville, in taking to sea, sought an "identification" with his "important and prosperous male Melville relatives and ancestors", "some of whom, including Captain John De Wolf, and Melville's cousins, Guert and Leonard Gansevoort - as well as his own father - had achieved considerable recognition as seamen."[295] However, Olson's use of myth is, like Freud's and Fiedler's, primarily concerned with "male authority and male conflict",[296] and more recent feminist critics, such as Kristeva, Douglas and Boker, have argued that patriarchal mythic and psychoanalytical frameworks, such as those employed by Fiedler, Olson and Freud, stress masculine oedipal experience at the expense of pre-oedipal experience.

Despite the "apparently successful efforts of American male culture to control and displace female power", Boker argues, male American writers "continue to struggle internally with the maternal/feminine in the form of their conflicting desires

for separation from, and fusion with, the intrapsychic and symbolically depicted image of the mother."[297] According to Boker, the "disavowed feminine/maternal identification in American literary, historical and cultural thought" often resurfaces, forming "dynamic underlying forces in the textual narrative."[298] Within Olson's apparently phallocentric account of Melville's search for the mythic lost father, for example, there are the faint traces of a parallel search for the lost mother. Indeed, Olson's definition of "Space" as a primary existing prior to "before time, earth," and "man" suggests, in psychoanalytical terms, not the attempt to reinstate patriarchal authority via the figure of the father, but an attempt to recreate the relationship with the mother in the earliest periods of infancy.[299] There is a similar suppressed maternal identification in Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Fiedler's archetypal hero leaves his home behind in an "attempt to escape the mothers of his world" and their "respectable codes of piety and success."[300] However, beneath, or rather, entwined with, this search for "life with foster-father"[301], as Fiedler describes it, is a search for the lost mother, or in Richard Slotkin's description, an attempt to reestablish the broken "foetal or infantile relationship" to the mother.[302]

The suppressed maternal content in Fiedler's work is most obvious in his description of the archetypal white American protagonist's search for re-birth. Fiedler argues that the American hero seeks a new beginning, echoing Frederick Jackson Turner's celebration of the "perennial rebirth" that the frontier offered.[303] While Turner, as Kolodny notes, linked "the hope of rebirth and regeneration" to a landscape that was gendered as female, Fiedler denies any maternal content in his own presentation of "rebirth and regeneration".[304] "Each must be born again", he writes, although not in "the murky flood of blood, amniotic fluid, and milk which characterises female gestation", but rather in the "immaculate flux of waters" which represents a "a birth into the world of men without women."[305] Here, the instabilities in

Fiedler's argument become more apparent. Certainly, as Fiedler goes on to argue, this process of rebirth seems to imply a "new family, a wifeless and motherless one".[306] The descent into the "watery world", however, is as much a sublimation of the return to the mother as a replacement for it. While the "mother's genitals" or her "body" are never explicitly present, the descent nonetheless leads back, to quote Freud, towards "what is known of old" and is "long familiar".[307]

With this objection in mind, *Junky* can usefully be read as a re-birth narrative. *Junky*, as has already been noted, represents an immersion in death: the deathliness of the Valley, for example, with its magnetic pull for the "dying cell" (*Junky*/106), and junk itself, an "inoculation of death" (*Junky*/127) According to Fiedler, to "descend into the charmed waters" where "one can float 'practically without motion' is, in effect, to die; and the flight to the watery world is a kind of suicide, a quietus self-imposed."[308] One of the several casualties in *Junky* is Gary West, the representative "dying cell" of the Valley, who contracts "uremic poisoning", goes into convulsions and dies. (*Junky*/29) Later in the book, Lee himself nearly dies after his extending drinking spree in Mexico City: "The doctor picked up an empty tequila bottle. 'One more of these and you were dead'" (*Junky*/138) Lee had also contracted uremic poisoning, suggesting a link, explicit or implicit, between him and Gary West. If Lee is, as Fiedler suggests, Burroughs' "self-image",[309] the writer who "ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE", then West is his unlucky twin, who does not survive his immersion in death.[310]

Lee and Ishmael, however, do survive their immersion in the "watery world", suggesting that to make contact with death can also be to make contact with life, and to be inoculated with death, and to return from the land of the dead, can bring rebirth.[311] In his essay "God's Own Medicine", Burroughs would quote approvingly De Quincey's statement that withdrawal from opium involves the "torments [...] of

passing from one mode of existence to another."[312] To De Quincey, as to Burroughs, the pain of withdrawal is not the pain of dying, but the pain of being born, of a "sort of physical regeneration, and a restoration of more than youthful spirits."[313] In his introduction to *Queer*, Burroughs uses the language of resurrection, describing the Lee of that text as "having returned from the insulation of junk to the land of the living like a frantic inept Lazarus." (*Queer*/12) Lee's experience with junk is therefore paradoxical: what appears to be an inward journey, leading away from the world, in fact leads inevitably back to the "land of the living." (*Queer*/12) "Like a man who has been away a long time," Lee writes at the end of *Junky*, "you see things differently when you return from junk." (*Junky*/151) The immersion in the deathly, watery-world of junk, then, promises a new beginning, for, as Fiedler notes: "What seems a suicide may in the end be a baptism, and a transfiguration, an immersion and a resurrection."[314] However, as will be suggested in the following section, which focuses on *Queer*, the watery baptism of junk does not bring the reborn Lee back to a state of grace.

The Faustian Commitment

A central aspect of Fiedler's thesis in *Love and Death in the American Novel* concerns the centrality of the Faustian commitment to American fiction. As is often the case, Fiedler's argument finds its echo in Freud's writings. In his essay "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis" (1923), Freud offered his study of a seventeenth-century painter, Christoph Haizmann, who sold his soul to the Devil. Freud hypothesizes that the painter, who has recently lost his father and is consequently suffering from artist's block, wished to become the devil's son and thus regain his powers. Freud, in interpreting Christoph Haizmann's Faustian deal, argues that the painter sought in the Devil a "substitute" for his recently deceased father.[315] In "A Demonological Neurosis", however, Freud is discussing a devil with some

markedly maternal features, since the Devil who appears to Christoph Haizmann has "two pairs of female breasts."[316] Faced with this ambivalence, Freud draws the same conclusion: the female characteristics of Haizmann's devil betrays his "feminine attitude" towards his father, which "culminates" in "the phantasy" of bearing the Devil "a child."[317] Freud goes on to suggest, however, that the "female additions" to the Devil are an "indication that the child's tender feeling towards his mother has been displaced onto his father", which "suggests that there has previously been a strong fixation on the mother" that "is responsible for part of the child's hostility towards his father."[318] Another possibility, of course, is that the earlier, pre-oedipal relationship with the mother has broken down, and the mother herself has become a demonic figure.

It is helpful at this point to return to *Moby Dick*, and in particular to Ishmael's childhood nightmare. Ishmael, it will be recalled, is punished by his step-mother for "trying to crawl up the chimney",[319] and, as a number of critics have noted, this anecdote links his own comic "dismemberment", at the hands of his step-mother, to the "bodily dismemberment" of Ahab by the white whale.[320] Ahab's solution to his "dismemberment" is, like the painter's solution to his inability to paint, to make a Faustian deal, implicit in his mysterious relationship with Fedellah.[321] The step-mother episode, however, also suggests Ishmael's susceptibility to a deal with the Devil. Ishmael, forced to "lie abed" for sixteen hours as a punishment for his innocent crime, eventually falls asleep, and awakes to find the room "wrapped in outer darkness".[322] He feels a "shocking running through" his frame, upon discovering a "supernatural hand" that "seemed place in mine."[323] By his bedside is the "nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged".[324] For "days and weeks and months afterwards" Ishmael loses himself in "confounding attempts to explain the mystery" of this "phantom" presence, without resolution.[325] It may be the forbidding

presence of the step-mother in ghost form, or Ishmael's mysteriously absent father, or of course, some amalgam of both. Whatever the precise origin of the phantom, its appearance is suggestive of a broken connection to the lifesource, an inner deathliness from which Ishmael requires a "resurrection."[326]

The relationship between Ishmael and Ahab finds its echoes in the modernists' reaction against the Victorian matriarch, and in particular the reaction of Hart Crane, who, it will be recalled, formed a part of Burroughs' post-war reading list. Ann Douglas recounts a dream Crane reported to his psychiatrist during the writing of his most famous poem, "The Bridge". In the dream, Crane is "in dark attic, rummaging through a trunk of his mother's clothes."[327] Piece by piece, Crane removes a "dismembered body" from the trunk; "first a hand, then another hand."[328] It is the body of his mother. Here, then, is the act of symbolic murder. Douglas, however, draws our attention to a word Crane uses in his poem "Voyages III". The word is "transmemberment",[329] and, in Douglas' reading, Crane uses the word to:

> signify a regrouping of what has been separate, fragmented, even dismembered, lost to 'carnage' and 'death,' into a single act of sexual love and poetic consciousness.[330]

As Douglas suggests, the word "transmemberment", which has no place in any known dictionary, seems to emerge out of the word "dismemberment", as if the first word has "been created out of the necessity of countering the idea and the act" of the second word.[331] Transmemberment is then a "transformative word", which disperses the "demonic implications of dismemberment, an exorcism of black magic by white."[332] Douglas distinguishes between "Crane the poet", who must "transmember" what "Crane the dreamer" has "dismembered": mother-murderer and mother-redeemer, separate and yet inextricably linked.[333]

According to Douglas, the modernist's violent repudiation of the "Mother God of the Victorian era" was enacted, in part, in their employment of terse, dense language.[334] The sentimental, feminized discourses of the previous era would be replaced by the "terrible honesty" of modernist literature.[335] The "stripped prose style" adopted by Ernest Hemingway, for example, was in itself a "symbolic but potent act of matricide".[336] Hemingway, Douglas notes, "phobically avoided" words such as

"'sacrifice', 'glory' and 'honour'", words that were associated with the "high-minded idiom" of the Victorian matriarch in her generalized form, and with his own mother in particular.[337] Burroughs' invention of factualism, and the employment of a terse narrative style in *Junky*, avoided "high-minded idiom" with similar vigour.[338] Burroughs' recourse to factualism was also part of his refusal to accept the easy explanations he felt were offered by psychoanalysis. Writing to Ginsberg about his month of drunken behaviour, fictionalised in the last section of *Junky* and the first section of *Queer*, Burroughs claimed it would "violate" his "principles as a factualist" if he provided an "alibi" for it.[339] "That is one thing I can't abide about psychoanalysts", he wrote, "always the alibi."[340] Burroughs also went on to write, however, and then crossed out, the following: "After all, how could anyone expect me to act but crummy, me having all these traumas and complexes."[341] A similar tension is present, as has been suggested, in the Prologue to *Junky*, with its terse refusal to provide an "alibi" for using heroin being compromised by the timid child's earlier decision to "smoke opium when I grow up." (*Junky*/xi)

Junky, with its "factualist" refusal of emotive language and self-pity, and matricidal sub-plot, slyly gives away its most extraordinarily vulnerable and innocent aspect: the link to the lost mother world. Apart from one solitary reference, Lee's mother is never alluded to specifically.[342] The solitary reference, however, by its very singularity, demands attention: the sudden, piercing memory, brought on by "junk sickness", of lying "in bed beside my mother, watching lights from the street move across the ceiling and down the walls" (*Junky*/125), an image which summons up to Lee the "magic of childhood".[343] (*Junky*/126) Remembering the earlier description of the first shot of heroin as "a spreading wave of relaxation slackening the muscles away from the bones so that you seem to float without outlines, like lying in warm salt water [...]" it might seem appropriate to link the wish to take heroin with the wish to

regress to a womb-like state, to "float without outlines" in the "warm" amniotic waters. (*Junky*/7) The "sharp nostalgia" that Lee experiences, however, is produced here not by an injection of heroin, but from withdrawal from heroin. When Lee, having compared this "wonderful" feeling to "a shot", rushes to the bathroom to inject, the results are the diametric opposite to "the magic of childhood":

> I was a long time hitting a vein. The needle clogged twice. Blood ran down my arm. The junk spread through my body, an injection of death. The dream was gone. (*Junky*/126)

However, the description of the "strong feeling of fear" experienced with Lee's first injection, the "feeling that some horrible image" was moving "beyond the field of vision" (*Junky*/7), does markedly echo the Prologue's evocation of a haunted childhood where Lee is afraid of the dark, and afraid of sleep, "because of dreams in which a supernatural horror seemed always on the point of taking shape." (*Junky*/xi)

In *Queer*, the same pattern can be seen repeating itself: the search for lost wonder and innocence producing images of supernatural horror. This apparently inseparable relationship between terror and innocence is written into the book's descriptions of Lee. Lee's face, for example, is "ravaged and vicious and old", but his "clear green eyes" are "dreamy and innocent." (*Queer*/30) When Lee meets Allerton, he attempts to make a "dignified old-world greeting". (*Queer*/34) What emerges instead, however, is an expression of "naked lust, wrenched in the pain and hate of his deprived body". (*Queer*/34) In "simultaneous double exposure" with this "leer" is its apparent opposite: "a sweet child's smile of liking and trust, shockingly out of time and out of place, mutilated and hopeless." (*Queer*/34)

The search for contact, begun with the Prologue to *Junky*, continues in *Queer*, where the inexorable, restless momentum of Lee's quest narrative suggests more explicitly than *Junky* does the search for the lost pre-oedipal mother. According to Jung, the "myth of the hero" was the "myth of our suffering unconscious", with its "unquenchable longing for all the deepest sources of our own being; for the body of the mother, and through it communion with infinite life in the countless forms of existence."[344] There are echoes, in Lee's search in *Queer*, for "contact on the nonverbal

level of intuition and feeling", of this search for the lost mother, the attempt to regain a pre-oedipal, pre-linguistic relation to the maternal body. In *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence expressed his horror of the longing for "utter identification, utter merging", the "incest desire" that we "all want" to fulfill "*without resistance*."[345] Lee's routines in *Queer* betray this desperate need to break down the separation between self and other, his frustrated efforts to merge with Allerton representing an attempt to re-establish a relationship with the life-source. "If I had my way", Lee tells Allerton in Guayaquil, "we'd sleep every night all wrapped around each other like hibernating rattlesnakes." (*Queer*/96) Then, speaking in "baby talk", he announces that it would be "booful if we should juth run together in one gweat big blob." (*Queer*/96) Earlier, in Mexico City, Lee suggests that if both he and Allerton were to fit inside Lee's pair of over-sized trousers, then people "would think we were Siamese twins." (*Queer*/56) The innocence of Lee's intentions are suggested in *Queer* by the striking sequence, already referred to, in which Lee snuggles "closer" to Allerton, and feels a "deep tenderness" flow out from his "body at the warm contact". (*Queer*/109) However, these innocent, loving intentions continually turn into their opposite: the coercive, desperate exertion of a predatorial will.[346]

In *Junky*, Lee, while enmeshed in the predatorial, hierarchical world of junk, is never himself described as a predator. In *Queer*, however, Lee is continually presented as being on an unfulfilled hunt. Lee, glimpsing food in a restaurant window, freezes like a "bird dog". (*Queer*/33) Inside, he orders immediately, and eats his food "like an animal, cramming bread and steak into his mouth" (*Queer*/33) Lee lives within his frustrations like a caged animal: his "eyes" look out "through the invisible bars, watchful, alert, waiting for the keeper to forget the door, for the frayed collar, the loosened bar ..." (*Queer*/40) Carl, the first object of Lee's attentions, reminds Lee of a "young bird". (*Queer*/21) To say Lee is a predator, however, does not necessarily

clarify exactly what his prey is. Certainly, the description of Carl as a "young bird" suggests that Lee is a sexual predator, but Lee, as has been already suggested, is also predatory about food. (*Queer*/21) When Lee is "hungry", when he wants "a drink or a shot of morphine," he finds "delay" to be "unbearable." (*Queer*/33)[347]

In his Introduction to *Queer*, Burroughs writes that Lee's interest in Allerton "had nothing to do with Allerton as a character." (*Queer*/12) However, certain aspects of Allerton's character do seem to make him a candidate for Lee's attention. Listening to Allerton tell a story, for example, Lee is "impressed by his combination of intelligence and childlike charm." (*Queer*/39) Allerton told his story "very fast in a high thin voice like the disembodied voice of a young child." (*Queer*/39) Easing into his tale, Allerton was "friendly now, without reserve or defense, like a child who has never been hurt." (*Queer*/39) No longer listening to his words, Lee watches Allerton's "thin hands, the beautiful violet eyes, the flush of excitement on the boy's face." (*Queer*/39) It is at this point that Lee's attention becomes predatorial, his "imaginary hand", with its "ectoplasmic fingers", invading Allerton's space, "caressing his ear" with "phantom thumbs". (*Queer*/39) Later, as they watch "Cocteau's *Orpheus*" together, Lee feels "his body pull towards Allerton, an amoeboid protoplasmic projection, straining with a blind worm hunger to enter the other's body, to breathe with his lungs, see with his eyes, learn the feel of his viscera and genitals." (*Queer*/48)

A short prose sequence titled "Dream of the Penal Colony", which was eventually published in *Interzone*, provides further clues as to the nature of Lee's need for contact. The sequence, which according to James Graueholz was written in autumn 1953, was based around a scene in *Queer* in which Lee has a nightmare in which he is trapped in a penal colony.[348] In *Queer*, Lee, feeling the "chill of final despair", crawls into bed with Allerton, "convulsed by the adolescent lust of junk sickness." (*Queer*/84) In the *Interzone* sequence, Lee attempts to make contact with

one of the "townspeople" who mix with the inhabitants of the colony. (*Interzone*/44) Sitting in a café, Lee listens to a young man "talking about his childhood in a coastal town." (*Interzone*/44) Lee sits "staring through the young man's head", and visualizes the "salt marshes, the red-brick houses, the old rusty barge by the inlet where the boys took off their clothes to swim." (*Interzone*/44) This image of childhood innocence leaves Lee's "stomach knotted with excitement." (*Interzone*/44) "*This may be it,*", he thinks to himself. "*Easy now. Cool, cool. Don't scare him off.*" (*Interzone*/44) Again, Lee is predatory, but it is this glimpse of a lost innocent world, the "child who has never been hurt", that is so tantalising to him. (*Queer*/39)

In *Queer*, Lee's predatorial behaviour is often voyeuristic. As has been noted, in Ecuador Lee watches "some beautiful boys on the waterfront. The real uncut stuff." (*Queer*/95) Lee as voyeuristic observer can only experience the boys at a distance. He watches as if "through a telescope". (*Queer*/93) He finds one of the boys "so beautiful" that "the image" cuts his "senses like a wire whip." (*Queer*/93) However, the "tearing ache" of Lee's "limitless desire" breaks down the separation between the voyeur and his subject. (*Queer*/93) With predatory vision, Lee notes the "thin body" underneath one of the boy's "torn shirt", and claims that he "could feel himself in the body" of one of the boys. (*Queer*/93) Then he imagines a vivid erotic fantasy, involving the boy and his friends, with Lee still in the boy's body. The boys Lee watches voyeuristically in Ecuador are "vibrating with life" (*Queer*/95) and it is "life" that Lee seems to be seeking out so compulsively: "An iron bedstead, painted light pink, a shirt out to dry ... scraps of life." (*Queer*/92) Like the image of childhood innocence, in the penal colony sequence in *Interzone*, that leaves Lee's "stomach knotted with excitement", these "scraps of life" are closely connected to Lee's predatorial search. (*Interzone*/44)

In the closing sequence to *Queer*, "Epilogue: Mexico City Return", Lee, still

searching for Allerton, returns once more to Panama and Mexico City. Lee is described wandering around Panama City with his camera, predatorially taking pictures with his camera.[349] A "shirtless young man" looks "up from his washing like a animal scenting danger" and Lee catches him with the "old photographer's trick: wait for a distraction." (*Queer*/114) Again, Lee appears to be searching for "scraps of life": he photographs "some boys", who are described as "young, alive," and "unconscious". (*Queer*/114) Yet, the search for Allerton in "Mexico City Return" is conducted against the backdrop of Panama, and it is the "excrescence" of decaying Panama that Lee also wants "a picture of", with "the albatrosses and vultures wheeling over it against the hot gray sky." (*Queer*/113) Supposedly seeking life, Lee is continually drawn instead to decay and terror. Wherever he sees "scraps of life", Lee snaps at them "hungrily, like a predatory fish cut off from his prey by a glass wall." (*Queer*/92) He cannot "stop ramming his nose against the glass in the nightmare search of his dream." (*Queer*/92)

Lee's predatorial and violent pursuit of "scraps of life" (*Queer*/92) is, to quote Ann Douglas, more suggestive of "black magic" than "white".[350] In his "recurrent nightmare", Lee sees himself "desperately rummaging through bodies and rooms and closets in a frenzied search". (*Queer*/85) His "nightmare search" is reminiscent of the dream Hart Crane reported to his analyst, in which, finding "himself in a dark attic, rummaging through a trunk of his mother's clothes", unsure of exactly what he is looking for, but sure that it is "somewhere in the trunk", Crane finds his mother's dead body.[351] However, while Crane's dream leads to an image of violent dismemberment, that dismemberment is countered by the "*trans*memberment" of Crane's poetry: the "exorcism of black magic by white", and the "reincorporation of the scattered self into an electric matrix".[352] Lee's "nightmare search" leads only to an "empty room", symbolic of a broken connection, a haunting absence (*Queer*/85), or leaves him

futilely "standing in a dusty room in the late afternoon, with an old shoe in his hand". (*Queer*/92) However, Burroughs' claim, in the "Introduction" to *Queer*, that Lee's predatorial search for "contact" would be later transferred into "writing" and the "world of fiction", suggest Burroughs' own version of "*trans*memberment". (*Queer*/13) Lee's routines, expressions of both violence and extraordinary innocence, "signify", like Crane's poetry, "a regrouping of what has been separated, fragmented, even dismembered, lost to 'carnage' and 'death'".[353] While Lee's routines are only a "mask", the fragmented expression of an identity which covers over a "shocking disintegration", they provide an "indelible record", a means to ward off "painful dispersal". (*Queer*/12-13)

The Skip Tracer

In keeping with Fiedler's claim about the centrality of the Faustian commitment to American literature, there are certainly demonic shadows in Burroughs' early fiction. It will be recalled, for example, that the first page of the Prologue to *Junky* describes Lee's childhood fears of a "supernatural horror" that "seemed always on the point of taking shape." (*Junky*/xi) These nightmares leave Lee "afraid to be alone", and "afraid of the dark". (*Junky*/xi) Later in the Prologue, Lee writes the following enigmatic sentence: "The environment was empty, the antagonist hidden, and I drifted into solo adventures." (*Junky*/xiii) As has previously been suggested, moral discourse is not a particular concern of *Junky*, and the text deliberately avoids definitions of good or evil, or friend or enemy. This sentence is the only suggestion in the text of an enemy, or "antagonist", as against the protagonist, Lee. (*Junky*/xiii) Further, the sentence appears to suggest that the drift "into solo adventures" is in some way connected to the fact that this mysterious "antagonist" is "hidden": that is, not absent, merely not visible. (*Junky*/xiii)[354]

In *Queer*, the dark adversary is, as Burroughs writes in his Introduction, a "presence palpable as a haze." (*Queer*/15) While in Panama, Lee dreams that he has "finally found Allerton, hiding out in some Central American backwater." (*Queer*/120)[355] In this, the book's final routine, Lee becomes the "Skip Tracer", a "finder of missing persons". (*Queer*/120) This curious ending sequence makes even more explicit the dark side of Lee's relationship with Allerton, since Lee and the Skip Tracer are inextricably linked. Earlier in *Queer*, Lee is described sitting at bar. The "silence peculiar to Mexico", a "vibrating soundless hum", seeps into Lee's body, and "his face" goes "slack and blank." (*Queer*/30) The effect is "curiously spectral, as though you could see through his face". (*Queer*/30) In this "spectral" state, the two sides of Lee are revealed: his "ravaged and vicious" face and his "dreamy and innocent" eyes. (*Queer*/30) Likewise, having issued one of his thinly-veiled threats, the "Skip Tracer's face" goes "blank and dreamy", and his "mouth" falls "open, showing teeth hard and yellow as old ivory." (*Queer*/120)

Lee as the Skip Tracer is threatening and manipulative. "We don't like to say 'Pay up or else'," the Skip Tracer tells Allerton. (*Queer*/120) "It's not a friendly thing to say." (*Queer*/120) When Allerton refuses his advances, Lee is both hurt and vindictive. Snubbed by Allerton in the Ship Ahoy, for example, Lee feels "a charge of anger pass through his body." (*Queer*/78) "'I'll make him pay for this somehow,'" he thinks to himself. (*Queer*/78) While Lee claims that he does "not actually want retaliation", he does want enough power over Allerton to ensure his continued interest. (*Queer*/78) When Lee's routines fail to secure that interest, Lee falls back on his financial resources. The "Skip Tracer" announces that he represents "the Friendly Finance Company." (*Queer*/120) Lee similarly attempts to combine affection and economics. Having slept with Allerton for the first time, Lee offers to pay the "four hundred pesos" to retrieve Allerton's camera from the pawn shop. (*Queer*/54) When

Allerton, who disliked the "obligation" Lee's payment put him under, "abruptly cut off contact", Lee tries to bribe him, as he had had to bribe the officials to get Allerton's camera. (*Queer*/64) "Like the Wallace Administration", Lee tells Allerton, "I will subsidize non-production. I will pay you twenty pesos not to work tonight." (*Queer*/64) He even considers "buying a half-interest in the Ship Ahoy", because Allerton had "owed four hundred pesos" at the bar. Then Allerton "would not be in a position to ignore him." (*Queer*/78)

Quite clearly, the Skip Tracer wants something of Allerton, but he does not say exactly what. Although the Skip Tracer works for "Friendly Finance", he makes it clear that the relationship between him and Allerton is not a financial one. (*Queer*/120) "Every now and then", the Skip Tracer tells Allerton, "some popcorn citizen walks in the office and tries to pay Friendly Finance with *this* shit. [...]". (*Queer*/121) He opens "a thin brown hand" to reveal "a roll of yellow thousand-dollar bills." (*Queer*/121) Indeed, the Skip Tracer even gives Allerton the roll of bills "in case" he is "caught short." (*Queer*/121). It is not money, then, and the Skip Tracer does not appear at all interested in sexual contact, supposed source of Lee's interest in Allerton. Yet Allerton is clearly in the position of a debtor: "'Oh, uh ... about your, uh ... account. I'll be around soon. That is within the next few ...' The Skip Tracer's voice was muffled." (*Queer*/121)

The menace of this brief dream sequence arises in part from its juxtaposition of nostalgic American motifs and manipulative behaviour. The Skip Tracer hums "'Johnny's So Long at the Fair' over and over", and then stops "abruptly, in the middle of a phrase." (*Queer*/120) At times, he talks "in a voice languid and intermittent, like music down a windy street." (*Queer*/121)[356] If Freud's interpretation of the Devil as "father-substitute for the painter" is complicated by the Devil's "large pendulous breasts", then an interpretation of the Skip Tracer as a devilish father figure is equally

complicated by these nostalgic touches.[357] They recall the equally incongruous nostalgic motifs in *Junky*, the memory of lying "in bed beside my mother", and the "sharp nostalgia of train whistles, piano music down a windy street [...]". (*Junky*/125-6) Indeed, the Skip Tracer routine suggests an interpretation of the Faustian commitment subtly different from those considered so far. All of the Faustian figures examined here are linked by their disconnection from the lifesource: Ishmael and Ahab are "rejected sons"[358], Freud's painter has lost his creativity, Lee cannot "love with complete wholeness". (*Interzone*/64) They all, consciously or unconsciously, summon up the Devil, the figure of supposedly masculine power and fear, in an attempt to reestablish their broken connections to the lost mother world. Hence the Devil's "large pendulous breasts", and the Skip Tracer's association with nostalgic melodies.[359] Failed in love, they turn to terror to retrieve their lost innocence.

While the Skip Tracer sequence suggests a psychological dynamic rooted in infantile experience, the references to "Friendly Finance" and the "yellow thousand-dollar bills" he gives to Allerton also suggest that the Skip Tracer is also formed out of particular political and historical circumstances. (*Queer*/121) The Skip Tracer, despite his air of mystery, is a strikingly white American devil, with apparently unlimited access to large amounts of U.S. currency. At the conclusion of a text located in Mexico, the appearance of such a figure inevitably raises the issue of the United States' economic involvement in the area, and indeed, given the correspondences noted between Lee and the Skip Tracer, to Lee's connection with this involvement. These issues will be raised in the following chapter, which will place Lee's attempt to farm in the Rio Grande Valley in *Junky*, and the journeys into Mexico and South America fictionalised in *Queer* and *The Yage Letters*, in the context of United States economic expansion.

1 Lydenberg refers to the "visions", recounted in *The Yage Letters*, "of composite cities in perpetual architectural flux," and "composite races without inhibitions and open to all human potential." Lydenberg, *Word Cultures*, 47. Given that *Word Cultures* was published in 1987, it is understandable that no reference is made to *Queer*.
2 Ibid., x. Lydenberg also mentions Burroughs' use of "William Lee" as a "pseudonym" for his "first novel". Ibid., 170.
3 Skerl, *William S. Burroughs*, 45.
4 Burroughs, "The Art of Fiction XXXVI: William Burroughs, An Interview", with Conrad Knickerbocker, *Paris Review* (Paris: Paris Review, Fall 1965, no. 35, Vol. 9), 15.
5 In his 1984 essay "My Purpose Is to Write For the Space Age", Burroughs again writes of *Junky*'s simplicity, presenting the book as "an 'inside look' at the world of a drug addict, with no literary pretensions." William Burroughs, "My Purpose is to Write for the Space Age", *New York Times Book Review*, (19 Feb., 1984), pp. 9-10. The flexibility in Burroughs' pronouncements about *Junky* should be noted: "*more or less* straightforward", and "*comparatively* simple." (emphasis mine) Which raises the question: simple in comparison to what? It is useful to remember that Burroughs described *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz* as "straight narrative", and claimed that *Cities of the Red Night* followed "a fairly straight narrative line." Bearing in mind the extreme narrative strategies employed by both these texts, it seems wise to conclude that Burroughs' conception of "straight narrative" is somewhat idiosyncratic. Victor Bockris, *With William Burroughs: A Report from the Bunker*, pp. 13-14.
6 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 207.
7 Burroughs, "The Art of Fiction XXXVI", *Paris Review* (Fall 1965), 16.
8 Geoff Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 343.
9 Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1971), 111.
10 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 347. In fact, Ward's apparent separation of prose styles in *Junky* and *Naked Lunch* is not as distinct as these two quotes suggest. Ward is in fact very alive to the narrative instabilities in *Junky*, describing the text as a "deceptively complex and hybrid one." Ibid., 343.
11 Skerl, *William S. Burroughs*, 21.
12 Stull, "The Quest and the Question: Cosmology and Myth in the Work of William S. Burroughs, 1953-1960", *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, 15.
13 Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970*, 113.
14 The first manuscript version of "Junk" was sent to Burroughs' friend, Lucien Carr, towards the end of 1950: "I have sent the finished MS. of my book along to Lucien and told him to peddle it for the best price he can get." Burroughs, *Letters*, 75. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.1,1951. On March 5, 1951, Burroughs sent Carr "part of a chapter" he wanted to "add to the novel". Burroughs added that he thought it wouldn't "hurt to put in some sex", apparently so as to attract the attention of James Laughlin, editor of New Directions. This tactic clearly failed, since Laughlin was not interested in publishing "Junk". In a P.S. to his letter to Carr, Burroughs clarified that "Junk" had been written while he was still addicted. Burroughs went on to say that there "were 2 books to be writ, one written on the junk, one off, or more accurately half the book written on and half off." Ibid., 81. Letter to Lucien Carr, dated March 5,1951. This is the first sign of the emergence of *Queer*.

In a letter to Jack Kerouac, sent in April 1951, Burroughs announced that he was writing a "Mexican section" to "add to my novel." Ibid., 82. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated April 24, 1951. Two weeks later, Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg, claiming that the "Mexican section of *Junk*" was "not finished yet", and that it was "giving me a bad time." "It involves sex," he explained, "and that is the most difficult subject to write

on." Ibid., 83. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1951. By March 1952, however, Burroughs claimed that he was working a "new novel". This new work "could be part II of *Junk*" but was "complete in itself", although it would employ the "same straightforward narrative method" used in "Junk". Its subject matter was the relationship of "Allerton and Dennison", a fictionalised version of Burroughs' relationship with Lewis Marker. Ibid., 105. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 20, 1952. Lewis Marker: Burroughs had a relationship with Marker in Mexico City in 1951, and Marker accompanied Burroughs on his expedition into South America. Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 56.

While claiming that the second half of "Junk" was "complete in itself", Burroughs was still reluctant to separate the two halves completely. Burroughs, *Letters*, 105. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 20, 1952. Burroughs wrote to Jack Kerouac explaining that his "two stories" were "really complementary and should go together." Ibid., 107. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 26, 1952. By April 1952, Ginsberg had secured a publisher for "Junk", in the form of Ace Books, on the basis that "some of the material from *Queer*" was included. Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 61. At this stage, Burroughs now believed that it would have been better to "publish *Queer* as a sequel to *Junk* rather than together", but he agreed to try to finish the "Queer" section as quickly as possible. Burroughs, *Letters*, 117. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 14, 1952.

It is important to note, in this context, that some material from the final, Mexico-based section of *Junky* reoccurs at the start of *Queer*. For example, the description of "Lola's bar" is similar in both texts (*Junky*, 139, *Queer*, 35), and Lee's account of taking peyote, presented in *Junky* as a self-contained section (*Junky*, pp.145-7), is included in *Queer* as a routine for Allerton. (*Queer*, pp. 89-90)

15 Burroughs, *Letters*, 154. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 5, 1953.

16 Robert Creeley, "A New Testament", *A Quick Graph: Collected Notes and Essays* ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970), 327.

17 There are two further sections to *The Yage Letters*, "Seven Years Later" (1960) and "Epilogue" (1963), which although profoundly relevant to the first section of the text, will be considered separately here, given their later publication dates.

18 The shift in narration from first to third person was a problem in combining "Junk" and "Queer". Burroughs explained this shift to Allen Ginsberg as follows: "On junk, you are concerned primarily with self, so first person is best instrument, but off the junk you are concerned with relationships and 1st person is not adequate to say what I have to say." At this stage, Burroughs still felt that this shift in narrative perspective, which would have occurred in the "middle of the book" if "Junk" and "Queer" were combined, would work: "So it hasn't been done", he wrote to Ginsberg, "well let's do it." Ibid., 122. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 26, 1952. In the end, however, Ace Books published "Junk" as *Junkie*, with an additional Mexico City section, but without a shift from the first person narration of "Junk". The additional "Mexico City" sequence was added as the final section of the main text. This final stretch of *Junky* detailed Lee's nightmarish withdrawal from junk, exacerbated by excessive drinking, and accompanied by images of entropic finality.

19 Skerl, *William S. Burroughs*, pp. 22, 23.

20 For example, the first piece included in *Interzone*, "Twilight's Last Gleamings", was first "written in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1938", although the version in *Interzone* is taken from a "thirteen page manuscript" which was probably written during Burroughs' stay in Tangiers. James Graueholz claims that the manuscript is probably a "reconstruction from memory", and dates the manuscript to the Tangiers period because "Burroughs was using a typewriter with the Spanish inverted exclamation point". James Grauerholz, "Introduction", *Interzone*, xv.

The intention of *Interzone*, according to James Grauerholz, is to "portray the development of Burroughs' mature writing style", and the editing of the disparate

manuscript fragments, especially in the "Ginsberg Notes" section, suggests a retrospective linearity has been imposed on the material. I am thinking, in particular, of the closing section in the "Ginsberg Notes" section, which includes the declaration "Throw down all your arms and armor, walk straight to the Frontier", and then concludes with a "Frontier" crossing dream sequence, and the final two sentences: "At times I feel myself on the point of learning something basic. I have achieved moments of inner silence." The juxtaposition of these fragments, which may or may not have been juxtaposed in Burroughs' original papers, is highly suggestive. Burroughs, *Interzone*, pp. 130-1.
21 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xvi.
22 Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.
23 Ibid. xvi.
24 Stull, "The Quest and the Question", *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, 15.
25 Burroughs, *Letters*, 372. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct. 19, 1957.
26 Oliver Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxxv.
27 Burroughs, *Letters*, 379. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Dec.4, 1957.
28 Ibid., 429. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.7, 1959.
29 Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, (London: Meuthen, 1981), 106.
30 Ibid.
31 For example, Burroughs wrote to Jack Kerouac to say he was glad that Kerouac had "enjoyed 'Junk.'" Ibid., 80. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.28, 1951.
32 The manuscript was lost in the confusion following the shooting of Joan Burroughs. "Lewis Marker and Eddie Woods, another friend of Bill's in Mexico City, left it in a restaurant in Jacksonville, Florida, where Marker lived, and were embarrassed to go back for it." Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 57.
33 To differentiate between the manuscript and the published text, we will present the titles in a different manner: here, "Junk" is the original manuscript, *Junkie* is the 1953 published text, and *Junky* is the 1977 edition.
34 "I have been writing a novel about junk." Burroughs, *Letters*, 65. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 10, 1950. Two months later, Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg, explaining that he had been "working on a novel about junk. It is about finished now." Ibid., 70. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950. The significance of the place-mark on this letter, and of Burroughs' expatriation, will be examined in more detail in Chapter Three.
35 Ibid., 75. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.1, 1951.
36 Harris, Footnote, *Letters*, 88. We will go on to look at the missing section, Chapter Twenty-Eight of the "Junk" manuscript, in more detail in Chapter Two.
37 Burroughs, "Introduction" to "Junk", (Stanford University, Department of Special Collections: "Ginsberg Papers", Call No. M733, Box No. 2, Folder 41). These criticisms were repeated in the "Mexico City" section of *Junky*, pp. 142-5.
38 Burroughs, *Letters*, 82. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated April 24, 1951. Burroughs' correspondence clarifies the primary reason for these omissions: he clearly wanted "Junk" to be published, and to bring in some money. He wrote to Ginsberg in May 1950 expressing his doubts that "anyone" would published "Junk" due to the "criticism of the Nar.[cotic] dept. it contains." Ibid., 70. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950. In a later letter to Ginsberg, Burroughs placed his hope to "get $1000" out of "Junk" in the context of his plan, frustrated by depleted resources, to buy a ranch in Mexico. Burroughs explained to Ginsberg that he was "having difficulty raising the cash" for his ranch, despite having sold his land in Texas, and was resigned to starting his "operations" on "a shoe string and under real pioneer conditions." Ibid., 75. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Jan.1, 1951. Burroughs' early correspondence details a number of "money making enterprises", from selling "fluoride tablets for tooth decay" to farming marijuana, and the manuscript of "Junk" is not endowed by its author with any special

intensity, beyond its potential value as a commodity. Ibid., 7. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Sept. 1, 1946. The alterations Burroughs made did not pay off immediately, however. The pared down text, Jack Kerouac assured publisher James Laughlin in a letter in February 1952, was "smoother now and not so weird and Reichian", but Laughlin did not take the book. Ironically, given the fate of "Junkie", and the current collector's value of the original "Ace" edition of the book, Kerouac attempted to convince Laughlin that it "would be a shame if it was eventually swallowed up by cheap paper covered 25 cent Gold Medal or Signet Books like 'I, Mobster.'" Jack Kerouac, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 333. Letter to James Laughlin, dated Feb.24, 1952.

The book was also rejected by Jason Epstein at Doubleday, who famously said: "The prose is not very good. This could only work if it were written by someone more important like Winston Churchill." Barry Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 55. Burroughs told Ginsberg that he was "about ready to hack" his manuscript up "and peddle it to magazines." Burroughs, *Letters*, 95. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.5, 1951.

39 While Ace nervously delayed publishing *Junkie*, Burroughs ruefully noted the success of other contemporary books on addiction: he cited, for example, "*DOWN ALL YOUR STREETS* and *H IS FOR HEROIN*". It was, Burroughs felt, the "beginning" of a "deluge", and "NOW" was "the time to publish": while the "Subject" was "hot now", it wouldn't "be hot long." William Burroughs, Unpublished Correspondence, (Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ginsberg Collection). Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated June 15, 1952. Also quoted in Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 61.

40 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 341.

41 By writing about junk, and by agreeing to publication, Burroughs was, as Ward claims, "bypassing any possible chance of a serious literary review or recommendation". Ibid.

42 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 206.

43 Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible*, 63.

44 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 206.

45 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 341.

46 Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography* by Barry Miles, 152.

47 A series of notes were also added to the main text by Ace, to further distance themselves from William Lee's opinions. In response, for example, to the main text's claim that marijuana was "positively not habit-forming", a footnote was added which read: "Authorities maintain that the marijuana smoker usually forms a psychological pattern; under present laws, the use of marijuana is in itself a crime." These notes were also included in the Olympia Press edition of *Junkie*. William Burroughs, *Junkie* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1966), pp. 30, 154.

48 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 206.

49 Ibid., 210.

50 Although Burroughs' letters make no mention of Hammett, he is often referred to as an influence on Burroughs. Gary Snyder, for example, refers to Burroughs narrative voice as a "half Coyote, half Dashiell Hammett dry style." Gary Snyder, from "The Incredible Survival of the Coyote", *Symposium of the Whole: a range of discourse towards an ethnopoetics* ed. and with commentary by Jerome and Diane Rothenberg (Berkerley, University of California Press, 1983), 432. Certainly, Burroughs was very familiar with the detective genre. The form is used - and parodically deconstructed - in Burroughs 1981 novel *Cities of the Red Night*: "The name is Clem Williamson Snide. I am a private asshole." Burroughs, *Cities of the Red Night* [1981] (London: Picador, 1981), 44.

51 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 342.

52 Chandler quoted in Russell Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 256.
53 Russell Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 256.
54 Ibid., 257.
55 Chandler quoted in Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse*, 257. Burroughs would later distance himself from this notion of the gritty realism of hard-boiled detective fiction. In "The Last European Interview", Burroughs argues that this "idea that this is the hard-boiled realistic style is completely mythological. Raymond Chandler is a writer of myths, of criminal myths, not of reality at all. Nothing to do with reality." Burroughs, "The Last European Interview", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (1984), 14.
56 In August 1944, Lucien Carr stabbed Kammerer, who had become "fixated" with him, and threw him into the Hudson River. The following morning, he went straight to see Burroughs, allegedly handing him a "blood-stained pack of Lucky Strikes", and offering him the last cigarette. Two days later, Carr gave himself up to the authorities. Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, pp. 104-110.
57 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 110.
58 Ibid., 110. The single line of "And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks" quoted by Ted Morgan suggests a similarity in narrative voice to *Junky*:
"People in bars are always claiming to be boxers, hoping thereby to ward off attack, like a blacksnake will vibrate its tail in leaves and try to impersonate a rattlesnake." Ibid., 110. The similarity is rooted in the startling use of metaphor, which is also an important point of comparison with Chandler, who described an actress who "smelled the way the Taj Mahal looks by moonlight". Metaphor in *Junky* (and in the above example from "And the Hippos") often links the human and the animal worlds. In *Junky*, for example, the "drivers" in New Orleans "orient themselves largely by the use of their horns, like bats." Burroughs, *Junky*, 69. The metaphor, as employed by Chandler and Burroughs, is not as Ward suggests "dead", for it creates narrative disjunctions, transgressing, with its linguistic performance, the "monotone" voice that is the supposed confine of detective fiction. Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 342.
59 Burroughs, *Letters*, 83. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1951.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 24. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.9, 1948.
65 Korzybski, "Introduction to the Second Edition", *Science and Sanity*, xi.
66 Burroughs, *Letters*, 68. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950.
67 Will Self, review of *Junky*, *The Sunday Times*, 2nd May 1993, *Books* section, pp. 6/9.
68 Ibid.
69 In fact, Lee does provide a final comment on the story, but it hardly serves as comforting closure: "He laughed until his face was purple." Burroughs, *Junky*, 7. A wry paradox is set up here between Jack's portrayal of himself as "cold-blooded killer", and the strange warm-bloodedness of his own reaction to the story: a cold-blooded creature couldn't laugh until "his face was purple." Ibid., 7. The less than comforting resolution of this paradox is to assert Jack's similarity to the warm-blooded reader, rather than allowing Jack's expression of his own difference.
70 Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse*, 256.
71 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 347.
72 Burroughs, "Hemingway", *The Adding Machine*, 67.
73 Ibid.

74 Burroughs, "The Art of Fiction XXXVI: An Interview", *Paris Review* (Fall 1965), 15.
75 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *The Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 347.
76 *Letters*, 80. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Jan.29,1951.
77 Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 25.
78 Ibid., 27.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 26.
81 Ibid., 27.
82 Allen Ginsberg, "The Art of Poetry VIII", *Paris Review* (Spring 1966), 43.
83 Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 26.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 25.
86 Ibid., pp. 25-6.
87 Ibid., 26.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Eric Mottram, "William Burroughs and the Algebra of Need", *Snack* (London: Aloes Books, 1975), 3.
94 Ibid.
95 Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 27.
96 Burroughs, *Letters*, 117. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 14, 1952.
97 Ibid.
98 Simultaneous with this process of his own fictionalisation, Burroughs was clearing up the distinction between the 'real' criminal underworld, and his 'fictional' representation of it. As his letters to Ginsberg clarify, in revising the manuscript for Ace, Burroughs also changed the "real" names of his characters. "Change Johnny to plain Irish or Jimmy Irish. He is dead but he may have heirs. Old Bart can stay Bart. He is dead -heart trouble- and he has no relatives." Ibid., 136. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 13, 1952. An important shift was therefore taking place in the text: its fictional status was being further clarified.
99 Ibid., 108. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 26, 1952.
100 Ibid., 125. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 15, 1952.
101 Ibid., 127. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 23, 1952.
102 Ibid.
103 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxvii.
104 Burroughs, *Letters*, 125. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 15, 1952.
105 Ibid., 108. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 26, 1952.
106 Ibid., 117. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 14, 1952.
107 Ibid., 119. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 22, 1952.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 "I held the cat out at arm's length, slapping it back and forth across the face with my free hand. The cat screamed and clawed me, then started spraying piss all over my pants. I went on hitting the cat, my hands bloody from scratches." Burroughs, *Junky*, 123.
112 Burroughs, *Letters*, 120. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 22, 1952.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Burroughs, *Interzone*, pp.13-17. "The Finger" will be analyzed at length in Chapter Four.
120 Burroughs, *Letters*, 120. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 22, 1952.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid., 134. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Early July, 1952.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid. 117. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 14, 1952.
126 Kundera, *The Art of Fiction*, 26. Before the Prologue is examined in more detail, it is instructive to compare it with Burroughs' earlier attempt to write an Introduction to "Junk". This Introduction has never been published, and exists only in manuscript form in the "Ginsberg Papers" archive at Stanford University. Burroughs, "Introduction" to "Junk", (Stanford University, Department of Special Collections: "Ginsberg Papers", Call No. M733, Box No. 2, Folder 41). Fixing an exact date to the "Introduction" is somewhat problematic, but there are various clues within the text that suggest an approximate date. There is a reference, for example, to Lee/Burroughs' wife, on page 4 of the "Introduction": "Every time I take a fall the law say to my wife: 'It's a wonder he didn't get you on the junk." Ibid., 4. This dates the Introduction prior to July 1951. Burroughs' first mention of the "Junk" manuscript was in a letter to Allen Ginsberg sent from Mexico City, dated March 10, 1950. The Introduction is largely concerned with the use of junk in America, which suggests it may have been written relatively early in Burroughs' stay in Mexico City. A further letter to Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950, refers to Burroughs' doubt that "anyone would publish it, owing to the criticism of the Nar [cotic] Dept it contains." Burroughs, *Letters*, 70. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950. This would tie in with the generally confrontational tone of the Introduction.

In style, it is very different from the Prologue. It sets up ten "myths" about junk, and in true factualist fashion, attempts to dispel them with "factual" statements. For example, the first myth is that "*All drugs are more or less similar and all are habit forming*." Burroughs, or "Dennison" to use the persona employed at this stage in the writing of "Junk", responds by distinguishing a series of drugs according to their effects, whether or not they are addictive, and what the precise withdrawal symptoms are. Dennison thereby seeks to differentiate his own portrayal of the junk world from that found in "newspapers, magazines and movies". They, he argues, "seldom deviate from the officially sponsored myth." Burroughs, "Introduction" to "Junk", 2. He gives the example of a "recent movie" titled "Johnny Stool Pigeon", in which the addicts "tear the clothes off their skinny bodies and die screaming" in their crazed pursuit of junk. "This", Dennison retorts, "is preposterous." Ibid., 4. Needless to say, the Introduction is "factualist" only in the widest, most Burroughsian sense. In the third paragraph, Dennison claims that he would not have written a book about junk "unless I had something special to say on the subject that has not already been said." Ibid., 1. He goes on to exercise the theory that "junk is transitional between living and dead matter, between animal and vegetable life. You cannot avoid the feeling", he goes on, "that junk is in some way alive." Ibid., 1.
127 The word "routine" is especially ambiguous, since the "routine" was to become Burroughs' "special form" : an exaggerated, hallucinatory burst of writing with little regard for the conventions of realism. Burroughs, *Interzone*, 127 Hearing of Kenneth Rexroth's disapproval of his "Roosevelt after Inauguration" routine , Burroughs wrote to Allen Ginsberg fuming: "It's not supposed to be *accurate*. Does he think it has anything to do with Roosevelt? [...]" Burroughs, *Letters*, 240. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Nov.12, 1954.

128 Ward, "William Burroughs: A Literary Outlaw?", *Cambridge Quarterly* (1993), 343.
129 Ibid., 342.
130 Ibid., 343.
131 Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 26.
132 These nostalgic motifs would become recurrent throughout Burroughs' work. As early as *The Yage Letters*, the motifs were parodied for being *so* recurrent. "Notice" Burroughs writes to Ginsberg during the Billy Bradshinkel routine, "I am sparing you the falling leaves." Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, 6.
133 Eric Mottram, *Algebra of Need*, 30..
134 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 85.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 95.
138 Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, 26.
139 Burroughs, *Letters*, 83. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1951.
140 Burroughs, Unpublished Correspondence, (Columbia University). Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Aug.20, 1952.
141 Susan Howe, *The Birth-Mark*, 163.
142 Fiedler*, Love and Death in the American Novel*, 168.
143 Ibid.
144 Edwin Fussel, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West*, pp. 285-291, quoted in Harold P. Simonson, *The Closed Frontier: Studies in American Literary Tragedy*, 9.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Harold P. Simonson, *The Closed Frontier: Studies in American Literary Tragedy*, 144.
148 Melville, "Bartleby", *The Penguin Book of American Short Stories*, 76.
149 Ibid., 111.
150 Simonson, *The Closed Frontier*, 11.
151 Ibid., pp.13-14.
152 Ibid., pp. 12-3.
153 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.
154 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 168.
155 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.
156 Ibid., 12.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., 16.
159 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 168. Although the Prologue to *Junky* does not name the "large Midwest city" in which Lee was born, it is useful to examine the historical circumstances into which the author was born, and which provided a basis for details given in the Prologue.. St. Louis, founded primarily by exiles from the "French provinces of Aunis and Saintonge", was "a commercial center on the edge of a frontier", an early point of intersection between merchants from the "burgeoning American populations to the East", and "the Indian communities to the West." St. Louis reflected the "family formations and distribution of wealth" of its French founders. Jay Gitlin, "Empires of Trade, Hinterlands of Settlement", *The Oxford History of the American West*, pp. 93,110. According to Elliot West, however, at the start of the nineteenth century, St. Louis also still reflected the "frontier's dynamic changes", and its streets were home to "trappers, merchants and slaves, planters and their families, boatmen and Indians, loafers and thieves." Eliott West, "American Frontier", *The Oxford History of the American West*, 135. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase opened up a vast area of land beyond St. Louis to white American pioneers. It

was in St. Louis that the "formal transfer ceremony" was conducted, and from St. Louis, the gateway to the West, that Clark and Lewis, at Thomas Jefferson's instruction, set off to explore the new territories. By 1914, however, the new territory had been fully mapped and was increasingly populated and urbanized. Clyde A. Milner, "National Initiatives", *The Oxford History of the American West*, pp. 155, 157. Burroughs has described the St. Louis of his childhood as a "pretty hard-core matriarchal society." Burroughs, "The Last European Interview", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (1984), 17. In *Naked Lunch*, Dr. Benway would offer his own advice to the individual who found himself "in a matriarchy": "walk don't run to the nearest frontier." Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 36.

160 It is important to add that, while Lee identifies with criminals, he becomes a junky. That is, as addict, he is not merely associating himself with, but actively participating in, the junky underworld.

161 Goethe, *Faust Part Two* (London: Penguin Books, 1959) trans. and with intro. by Philip Wayne. Act I, "A Gloomy Gallery", 76.

162 Burroughs, *Letters*, 45. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 18, 1949.

163 Ibid., 68. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950.

164 Ibid., 45. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 18, 1949.

165 Ibid., 68. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 1, 1950. There are distinctly Faustian overtones here. Mephistopheles, guiding Faust towards the realm of "the Mothers", invites him to "Take the free realms of Forms for your delight; / Rejoice in things that have long ceased from being;". Goethe, *Faust Part Two*, Act I, "A Gloomy Gallery", 78.

166 Simonson refers to Oliver Wendell Holmes' *Elsie Venner* (1861), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1880) and William Dean Howells' *The Undiscovered Country* (1880), *The Shadow of a Dream* (1890) and *Questionable Shapes* (1903). Simonson, *The Closed Frontier*, 138.

167 Simonson, *The Closed Frontier: Studies in American Literary Tragedy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 138.

168 Ibid., 139.

169 Ibid., 14.

170 Susan Edmunds, *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis and Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 13.

171 Ibid., 337.

172 Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 24.

173 Fiedler*, Love and Death in the American Novel*, 315.

174 Ibid., pp. 315, 327. In *Literary Outlaw*, Ted Morgan presents a series of anecdotes that suggest that Burroughs himself was never close to his father. There was, Morgan suggests, "a remoteness that his son could never bridge." Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 25. Burroughs' brother, Mort, was more practical than he was, and Mort would obediently help his father in the "workshop in the basement." Burroughs was "excluded from the workshop", and therefore "excluded from the closeness between father and oldest son" that was created by their working together. Ibid., 32. In another minor incident, Burroughs' father, who was an atheist, told his son that once you died, you were "dead all over", and that there was nothing more. His son disagreed. Ibid., 25. It might be speculated that this small domestic drama was one seed for the search for immortality that dominates Burroughs' later fictions.

175 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 327

176 Ibid., 336.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

179 Herman Melville, "Bartleby", *The Penguin Book of American Short Stories*, 97.

180 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 12.

181 Carolyn Potter, "Call Me Ishmael, or How to Make Double-Talk Speak", *New*

Essays on Moby Dick, The American Novel series, ed. Richard Brodhead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73.
182 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 335.
183 According to Fiedler, the cerebral protagonist in white male American fiction often has a twin, who represents all the qualities that the protagonist lacks. In Hawthorne's *Fanshawe*, for example, Fanshawe's twin is Edward Walcott, who is "handsome, vigorous, full of natural grace and forgivable 'boyish' excesses." Ibid., 211. Walcott is, therefore, the body, and Fanshawe, the mind, and their splitting is suggestive, to Fielder, of an ominous splitting with the male American psyche in general.

The mind-body split was a profound concern of Burroughs and his contemporaries, as is clear from an episode recounted in Barry Miles' biography of Allen Ginsberg. Miles, making use of Ginsberg's own reminiscences, describes a deeply divided argument on a summer night in New York in 1946. On one side were the "Wolfeans", the "heterosexual All-American boys", represented by Jack Kerouac and Hal Chase. They, like Kerouac's sometime hero Thomas Wolfe, stood for the "appreciation of America and homeyness and family and normal values." On the other side of the divide were the "non-Wolfeans", namely Burroughs and, if tentatively, Ginsberg. They "didn't believe in the wide, open, dewy-eyed lyrical America" as peddled by Wolfe, for they were instead "sinister European fairies." The split was in large part between the advocates of the body, and those of the mind. Ginsberg claimed his own side, the "non-Wolfeans", were deficient in "earthiness", and "fearful of the body", and he expressed his own feelings of disembodiment, using the image of a "curtain of cellophane" that came between him and "reality itself." Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography*, 70.

Appropriately, then, in *Junky* Lee has no twinned self to balance his cerebral tendencies. Indeed, the book's conclusion, as we will go on to discuss, expresses a desire for "momentary freedom" from the "claims of the aging, cautious, nagging, frightened flesh." Burroughs, *Junky*, 152.
184 Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 297.
185 James Creech, *Closet Writing, Gay Reading*, pp. 73-4.
186 Ibid., 74. Creech, apparently more concerned with queer politics than with questions of class and race, imagines the "powerful allure of the lower decks and the beautiful savages on land for a twenty-one year old homosexual man." Ibid., 74.
187 Douglas disregards the Polynesian women depicted in Melville's early writings, claiming they present "few challenges" for the protagonists. This isn't quite accurate: while Douglas describes Fayaway in *Typee* as an "uninhibited, tender, sensual" character, offering "exactly what the American Victorian lady would deny her male counterpart: unmoralized pleasure", she does not register how troubling, as well as appealing, this was to the deeply repressed white male protagonist. Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 297. Ibid. As Rogin suggests, with *Mardi* the representations of women become more problematic, with "Annatoo, the emasculating savage wife", "Yillah", the "elusive maidenly object" of the protagonist's "romantic quest", and the "Seductive, maternal Hautia," the "witch-priestess who pursues him". Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 62.
188 Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 47.
189 Ibid., 48.
190 Ibid.
191 Melville wrote to Sophia Hawthorne expressing surprise that she had liked the book, since "as a general thing, women have small taste for the sea." Melville, "Letters", *Moby Dick*, 568. Letter to Sophia Hawthorne, dated January 8, 1852.
192 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 357.
193 Looking on with horror at the "infernal orgies" taking place on board the Pequod, the sentimental Starbuck notes what "small touch of human mothers" the "heathen crew" have in them. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 148.

Douglas notes that Freud, while writing his "matricidal script", *Totem and Taboo*, had

felt "all omnipotence, all savage." Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, pp. 230, 229. Likewise Melville, who having finished *Moby Dick*, would write to his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne claiming that the book had been "broiled" in "hell-fire", and later would claim that he had "written a wicked book" and yet he "felt as spotless as the lamb." Melville, "Letters", *Moby Dick*, pp. 562, 566. Letters to Nathaniel Hawthorne, dated June 29, 1851, and November 17, 1851 respectively.
194 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 348 and Pamela A. Boker, *The Grief Taboo in American Literature: Loss and Prolonged Adolescence in Twain, Melville and Hemingway* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), pp.58-9.
195 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 32.
196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.
199 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 348 and Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 46. In this context, it is helpful to note Susan Stanford Friedman's distinction between the mother in a patriarchal society - the unloving 'step-mother' - and the relationship between infant and mother, prior to individuation, and therefore pre-patriarchal. Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 142.

Fiedler claims that his "interpretation suggests itself immediately", and suggests that it clarifies "the meaning of chimneys" in Melville's short story 'I and My Chimney'. While a chimney is certainly at the centre of 'I and My Chimney', the chimney is described in distinctly phallic terms, with the story's narrator, as Ann Douglas notes, defending his chimney as a "bastion of phallic, assertive and aggressive masculinity." The suggestion is made, by the architect called in by the narrator's wife, that the chimney contains a "reserved space, hermetically sealed." As Douglas points out, the architect suggests in "veiled fashion by this womb imagery" that the "chimney is feminine." Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, pp. 317-8.
200 Fiedler*, Love and Death in the American Novel*, 349. There is more ambiguity here than Fiedler allows. Firstly, Ishmael's "juvenile domestic tragedy" is, as Fiedler himself notes, initially about being "rejected by mama", not about the rejection of "mama". Secondly, as will be noted later, the protagonist takes to sea not only to escape the "mothers of his world", but also, by establishing a relationship to the sea itself, to recreate the lost relationship to the mother. Ibid., pp. 347, 327.
201 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 6.
202 Ibid.
203 Lydenberg, *Word Cultures*, 168 and Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 252.
204 Ibid., 157. Here, "Neal" is Neal Cassady, "Jack" is Jack Kerouac.
As Ann Douglas stresses, the attempted symbolic violence towards the mother was not only the preserve of the male modernist writer, since the "daughters of the Titaness were as instrumental in overthrowing her as her sons." Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 247. Susan Stanford Friedman, for example, in her studies of H.D., draws attention, if somewhat begrudgingly, to the matricidal plot implicit in H.D.'s *Her* and *Paint it Today*. To "break free", she notes, "means - terrifyingly - to 'kill' the mother." Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 220. What is striking about these symbolic acts of matricide is their furtiveness. The matricidal plot in *Her*, for example, was erased manuscript before publication. (See Manuscript no.2 at the back of *Penelope's Web*: "Suppression of Matricidal Desire - Typescript from *Her*". Part of the deleted text reads: "If I hurl a pumpkin at Eudenia her head will roll off and they will hold me responsible for matricide.") In *Paint It To-Day*, the act of matricide is implicit in the protagonists' "flight from home". By becoming an expatriate, H.D. and her protagonist were breaking their connection to "the norms of Victorian femininity". Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, 220
205 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 157.

206 Stimpson, *The Beat Generation And the Trials of Homosexual Liberation*, 379.
207 Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography*, 59,
208 Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 441. Letter to Carolyn Cassady, dated Aug. 26, 1954. The context for this letter was the expulsion of Ginsberg from the Cassady home after Carolyn had walked in on Ginsberg and Neal Cassady engaged in oral sex. Burroughs' response to this incident was as follows: "Hardly surprising. You know how women are. Come on broad-minded and understanding ... I knew a women in Chi, a German, said she was emancipated and didn't mind her husband going with other women until he did it, and then she attacked him with a carving knife, called the cops and attempted suicide. Well I guess Carolyn has what she wants, now. What every U.S. bitch of them wants. A man all to herself with no pernicious friends hanging about." Burroughs, *Letters*, 232. Letter to Jack Keroauc, dated Sept.3, 1954.
While Kerouac is sympathetic, if patronising, towards Carolyn Cassady, the science fiction story "cityCityCITY", which Kerouac refers to briefly in his letter to her, suggests Kerouac's own, somewhat submerged, hatred of "puritanical matriarchal [...] repression", since, like other 1950s science fiction plotlines, cityCityCITY presented the nightmare vision of a future city run by women.
209 Ibid.
210 Burroughs continues: "I mean she is really evil in her small way." The context for this outburst was Burroughs having accidentally received a somewhat poisonous letter Mrs. Kerouac sent to Allen Ginsberg. Burroughs, *Letters*, 391. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated July 1958.
211 Victor Bockris and William Burroughs, "A Passport for William Burroughs", *With William Burroughs*, xiii.
212 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 32.
213 Skerl, *William S. Burroughs*, 4.
214 Victor Bockris and William Burroughs, "A Passport for William Burroughs", *With William Burroughs*, xiv.
215 Ibid.
216 Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 441. Letter to Carolyn Cassady, dated Aug. 26, 1954.
217 Catharine R. Stimpsom, "The Beat Generation and the Trials of Homosexual Liberation", *Salmagundi* (1982-3), 376.
218 Ibid.
219 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 19.
220 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 331.
221 Ibid., 327. The fictional working out of this "counter-family" finds its most complete expression in Burroughs 1987 western novel, *The Place of Dead Roads*, in which The Johnson Family (the fictional invention of Jack Black, author of *You Can't Win*) are portrayed as a subversive underground organization.
222 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 10.
223 Ibid.
224 Burroughs, "Foreword" (1988) to Jack Black, *You Can't Win: An Autobiography of Jack Black* [1926] (New York: Amok Press, 1988), v.
225 Ibid.
226 Miles, *El Hombre Invisible*, 42.
227 Ibid.
228 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 14, quoted in Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 79.
229 James Creech, *Closet Writing, Gay Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 73.
230 Redburn adds: "for when I think of those days, something rises up in my throat and almost strangles me." Melville, *Redburn: His First Sea Voyage* [1849] (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 36.
231 Ted Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 19.

232 Burroughs and Bockris, "A Passport for William Burroughs", *With William Burroughs*, xiv.
233 In *Port of Saints*: "His [Audrey Carsons] family was in very modest circumstances. It humiliated him to attend classes in his patched blue suit". Burroughs, *Port of Saints* [1973] (Berkeley: Blue Wind Press, 1980), 61.
234 John Tytell, "A Conversation with Allen Ginsberg", *Partisan Review* (Vol.41, 1974), 254.
235 Ibid.
236 Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 79.
237 In Morgan's account, Burroughs was doing well at the interview until Colonel Donovan introduced him to the "director of research and analysis", who "turned out to be none other than his former Harvard housemaster, James Phinney Baxter, who had disliked Burroughs from the days when he kept a ferret in his room. As soon as Burroughs saw Baxter's purple-jowled face, he knew the game was up." Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 80.
238 John Tytell, "A Conversation with Allen Ginsberg", *Partisan Review* (Vol.41, 1974), 254.
239 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 337.
240 Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xix.
241 Campbell, *Writing Security*, 205.
242 Burroughs, *My Education*, pp.6-7.
243 Burroughs, "Foreword" to Jack Black, *You Can't Win*, v.
244 Ibid., 378.
245 Ibid.
246 Burroughs, *Letters*, 119. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 22, 1952.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
251 The reader is drawn further to read Lee's interest in Carl as sexual by a description of Lee's own thoughts: "'If I could get this far with an American kid,' he reasoned, 'I could get the rest of the way. So he's not queer. People can be obliging. What's the obstacle?'" Burroughs, *Queer*, 22.
252 Dellamora, "Queer Apocalypse: Framing William Burroughs", *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*, 148.
253 Timothy S. Murphy, "William Burroughs Between Indifference and Revalorization: notes towards a political reading", *Angelika* (Oxford: vol.1, no.1, 1993), 114. The description of homosexuality as a "cover story" derives from Burroughs' own fiction: in the "Hauser and O'Brien sequence of *Naked Lunch*, Lee claims that "homosexuality is the best all-round cover an agent can use". Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 171.
254 Dellamora, "Queer Apocalypse: Framing William Burroughs", *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End*, 148.
255 Burroughs, *Letters*, pp. 107-8. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated March 26, 1952.
256 Ibid., pp.114-5. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated April 1952.
257 Harris, Footnote 20, *Letters*, 115.
258 Burroughs, *Letters*, 118. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated April 14, 1952.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 William L. Stull, "The Quest and the Question: Cosmology and Myth in the Work of William S. Burroughs, 1953-1960", *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, 21.
263 Oliver Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 63.
264 It is at such moments, however, that the terse factualist narrative of *Junky* breaks down, and is forced instead to gesture towards places ("the final place where the human

road ends") that are unrepresentable in matter-of-fact language. Burroughs, *Junky*, 133.
265 Burroughs, "Chapter Twenty Eight" of the "Junk" manuscript, (Stanford University, Department of Special Collections: "Ginsberg Papers", Call no. M733, Box 2, Folder 39), pp. 141-6.
266 Ibid., 141. Burroughs' spelling of "Orgonne" here is inconsistent with the most usual spelling, "Orgone".
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid., 82. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated April 24, 1951.
271 Ibid., 141. From the relative safety of Mexico City, Burroughs noted, in a letter to Jack Keroauc, Reich's observation that "orgones come in waves, and that lately the wave has been at a very low ebb." Ibid. 72. Letter to Jack Kerouac, dated Sept.18, 1950.
272 Wilhelm Reich, "Die therapeutische Bedeutung der Genital libido", *International Zeitschrift für Psycho-Analysis* 10 (1924), quoted in Allan Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy: William S. Burroughs' *Junky* and *Naked Lunch* and Reichian Theory", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (1984), 108.
273 Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 108.
274 Ibid., pp. 108, 110.
275 Ibid., 110.
276 Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters: 1940-1956*, 482. Letter to William S. Burroughs, dated mid-May 1955.
277 Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), xi. Quoted in Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114.
278 Ibid.
279 Burroughs, *Letters*, 19. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb.20, 1948. As Oliver Harris notes, Ginsberg had written to Wilhelm Reich in March, 1947, asking Reich for assistance with his "psychic difficulty" as a homosexual. Harris, Footnote 2, *Letters*, 11. In a letter sent in February 1949, Burroughs advised Ginsberg to try the "Reichians who sound a good deal more hip" than conventional analysts. Burroughs, *Letters*, 11. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Feb.19, 1947. Clearly, Burroughs' attitude towards Reichian analysis shifted somewhat in the following year.
280 Ibid., 19.
281 Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114.
282 Burroughs, "Introduction" to "Junk", (Stanford University: "Ginsberg Papers"), p.1.
283 Ibid.
284 Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114.
285 Reich, *Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), xix. Quoted in Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114.
286 Johnston, "The Burroughs Biopathy", 114.
287 Harris, "The Last Words of William Burroughs", 85.
288 Neal Oxenhandler, "Listening to Burroughs' Voice", *Surfiction*, 186. There is also suggestive oral content in the "honey and Levantine syrups" that the "type" "sucks up through a sort of proboscis." Burroughs, *Junky*, 112.
289 These images, whatever their precise source, find echoes in a dream, with explicit but suppressed sexual content, recounted in the "Ginsberg Notes" section of *Interzone*. The dream, which has a "tone of furtive, but overpowering, sexuality", concerns the "toasting" of "four or five marshmallows" in "little wooden boxes which had wicks running around the edges like a kerosene stove." Initially, the dream is related to "the intolerable, febrile sexuality of junk sickness", and then, in a Freudian maneuver, to "cunts", and in particular "Mary, the English governess". Lee, who is trying to quit junk, then lights a "kerosene stove", in an direct echo of his dream, and takes a shot. Lee lights the "kerosene stove" to warm himself, having linked using junk to feeling "cold". However, the image of the "stove" is linked, in the dream, to the "febrile

sexuality of junk sickness." Lee therefore seems stuck in a vicious circle. A complex series of associations are therefore set up in this sequence between the "governess", "febrile sexuality" "and junk sickness". Burroughs, *Interzone*, pp. 117-118. In Ted Morgan's biography of Burroughs, Burroughs is quoted as saying, in the context of the incident with his nurse: "*I hear the dark mutterings of a servant underworld*." Morgan, *Literary Outlaw*, 31. I am relying on Morgan's use of italics to designate Burroughs' 'own words'.
290 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 327.
291 Olson, *Call me Ishmael: A Study of Melville* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1947), 82.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid.
295 Pamela A. Boker, *The Grief Taboo in American Literature*, 56.
296 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 231. Consider, for example, the manner in which Olson narrates the story of Enceladus, the Chief of the Titans, who was, as Olson claims, a "constant image" in Melville's writing. Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 82. Olson begins with the story of Kronos, who had castrated his father, Uranus, with a sickle, before marrying his sister, Rhea. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. Cary, Nock, Denniston, Ross, Duff, Scullard. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 476. Kronos was then himself "overthrown by their sons banded together in a brother horde." Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 82. Among these sons was Zeus, who took over Kronos' throne, and defended Olympus from another upsurgent group, the Titans. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 966. This attack on Olympus, led by Enceladus, was repulsed. Melville's identification with Enceladus suggests to Olson that Melville "saw his likeness in defeated and exiled heroes", rather than in "successful sons" who overcame their fathers and thereby became gods. Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 82.

What Olson neglects to mention is that Kronos had castrated his father on the "advice of his mother", who was "Earth", the originary goddess. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 476. The omission is important, since it echoes the apparent omission of female deities in the male world of *Moby Dick*. However, as a number of critics have suggested, while *Moby Dick* may not present female characters in human form, they are nonetheless powerfully, if problematically, present in the novel's depiction of the natural world, and in particular in the vast, amniotic ocean. For example, Joseph A. Boone, "Male Independence and the American Quest Genre: Hidden Sexual Politics in the All-Male Worlds of Melville, Twain and London", *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R.Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991).
297 Pamela A. Boker, *The Grief Taboo in American Literature*, 3.
298 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
299 These observations also apply to Olson's description of Melville's fascination with the Pacific. The Pacific was, Olson claims, the "HEART SEA, twin and rival of the HEART-LAND." Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 114. The "beginning of man", Olson recalls, had been in "salt sea", and the Pacific was Melville's "Atlantis", his "buried place." Ibid., pp. 13, 114-5. The notion of an amniotic origin obviously suggests the mother, rather than the father. To "know the source", therefore, was to "know" not only the "father" but also the mother. Ibid., 82. Similarly, Boker argues that Melville's protagonists were seeking "not only the father, but also the mother". Pamela A. Boker, *The Grief Taboo in American Literature*, 56.
300 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 327
301 Ibid.
302 Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 46.
303 Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 200
304 Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land*, 136.

305 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 333.
306 Ibid.
307 Freud, "The 'Uncanny'", *Art and Literature*, pp. 340, 368.
308 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 332.
309 Ibid., 335.
310 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 470
311 Fielder, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 332. In *Moby Dick*, the descent into the watery depths of the underworld is conducted by several characters. Pip, falling over board, is "carried down alive to wondrous depths" and sees the "strange shapes of the unwarped primal world", the "multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects", the "joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities". Melville, *Moby Dick*, 347. The possible presence of a male deity in this realm of the mother should note be noted : Pip sees "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom". Ibid., 347. Also worth noting are the ambiguities of Pip's vision: he sees the "joyous, *heartless*, *ever-juvenile* eternities", and senses God's indifference. (Italics mine.) Ibid., 347.

Other characters who enact descents into the watery underworld include Queequeg, who, having descended into the "dampness and slime" of the hold to seal a leak, catches "a terrible chill", which brings him to "the very sill of the door of death." Ibid., 395. Ishmael, in his final descent into the books "closing vortex", clarifies that the novel as a whole has been a descent into the underworld. Ibid., 470. Given Ishmael's survival, we can agree with Fiedler that Melville did "not foresee death as inevitable for the man who plunges into the 'all-subduing' element, the shoreless wastes of his own unconsciousness." Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 333.
312 Burroughs, "God's Own Medicine", *The Adding Machine*, 108.
313 Ibid., pp. 108-9.
314 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 358.
315 Freud, "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis" [1923], *Art and Literature*, 396. Freud goes on to argue that "God and the Devil were originally identical", and that the split relationship, in Judeao-Christian theology, between God and the Devil reflects our "unresolved conflict between [...] longing for the father", and "a fear of him and of a son's defiance of him". Ibid., 400. Likewise, in "The Uncanny", Freud interprets the "Sand-Man", Hoffman's "ugly spirit", as the "dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected." Freud, "The Uncanny", *Art and Literature*, 353.
316 Freud, "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis", *Art and Literature*, 404. Similarly, the "Sandman", allegedly throws "naughty children" into his sack, and "carries them to the crescent moon as food" for his own "little children." Hoffmann. "The Sandman", *Tales of Hoffmann*, 87.
317 Ibid., 405. Freud interprets Nathaniel's fascination with the "Sand Man" and his "narcissistic" obsession for Olympia in a similar manner.
318 Ibid., 406.
319 Melville, *Moby Dick*, 32.
320 Ibid., 160. As Fielder notes, the "step-mother" episode serves to further clarify the connection that exists between Ishmael and Ahab: both are "rejected sons." Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 359. In "The Symphony", we are told that the "step-mother" had been "cruel" and "forbidding" to Ahab, also. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 443. Pamela A. Boker describes Ishmael and Ahab as "psychological mirrors of one other." Boker, *The Grief Taboo in American Literature*, 47.

This connection is echoed by Melville's employment of mythological patterns. Ahab's "bodily dismemberment" occurred at the longest point in the year, suggesting, as Bruce Franklin has pointed out, mythic correspondences between Ahab and the Egyptian fertility hero, Osiris. Osiris, a "priest-king-god", "sails the world", as Ahab does, hunting an "aquatic monster", "Typhon", who, like the White Whale, represents "all in nature that is malignant to man." Once a year, on the longest day, "Typhon dismembers Osiris". The passage of Osiris echoes the passage of the seasons: his dismemberment

symbolizes the seasonal decline, and the healing of Osiris' dismemberment, in a "vernal phallic ritual", heralds the "seasonal resurrection" of spring. H. Bruce Franklin, *The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 73. Ishmael's comic "dismemberment", being "packed off to bed" by his stepmother, also occurred on the "21st of June, the longest day in the year in our hemisphere", suggesting a further link between Ishmael and Osiris. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 32.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid., 33.
323 Ibid.
324 Ibid.
325 Ibid.
326 Ibid., 32. Just as Ishmael "gave" himself "up", for a time, to Ahab's mad quest, so too Ahab, for brief moments, sees the world through Ishmael's gentler eyes. Ibid., 163. Ahab may perceive, as Fielder suggests, that his struggle is with the "fiery father", but within Ahab's apparent tale of "male authority and male conflict" we can discern the submerged aspects of the struggle with the mother. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 388 and Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 231. In the fourth to last chapter of *Moby Dick*, "The Symphony", as the revenge quest nears its climax, Ahab is momentarily distracted by the "lovely aromas" of a "clear steel-blue day." Melville, *Moby Dick*, pp. 442-443. The "glad, happy air" and the "winsome sky [...] stroke and caress him". The "step-mother world", which had been for so long "cruel" and "forbidding", now threw its "affectionate arms round his stubborn neck". Ibid., 443.
This "affectionate" distraction, however, is only momentary. Ahab, pausing briefly from his pursuit of the whale, makes the following extraordinary demand of his "fiery father": "My sweet mother, I know not. Oh, cruel! what has thou done with her?" Ibid., 417. As Fiedler points out, Ahab, should already have the answer to his question, since it "was revealed to Ishmael in the midst of the Grand Armada": the "sweet mother [...] resides still in the beauty of the natural world". Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 359. Ahab, however, has become his own "fiery father", and it is he who denies the "sweet mother" to his crew. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 417. Indeed, his act of revenge is directed not only at the "fiery father", but also at the "beauty of the natural world", of which the white whale is, in part, the symbol. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 359.
327 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 228.
328 Ibid., 228.
329 The poem "Voyages III" is included in *White Buildings* (1926). The poem concludes:

> ... death, if shed,
> Presumes no carnage, but this single change-
> Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn
> The silken silked transmemberment of song;
>
> Permit me voyage, love, into your hands ...

Hart Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 37.
330 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 229.
331 Ibid.
332 Ibid.
333 Ibid. A similar split self can observed at work in *Moby Dick*: the "dismembered" Ahab, on his murderous revenge-quest to "dismember" his "dismemberer" , is linked to Ishmael, who seeks to remember, by telling his tale, what has been "lost to 'carnage' and 'death'". Melville, *Moby Dick*, 147 and Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 229. The one, to

quote Fiedler, is a "would-be murderer", the other a "symbolic suicide." Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 357. In terms of psychoanalytical theory, Ahab represents Freudian matricide, and Ishmael the "Kleinian act of reparation to the mother." Susan Edmunds, *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis and Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems*, 6.

In *Moby Dick*, Ahab's attempt to "sever the umbilical cord" is an inevitable failure. Ibid., 7. At the conclusion of *Moby Dick*, Ahab fires his harpoon at the white whale, but is tied up by his own line, and "shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone." Melville, *Moby Dick*, 468. His harpoon becomes, at the last, an "umbilical cord" that links him to what he wishes to destroy. Ishmael, by contrast, had already seen, and inwardly accepted, the "long coils of the umbilical cord of Madame Leviathan" by which young whales are "tethered" to their "dam" in "The Grand Armada". Melville, *Moby Dick*, 326.

334 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 252.

335 The phrase "terrible honesty" was, as Douglas notes, "Raymond Chandler's". Ibid., 8.

336 Ibid., 224.

337 Ibid. There was a similar insistence on the facts in Herman Melville's early fictions. Indeed, as Douglas notes, Melville's early works are "as unyielding to the demands of sentimentalism in form as they are resistant to it in content." Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 301. In the introduction to *Typee* (1846), Melville writes that his narrative is based "upon facts admitting of no contradiction, and which have come immediately under the writer's cognizance." Melville, *Typee* (London, Penguin English Library, 1972), 34.

338 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 224.

339 Burroughs, *Letters*, 85. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated May 5, 1951.

340 Ibid.

341 Ibid.

342 A series of curious, seemingly unrelated incidents suggest her presence, although only in terms of her absence. In *Junky*, a woman living in an apartment where Lee had been storing some weed angrily hands the weed back to him, her "face dead white and puffy with nembutal sleep". She tells Lee and his partner that they are "both mother fuckers." She is "half asleep" and her voice is "matter of fact as if referring to actual incest." Burroughs, *Junky*, 17. In *Queer*, Joe Guidry is told by a young man who was "treated by an Army psychiatrist" that he found out he "was an Oedipus. I found out I love my mother." "'Why," Guidry replies, "everybody loves their mother, son,'" "'I mean I love my mother physically,'" says the young man, to which Guidry replies "'I don't believe that, son,'" This abrupt cessation of the conversation strikes Lee "as funny," and he begins to "laugh." Burroughs, *Queer*, 60.

Burroughs' choice of name for his protagonist, "William Lee", also suggests the presence of the mother, if only in the form of a curiously transparent disguise.

343 However, while the text may subtly signal its "sharp nostalgia", the reader can never satisfactorily trace this "nostalgia" back to its precise source. Burroughs, *Junky*, 125. While Lee may express his loss of the "magic of childhood", and while the Prologue that depicts Lee's childhood is also, at some level, itself nostalgic, the Prologue also carefully problematises any such sense of nostalgia, presenting it as just another "routine". Ibid., xi. Nonetheless, the sense of nostalgia remains, indeed seems all the greater, since it is not centred on one object or person, but instead sets off a series of motifs, expressions of inexpressible loss: "train whistles, piano music down a city street, burning leaves." Ibid., 126.

344 Jung, *The Psychology of the Unconscious*, quoted in Richard Noll, *The Cult of Jung: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* [1994] (London: Fontana Press, 1996), 173.

345 Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 82.

346 The relationship between terror and innocence was written into the text of *Queer*,

since the text itself was an attempt to make contact. As Oliver Harris notes, Burroughs had begun writing *Queer* as a literary substitute for his own relationship with Adelbert Lewis Marker, who appears as Allerton in the text. Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg explaining that he was "working on a new novel", since "Marker was away" and he had "no one around" he could "talk to" when he had "need of distraction." Burroughs, *Letters*, 105. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated March 20, 1952. See also Harris, "Introduction", *Letters*, xxii. The text of *Queer* itself, then, was for its author, a substitute for seduction, and also a seduction in itself, since Burroughs "wrote *Queer* for Marker", clearly hoping that Marker would read it. Burroughs, *Letters*, 138. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.6, 1952. Contact, then, would be made both for the text's author and for its protagonist.

A letter to Allen Ginsberg, written during the writing of *Queer* in June 1952, appears to confirm Fiedler's thesis about the centrality to the American writer of the "diabolic bargain", and the implicit "substitution of terror for love". Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 126. "Of course", Burroughs writes, "I am attempting black magic":

> Black magic is always an attempt to force human love, resorted to when there is no other way to score. (Even curse is last attempt at contact with loved one. I do not contemplate any curse, that is absolute end of wrong line. The curse is last attempt to regain attention.)

Burroughs, *Letters*, 128. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated June 4,1952. Burroughs does not clarify the precise manner in which he was "attempting black magic", although since this letter was written near the completion of *Queer*, and since *Queer* was "written for Marker", it does not seem outlandish to suggest that the text itself was an attempt at "black magic". Ibid., 138. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, dated Oct.6,1952. At one level, then, we seem faced with a chilling confirmation of Fiedler's thesis, as if the writing of *Queer*, like the writing of *Moby Dick*, was part of a diabolic bargain made by its author. This particular "diabolic bargain", however, is described as "an attempt to force human love", which suggests that terror here is not so much a substitution for love as a sublimation of it. The desire for love has not disappeared, but is, rather, inextricably linked to the terror that is its desperate other face. Burroughs' attempt to explain further this emotional cul de sac produces a series of complex sublimations and substitutions that take us further and further away from the "loved one" himself. "I want his love", he writes, "and but even more I want he should recognize my love for him", an observation that seems to take us back to the need for an audience, so important to Lee in *Queer*. As part of a deleted parenthesis, Burroughs writes that it is Allerton's "indifference" that he finds intolerable, and explains that a "curse" is a "last attempt to regain attention". Allerton's "indifference" cuts Burroughs off from "expressing life, from my way of expressing life, from life itself". Here we are reminded of Lee's description in the Prologue to *Junky* of being stuck in a "Mid-west suburb where all contact with life was shut out." (*Junky*/xii) The "chance is there", Burroughs continues, apparently still talking about the "attempt at contact with loved one", to "accomplish some work", a phrase which surely makes us think of writing, rather than of love. The confusion is heightened further by Burroughs' characteristic employment of the word "score", which leads us back to addiction, and to *Junky*.

Burroughs' conclusion, as far as there is one, both confirms and contradicts Fiedler's thesis. "In short", he writes "I am aware of wanting human love. I am aware that the attempt to coerce love fails if it succeeds and fails if it does not succeed." The attempt to love is, then, still central, still, to quote Fiedler, of "primary meaning." Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 126. Yet it is so inextricably linked with terror, and to the attempt to "coerce", that love cannot be had by itself. Burroughs, *Letters*, 128.

A similar paradox is at the heart of one of Burroughs' most quoted explanations of his own work, in which he explains the "mythology" that he has adopted in "writing for the Space Age":

> Heaven and hell exist in my mythology. Hell consists of falling into enemy hands, into the hands

> of the virus power, and heaven consists of freeing oneself from this power, of achieving inner freedom, freedom from conditioning. I may add that none of the characters in my mythology are free. If they are free they would not still be in the mythological system, that is in the cycle of conditioned action.

So "heaven" exists in the Burroughs mythology, and is defined as being freed from "virus power". Yet such freedom is impossible within the terms of the "mythological system", which is itself a product of "conditioned action." We seem to be lead on a vicious circle from which no escape is considered possible. "Love plays little part in my mythology", Burroughs writes, "which is a mythology of war and conflict." Again, Burroughs seems to be in agreement with Fiedler: terror, not love. Yet, we are not being told that love doesn't exist, but instead that it "plays little part", and it "plays little part" because of Burroughs' "mythology", which in fact isn't Burroughs', but is a "cycle of conditioned action". The vicious circle goes round and round. Quotations here from Mottram, *The Algebra of Need*, 40.

347 Indeed, Lee's wanderings from restaurant to bar to restaurant betray an oral longing, to eat, to be filled, that, while not necessarily contradicting the sexual basis of his need for contact, does at least complicate such a reading.

348 Burroughs, *Queer*, pages 83-4. "That night Lee dreamed he was in a penal colony. All round were high, bare mountains [...]" The opening paragraph of both the *Queer* and *Interzone* sequences are identical.

349 The inhabitants of Panama, however, are reluctant to be photographed. An "old hag" makes an "ambiguous gesture of hostility" from a balcony. Burroughs, *Queer*, 113. A "dark young Indian", knowing Lee wants to take his pictures, responds with a "young male sulkiness". Ibid., 114. Lee's intentions, initially, appear to be sexual. While attempting to take a picture of the "dark young Indian", for example, Lee imagines "running a finger [...] down across his naked copper chest and stomach, every cell aching with deprivation." Shocked by his own desperation, Lee walks away, "looking around for something to photograph." The suggestion here appears to be that taking pictures is a sublimation of the need for sexual contact, an interpretation hinted at by Lee himself. "There is" he tell us "something obscene about photography, a desire to imprison, to incorporate, a sexual intensity of pursuit." Burroughs, *Queer*, 114. Further suggesting sublimated sexuality, Lee describes how, with camera in hand, his "shirt stuck" to his body "like a wet condom." Ibid., 113. However, as Burroughs clarifies in his introduction, Lee's determination in *Queer* to "score, in the sexual sense of the word" is in fact a mask, a means to "avoid the realization that he is not really looking for sex contact." Ibid., 12. Therefore, while photography may have "a sexual intensity of pursuit", it is not in itself "sexual", being more precisely linked to a need "to imprison, to incorporate". Ibid., 114.

350 Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 229.

351 Ibid., 228.

352 Ibid., 229.

353 Ibid.

354 There is an avoidance of simple cause and effect in the construction of this curious sentence. Rather than saying, for example, "The environment was empty, the antagonist hidden, *so* I drifted into solo adventures" (which would imply a cause, and an effect), the sentence reads "*and* I drifted into solo adventures" (which can mean no more than all of these three things were true.) Somewhere in this dense phrasing, the existence of a dark adversary is hinted at, but not confirmed. Burroughs, *Junky*, xiii.

355 In Panama Lee has a "recurrent dream" in which he is "back in Mexico City", talking to old acquaintances about the whereabouts of the missing Allerton. Burroughs, *Queer*, 116. Lee is told in the dream that Allerton is in "Agua Diente", which is "somewhere south of Mexico City." Ibid., 116. With customary haste, Lee flies to Mexico City, where the text ends. The actual search for Allerton stops here, since Allerton had left for "South America or some place", acting as a "guide" for a "colonel

and his wife." Ibid., 119. The search for Allerton continues, however, in dream form.
356 The song 'Johnny's So Long at the Fair' is a recurrent nostalgic motif in Burroughs. See Burroughs, *Port of Saints*, 130. Compare also the presentation of the Skip Tracer with that of "Doctor Benway" in *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs' most renowned manipulator:

> Benway's voice drifts into my consciousness from no particular place ... a disembodied voice that is sometimes loud and clear, sometimes barely audible like music down a windy street. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 36.

357 Freud, "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis", *Art and Literature*, 405.
358 Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 359.
359 Freud, "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis", *Art and Literature*, 405.