Not Burroughs' Final Fix: Materializing *The Yage Letters*

Oliver Harris
Keele University
o.c.g.harris@ams.keele.ac.uk

© 2006 Oliver Harris.
All rights reserved.

Consistent Scrutiny

1. In the last decade of the twentieth century it seemed to some that a breakthrough was taking place in the longstanding isolation of interpretive criticism and textual scholarship. It may be premature to speak "in retrospect," but it doesn't appear that the theoretical turn taken by textual scholars, combined with the trumpeted technological fix of hypertext editions, has really achieved disciplinary togetherness. Of the major players who are synonymous with the effort to postmodernize the field of editing theory--D.C. Greetham, Peter L. Shillingsburg, and Jerome J. McGann--only McGann has achieved genuine name-recognition outside the field itself, while the jury remains out on the creation of satisfactory "postmodern" editions, electronic or otherwise.

2. Within this general picture, the critical fate of William Burroughs--a figure paradoxically long central to postmodern culture and yet only lately brought in from the outer limits of the literary canon--may be especially illuminating. This is because Burroughs criticism has itself been highly paradoxical with respect to his literary history, in the sense that critics have not significantly researched the historical processes of textual production or reception, even though the production histories of Burroughs' books--or rather, certain potent genetic myths--have decisively shaped his books' popular and critical reception. That Burroughs was himself responsible for peddling these half-fictions about his fiction-making has not gone unnoticed, especially concerning *Naked Lunch*,[1] but has itself been textualized as part of the writer's mystique. The upshot is that, as the Burroughs critical field expanded, more and more interpretive work--often very impressive on its own terms--has come to rest on the same small and unreliable scholarly base.

3. This kind of research has been central to my own work (in *William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination* [2003]), but the credit for bringing Burroughs' writing within the framework of materialist criticism and textual theory must go to Carol Loranger, for a landmark essay that appeared in *Postmodern Culture* in 1999. Focused on *Naked Lunch*, Loranger's essay makes two powerful calls: one for "consistent textual, as opposed to interpretive, scrutiny" of Burroughs' work; the other for a "postmodern edition" of his seminal novel, which would "necessarily be a hypertext edition" (24).

4. Loranger's second call raises important theoretical and practical issues without actually attempting to resolve them; as she puts it, her essay "should be taken as a series of first steps toward a postmodern edition of *Naked Lunch*" (2). The conclusion of this essay returns to these issues briefly in the context of both the new edition of *Naked Lunch* that actually did appear not long after ("The Restored Text" of 2003 by James Grauerholz and Barry Miles) and the "final steps" I have myself taken towards an edition of another work by Burroughs. The bulk of this essay details the materialist underpinnings to that edition, explored within a social text theory framework that "denies the automatic priority traditionally given to authors' intentions, preferring instead to regard textual creation and transmission as a collaborative, social act" (Greetham 9). In order to set up these explorations and to establish both their necessity and urgency, I want first to subject to scrutiny Loranger's call for, and own practice of, textual scrutiny.

5. Focusing on the relation between the text of *Naked Lunch* in its various editions and its pre-publication in the little magazine, *Big Table*, Loranger's case depends on two distinct claims. The first is by Burroughs himself, about "having no precise memory of writing" the text, a claim that underwrites Loranger's insistence that "authorial intent is antithetical to the very spirit of *Naked Lunch*" (2). She doesn't hold the author's claims to non-authorship up to any *material* scrutiny, however, because her stated aim is "not to contest" the "truth-value" of the text's genetic "mythology" (including "Burroughs' fabled passivity during the production of the novel" [5]), only to "specify its function" (7). She can therefore sidestep not just research into manuscript history but even use of any available biographical evidence (chiefly Burroughs' letters), either of which might have rescued at least some of the facts behind the fable. Loranger's second claim is to be making comparative analysis of the actual texts, but, despite its interpretive strength, her account turns out to be inaccurate and incomplete even on its own terms. These failings bear down upon not only the practical rigor of her observations--and therefore the factual record on which interpretation is based--but, more broadly, on the descriptive opportunities opened up by social text theory.

6. In terms of descriptive rigor, both Loranger's observations about how little the "narrative portion" of *Naked Lunch* changed after the first edition--"the addition of two words" ("See Appendix") (5)--and her comparative analysis of this text with the "Ten Episodes" published in *Big Table*, are marred by material errors.[2] In the most significant instances, she fails to observe that the Olympia edition lacks not "two words" but over two-and-a-half *thousand* words,[3] while in the "market" section there are a series of footnotes, the longest of which (over 800 words) runs across nine consecutive pages.[4] Only about a quarter of this latter material, so visibly prominent in the first edition, ever became part of the narrative portion of *Naked Lunch* in later editions, the rest appearing in the "Appendix." This last section is not, therefore, as Loranger claims, "an unrelated text, drawn into the orbit of *Naked Lunch* by the threat of obscenity charges" (in 1962, for the Grove edition). The significance of this point rests on the widely recognized effects of censorship in determining the appearance of Burroughs' work throughout the 1950s and '60s, and on the need for an accurate record of where, and by what agency, these effects occurred.[5]

7. Finally, while Loranger cites approvingly Shillingsburg's "post-electronic affirmation of the radical non-equivalence of 'the work of art' with 'the linguistic text of it'" (1), her analysis all but passes over one of the most valuable aspects of social text theory[6]--namely, attention not only to the text's words, its linguistic code, but to the materiality of bibliographic codes (physical features, from typeface to layout) and what George Bornstein calls "contextual coding" (the text's location within a larger whole; see Frankel). In this light, we might consider both the possibility that such codes carried over from magazine to book publication, so affecting the production of *Naked Lunch*, and the hermeneutic significance of those codes for an analysis of the magazine versions as texts in their own right--texts whose social and cultural histories affected, indeed should be considered legitimate parts of, the reception of Burroughs' novel.

8. Recovering the original circumstances of publication is essential if Burroughs criticism is to undo what amounts to the repression of his oeuvre's richly complex textual history.[7] Textual scholarship of this kind must become more rigorous because interpretive criticism inescapably depends upon it. Even in the most determinedly interpretive criticism, there is no "degree zero" of materiality, and the consequences of a false base can be dramatic.[8] One of the reasons for remaining suspicious of the solutions promised by hypertext editions, therefore, is that editing also depends upon critical interpretation--is indeed itself an *act* of interpretation--so that what is most needed for both criticism and for practical editing is an expanded material base informed by the rigorously scholarly application of the full descriptive potentials opened up by social text theory. The theoretical model opens up descriptive potentials by bringing new material objects within the frame of analysis (physical features of the text, multiple states, etc.), as the basis for further critical interpretation.

9. In what follows, I take up these potentials for materialist criticism and editing in relation to *The Yage Letters* (1963), a text published four years after *Naked Lunch* (and to which Loranger makes passing reference in her final paragraph). The fact that her comparison, in effect, inverts the genetic relation between texts affirms once again the value of this approach goes beyond analysis of individual works to embrace the intertextual relations between them. In the case of Burroughs, whose texts are a manifest bricolage of materials recycled across the oeuvre, such relations add up to a virtual limit-case, a nightmare of infinitely open-ended intertextuality. A complete analysis, in other words, lies far beyond the horizon of this essay.

Edited Out

10. For forty years *The Yage Letters* has been one of the most popular texts in the Burroughs oeuvre, a short (18,000 word) and accessible introduction to his work. In the form of an epistolary narrative, the bulk of it documents Burroughs' seven-month journey through the Amazonian jungles of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in 1953. This is the exotic backdrop for satirical bulletins and ethnobotanical observations in the course of his quest to find the fabled hallucinogen that gives the book its title (more correctly, written *yagé* and pronounced "ya-hey"). Among other short pieces, the last quarter of the text features Ginsberg's "reply" to Burroughs, reporting his own dramatic experiences with the same drug in the same region seven years later.

11. Despite its popularity, *The Yage Letters*' critical reception is almost as thin and short as the book itself. Jennie Skerl's thousand words in her 1985 study were the most detailed analysis until, in the last few years, two critics working outside the Burroughs field (Mullins in 2002, Martinez in 2003) advanced strong thematic readings that focus on sexuality and race. There are several reasons Burroughs critics have generally ignored *The Yage Letters*. Firstly, there's the peculiar hybridity of its overall contents, since it combines completely different types of writing composed by two authors across two decades: the long first section, "In Search of Yage," ambiguously presented as authentic letters from Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg in 1953; "Seven Years Later," a shorter exchange of letters between Ginsberg and Burroughs in 1960; and "Epilogue," a third section comprising a brief letter by Ginsberg from 1963 and a cut-up text by Burroughs, "I Am Dying, Meester?"

12. Secondly, its place in Burroughs' literary history is paradoxically fluid: Mullins calls it his "third book" (64), presumably because "In Search of Yage" was written after *Junkie* and *Queer*. But in the chronology of publication, *The Yage Letters* (1963) follows *Junkie* (1953), *Naked Lunch* (1959), *Minutes to Go* (1960), *The Exterminator* (1960), *The Soft Machine* (1961), and *The Ticket that Exploded* (1962), and so becomes his *seventh* book. *The Yage Letters* thereby actually precedes the second book in Mullins's chronology. *Queer* (written in 1952 but not published until 1985), by over twenty years, by which time Burroughs' long-abandoned manuscript had been re-edited to include as an epilogue material originally written to complete "In Search of Yage"; this material ("Epilogue: Mexico City Return") was in fact added specifically in order to satisfy the publishers' requirements for a longer text. The most visible of the resulting confusions between manuscript and publishing chronology concerns the phrase that is always quoted in discussions of *The Yage Letters*: "Yage may be the final fix." These were the last words of *Junkie* (128),[9] published in summer 1953 as Burroughs traveled through South America in search of *yagé*, and the inference seems obvious.[10] However, the line dates from July 1952, long before Burroughs thought of writing "Yage," and actually referred to *Queer* (which describes his unsuccessful 1951 quest for the drug), although the line was not in that manuscript, as Campbell assumes (132). In fact, the line was only added to *Junkie* at the last minute because Ace Books, which were then considering publishing *Queer* as its sequel, wanted it there to link the two books. Whether or not the drug proved to be Burroughs' "final fix," the impact of such contingent publishing circumstances suggests the urgent need to un-fix critical assumptions about the "final" text.

13. And thirdly, there's the indeterminate literary status of "In Search of Yage," three of whose "letters" are actually signed by Burroughs' fictional persona, William Lee. The book's appearance therefore begs all sorts of textual issues, only complicated by the fact that the text has been twice revised (editions in 1975 and 1988 adding important new material to the first section, among other smaller changes). Features that seem to have deterred or confused interpretive criticism are, however, precisely those that make *The Yage Letters* ideally suited to a social text approach.

14. In 1985, Skerl claimed that the "mode of composition (actual letters), the collaborative editing and publication, and the inclusion of later material" all make *The Yage Letters* "typical of Burroughs' practice as a writer": "He refuses to conform to the convention of the final text produced by the individual artist" (31). In broad terms, Skerl's incisive analysis still stands, and suggests the value of analyzing *The Yage Letters* in the first place. A "socialized" approach, which views the text "as a collaborative, cultural force" and recognizes "the work as having a career independent of the author" (Greetham 3, 55) is certainly consistent with Burroughs' authorship of (and in) *The Yage Letters*. On the other hand, the static notion of the "typical" text threatens to undo Skerl's own analysis by fixing and dehistoricizing the Burroughsian text. The specificity of its *multiple* identities and engagements is, to borrow Nicholas Frankel's terms, a sign of the text's "continual and ongoing subjection to the forces of historical change" (353)--including the production of new editorial transformations. In the case of *The Yage Letters*, these forces of change manifest a remarkably dynamic process of collaborative and contingent textual activity. This is not to say that the kind of specific textual-historical research undertaken here can or should be the basis for larger claims about materiality or agency. Rather, my aim is more local and limited because, as the shortcomings in this area of Burroughs criticism make clear, the necessity and importance of such research have primarily to do with the factual record and material base on which interpretation depends.

15. In common with earlier criticism, the recent approaches to "In Search of Yage" are based on material assumptions and on overlooking basic distinctions between the letter and literature. This is actually quite surprising, since both Mullins and Martinez make comparative use of Burroughs' published correspondence precisely to highlight differences between the texts of letters as they appear in "In Search of Yage" and in *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1945-1959*. In other words, their interest in local textual differences ignores the generic distinction between the texts they are citing--enabling Martinez, in one place, to refer to *The Yage Letters* while in fact quoting from *The Letters* (43). Biographers tend to assume the documentary value of literary works--and "In Search of Yage" has been readily used in this way--but in interpretive criticism of evident sophistication, it is odd to see such "transparent" readings of letters, however they are presented.

16. Although Skerl gives no detail to back it up, her implied skepticism--"the form of the narrative pretends to be strictly factual--a seemingly unrevised series of letters" (32)--ought to have suggested the need for interpretations either to build on manuscript research, or to avoid making the kind of specific claims that required it. This isn't the place to document the complex manuscript history of "In Search of Yage"--it's given in detail in the new edition itself--but suffice to say it reveals that the 1953 "letters" were, in almost all cases, fabricated in ways unimagined by Burroughs critics. This is a strikingly literal feature of the work by Mullins and Martinez, however, is that they make direct and detailed claims about the text's manuscript genealogy but about its *editorial* history. These claims are made without any supporting material context, and yet they are presented confidently as evidence to ground and support (in Mullins' case, otherwise illuminating and compelling) interpretation.

17. Interestingly, each critic is concerned to demonstrate that "In Search of Yage" was subject to deliberate acts of self-censorship that removed the same racially sensitive material from Burroughs' original letters, Mullins assuming that Burroughs "edited out" (77) this section because of its "offensiveness" (65), Martinez claiming that it was "edited for publication by Lawrence Ferlinghetti" (64), adding in a footnote, "the letters edited by Ferlinghetti were 'cleaned-up' for publication, omitting several passages which the publisher must have felt were racist or offensive. For example, Ferlinghetti strikes the frequent use of the word 'nigger,' substituting 'Nigra' or omitting the references altogether" (323). Whether aimed at author or editor, these are serious charges, and they raise highly relevant questions about censorship; they also beg questions about authorship and agency and about the processes of textual production, transmission, and reception.

18. My aim in what follows is to settle the question of authorship (or perhaps more accurately, *un*-settle it) within the larger context of the text's full publishing history. Shifting the latter from the bibliographic margins to the interpretive centre shows the value of material criticism not just for resolving particular interpretive disputes (whodunnit--Burroughs or Ferlinghetti?), or even for generating new readings of the text, but for recognizing new objects of critical analysis--objects useful for editors and critics alike.

19. If I focus on Burroughs' "In Search of Yage," deal with his later material more briefly, and pass over the Ginsberg texts, I do so because the publishing history of this section is the most richly complicated. Across the three editions published in 1963, 1975, and 1988, "In Search of Yage" exists in book form in three versions (see Table 1). But its prehistory also involves the appearance of its material published separately in four different little magazines (see Table 2).[11] And so, before describing how in 1963 Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights came to publish this text within *The Yage Letters* as a whole, I reconstruct the history of these magazine part-publications in order to recover their reception (their bibliographic, social, and cultural histories) and then, more surprisingly, in order to reveal their active role in the production of Burroughs' "final" text.

The Little Magazine Lark[12]

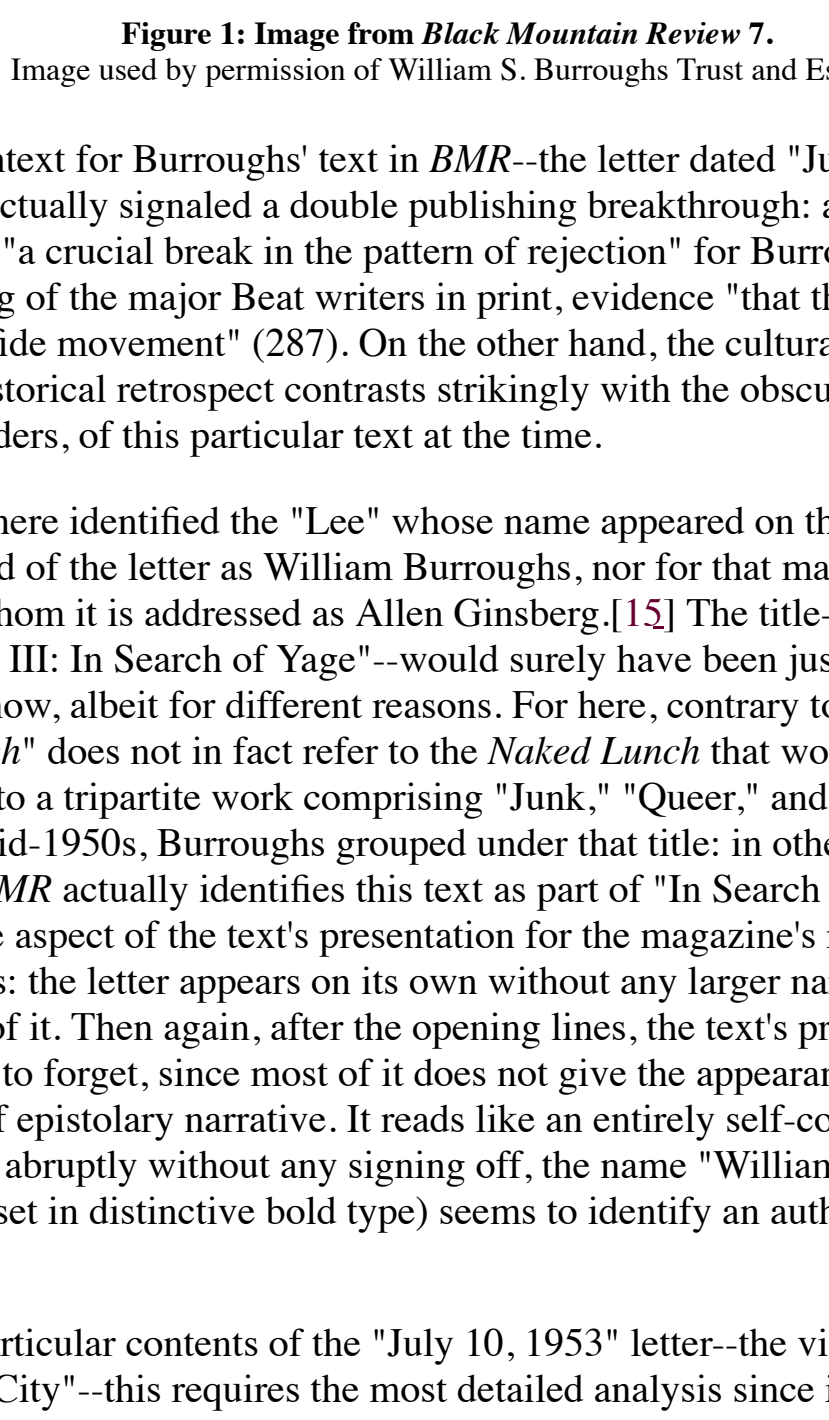
20. Burroughs' interest in magazines for the part-publication of his manuscripts goes back to his first novel, *Junkie*. Having completed a first draft called "Junk" in December 1950, he was by November of the following year sufficiently pessimistic about his chances of publishing the whole text as to be "ready to hack it up and peddle it to magazines" (*Letters* 95). Although *Junkie* was published in 1953--as a pulp paperback, hacked up in numerous places by its editors--Burroughs made no progress with its planned sequel, "Queer." As for "Yage," Burroughs finished it in December 1953 (producing, with Ginsberg's help, a manuscript since lost), but started working on it again in 1955, by which time he was in Tangier, immersed in writing what became *Naked Lunch* and struggling ever more grimly with the commercial unviability of his writing. When quoting one of its obscene "routines" in December 1954, he quips revealingly to Kerouac: "I can just see that serialized in *Cosmopolitan* or *Good Housekeeping*. I mean it's hopeless, Jack" (242). This, of course, was the point: Burroughs lacked a publishing context. That is why his comments about commercial magazines are so revealing. For, as his manuscripts got smaller--"Queer" and "Yage" combined were much shorter than "Junk"--and Burroughs found himself producing brief routines rather than coherent narratives, magazines actually offered the most formally appropriate mode of publication.

21. The turning point in the history of *Naked Lunch*, which prompted Maurice Girodias at Olympia Press in Paris to accept the whole in June 1959, was the publication of the *Big Table* "Episodes" studied by Loranger--or rather, the non-publication of parts of this material in the issue of *Chicago Review* infamously banned by the university authorities, which in turn led to the creation of *Big Table* as a way to get the material into print. Burroughs himself summed up the immediate and longer-term significance of this chain of events: "So it was publication in a little magazine that led to the publication of *Naked Lunch* at a time when I had almost given up. For many years I sent out pieces to all little magazines that asked me for a contribution" (Maynard and Miles x). Actually, Burroughs' publication in little magazines after *Naked Lunch* was more than just grateful payback; in important ways it was materially related to his cut-up practices, the kinds of text they produced, and the kind of reception they sought.[13] The larger point is again one of context: by the 1960s there was a great countercultural world of little magazines, not integrated into either commercial or academic institutions, of a kind that barely existed in the previous decade. Burroughs' closest Beat friends, Ginsberg and Kerouac, were also aware of the new opportunities and their promise to renew the magazine culture of prewar modernism--hence, Kerouac's reference in late 1959 to Marianne Moore's famous avant-garde magazine of the 1920s when he predicts the future for three of the new outlets, *Kulchur*, *Yugen* and *Beatitude*: "all those lil things will grow into big DIALS in time" (*Selected Letters* 219).

22. The general picture needs some specificity, since the category "Little Magazine" conceals important differences in content, format, readership, and so on, and Burroughs' involvement was with four quite different magazines: *Black Mountain Review*, *Big Table*, *Kulchur* and *The Floating Bear*. As well as their particular social and cultural histories, each of these magazines presented Burroughs' material in distinct bibliographic environments, inviting us to consider both how these part-texts were received in their original publishing contexts, and how this relates to the reception (and indeed, production) of *The Yage Letters*.

Black Mountain Review

23. While its circulation remained very small ("a usual printing of some 500 to 750 copies, about 200 of which ever got distributed," according to its editor, the poet Robert Creeley [261]), *Black Mountain Review* was highly influential culturally both on its own terms and for the new magazines its example inspired. For Creeley, the point of *BMR* was that it was not *The Kenyon Review*--not, that is, another forum for the academic literary establishment, any more than Black Mountain College was another orthodox educational institution. Although it was never a Beat magazine, *BMR* lasted long enough to publish its "epochal final issue" (Watson 225) of Autumn 1957 (actually issued in Spring 1958), co-edited by Allen Ginsberg and featuring an impressive Beat lineup, which included texts by Ginsberg, Kerouac, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and a certain "William Lee."



from Naked Lunch, Book III:
In Search Of Yage

July 10, 1953.
Lima.

Dear Allen,
Last night I took last of Yage mixture I brought back from Pucallpa. No use transporting to U. S. It doesn't keep more than a few days. This morning, still high. This is what occurred to me. Yage is space time travel. The room seems to shake and vibrate with motion. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polygot Near East, Indian—new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized passes through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants sprout out of the Rock and vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of the body), across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spreadout in a vast silent market.
Minarets, palms, mountains, jungle. A sluggish river jumping with vicious fish, vast weed grown parks where boys lie in the grass or play cryptic games. Not a locked door in the City. Anyone comes in your room any time. The Chief of

144

Figure 1: Image from *Black Mountain Review* 7.
Image used by permission of William S. Burroughs Trust and Estate.

24. The Beat context for Burroughs' text in *BMR*--the letter dated "July 10, 1953"[14]--actually signaled a double publishing breakthrough: as Ted Morgan notes, it was "a crucial break in the pattern of rejection" for Burroughs, and the first gathering of the major Beat writers in print, evidence "that the Beats were now a bona fide movement" (287). On the other hand, the cultural importance that is clear in historical retrospect contrasts strikingly with the obscurity, to all but a very few readers, of this particular text at the time.

25. For nothing here identified the "Lee" whose name appeared on the contents page and at the end of the letter as William Burroughs, nor for that matter identified the "Allen" to whom it is addressed as Allen Ginsberg.[15] The title--"from *Naked Lunch*, Book III: In Search of Yage"--would surely have been just as mystifying then as it is now, albeit for different reasons. For here, contrary to all appearances, "*Naked Lunch*" does not in fact refer to the *Naked Lunch* that would be published in 1959, but to a tripartite work comprising "Junk," "Queer," and "Yage" that, during the mid-1950s, Burroughs grouped under that title: in other words, the heading in *BMR* actually identifies this text as part of "In Search of Yage." But the most obscure aspect of the text's presentation for the magazine's readers is the most obvious: the letter appears on its own without any larger narrative context to make sense of it. Then again, after the opening lines, the text's presentation as a letter is easy to forget, since most of it does not give the appearance of being part of any sort of epistolary narrative. It reads like an entirely self-contained text, and when it ends abruptly without any signing off, the name "William Lee" at the foot of the page (set in distinctive bold type) seems to identify an author, not a letter-writer.

26. As for the particular contents of the "July 10, 1953" letter--the vision of the "Composite City"--this requires the most detailed analysis since it is by far the most widely referenced part of *The Yage Letters*.[16] One of Burroughs' most extraordinary pieces of writing, stylistically close to the densely poetic collage cartographies of Rimbaud and St. John Perse--both major influences on Burroughs--it begins by declaring that "Yage is space time travel" and ends by prophetically announcing the intersection of "the unknown past and the emergent future" (*Yage Letters* 44, 46). While its striking thematic of physical and chronological transcendence is clear, the full significance of this text depends on recognizing the multiple *material* analogues of its theme generated by its equally striking bibliographical chronology. These analogues are of two kinds: firstly, the text's publishing history, and secondly its intertextual relations as a part of *The Yage Letters*.

27. To begin with, the "July 10, 1953" letter was the first published part of Burroughs' "Yage" manuscript, but it is also the final letter in the whole epistolary sequence. Picking up *BMR* number 7, the first readers of "In Search of Yage" literally began at the end. However, the text goes on to perform an even more paradoxical inversion of chronology, since in 1963 the first readers of *The Yage Letters* were presented with another ending (the "July 8" letter) and would not find this letter there; nor would they until twelve years later, when it was at last included in the second edition. Bizarrely, then, the first letter of "In Search of Yage" to be published (in *BMR*) was also the last letter to be published in "In Search of Yage" (in *The Yage Letters*). On the other hand, sixteen years earlier, in 1959, readers of *Naked Lunch* would have come across it, because the letter, minus only the first four lines and with a few minor differences, appeared there at the start of "the market" section. The peculiarity of this complex bibliographical chronology in turn accounts for the genetic confusion in Loranger's analysis. She inverts the true relation between texts because, far from the later-published *Yage Letters* "reworking material from the narrative portion of *Naked Lunch*" (24), as she asserts, in fact *Naked Lunch* assimilates the overlapping material--the "July 10, 1953" letter--first published separately in *BMR* but ultimately taken from the "Yage" manuscript. If *yagé*, the drug, "is space time travel," and if "space time travel" became "the hallmark of *Naked Lunch* and his subsequent cut-up novels" (Mullins 65), then so, through its various material manifestations, is the very text that said so.

28. This analogy between theme and material history is remarkable, but it is also accidental, a byproduct of contingent circumstances. The question of agency is crucial here, suggesting that the phrasing Skerl used to describe *The Yage Letters* as a whole--"Burroughs refuses to conform to the convention of the final text produced by the individual artist"--has to be revised: to downplay the assumption of authorial motivation (in ironically determining the refusal of authorial control), and to play up the material agency of the text (in determining the refusal of textual finality).

29. What then, of the other--intertextual--analogue of this text's thematics? Perhaps unsurprisingly, it also begs questions of agency and operates in two chronological directions at once. The first set of intertextual relations becomes visible only when the "July 10, 1953" letter is read retrospectively as the final part of "In Search of Yage." In this context, the text describing the "Composite City" and "space time travel" now appears, materially, as itself a composite text that travels through textual space and time. This is because its collage aesthetic renders the *yagé* experience of visionary possession by being based on the wholesale recycling and transplantation of phrases already read in the earlier letters, so generating cumulatively an uncanny sense of déjà-vu.[17] In terms of the book's spatial and temporal existence, it is therefore fitting that this text should generate intertextual relations not just backwards in space and time but also forward.

30. Within *The Yage Letters* as a whole, the Composite City vision that concludes "In Search of Yage" finds an exact parallel in the text that concludes the whole book, "I Am Dying, Meester?" Although she gives no detail and overlooks the parallel, Skerl rightly observes that this text "employs the cut-up technique to create a collage from the materials in the earlier letters" (31). In fact, nearly a quarter of its 660 words derive from "In Search of Yage," mainly from the "January 15" and "April 15" letters, although it is very difficult to be precise, given not only the nature of the cut-up method but the extent of this text's internal repetition (nearly half the first paragraph, for example, occurs scattered about in later paragraphs). Such features are secondary, however, to the text's visible foregrounding of its material procedures. For the immediate physical appearance of textual fragments, bridged by over seventy dashes in a piece less than 700 words long, forces the sign to point to itself and to its origins in other texts. This is apparent even before reading, which marks the obvious difference between this text and the "July 10" letter, whose act of recycling can only be recognized in retrospect, after reading the whole narrative. The cut-up text radicalizes this process by insistently calling into question the agency and integrity of authorship and language, not only with respect to itself, but with respect to all the preceding texts--to all the *letters*, franked with dates and signatures as signs of authenticity--that it has mixed and sampled.[18]

31. The very placement of the "July 10, 1953" letter and of "I Am Dying, Meester?" in *The Yage Letters* invites the reader to see Burroughs' cut-up technique as a systematic development of the earlier, *yagé*-inspired, bricolage text, and so to recognize cut-up as the textuality of *yagé* experience. It is possible to explore the relations between the hybrid textuality of this letter and its thematics of cultural hybridity, and so recognize the relation between Burroughs' emerging experimental aesthetic and his background in ethnology and anthropology. We might therefore read the Composite City, and its avatars in *Naked Lunch* and the cut-up trilogy, as a topographic mapping in the tradition of Surrealist ethnography, based on a collage aesthetic of juxtaposition that foregrounds "cuts and sutures" rather than presenting fixed wholes (Clifford 146).

32. However, the placement of these two texts first makes its invitation only to the reader of the revised edition of *The Yage Letters* in 1975, because, as noted, the "July 10, 1953" letter wasn't included until a dozen years after "I Am Dying, Meester?" was included. Or to put this bizarre inversion of chronology and causality another way, the text that was the earliest aesthetic precursor of Burroughs' cut-up technique (by a decade) only took up its place in *The Yage Letters* a decade *after* the cut-up text whose recycling deliberately paralleled it. This in turn accounts for the significant--and otherwise surprising--absence from the cut-up text of any phrases derived from the "July 10, 1953" letter, since Burroughs cut up only those letters that appeared in the first edition.[19]

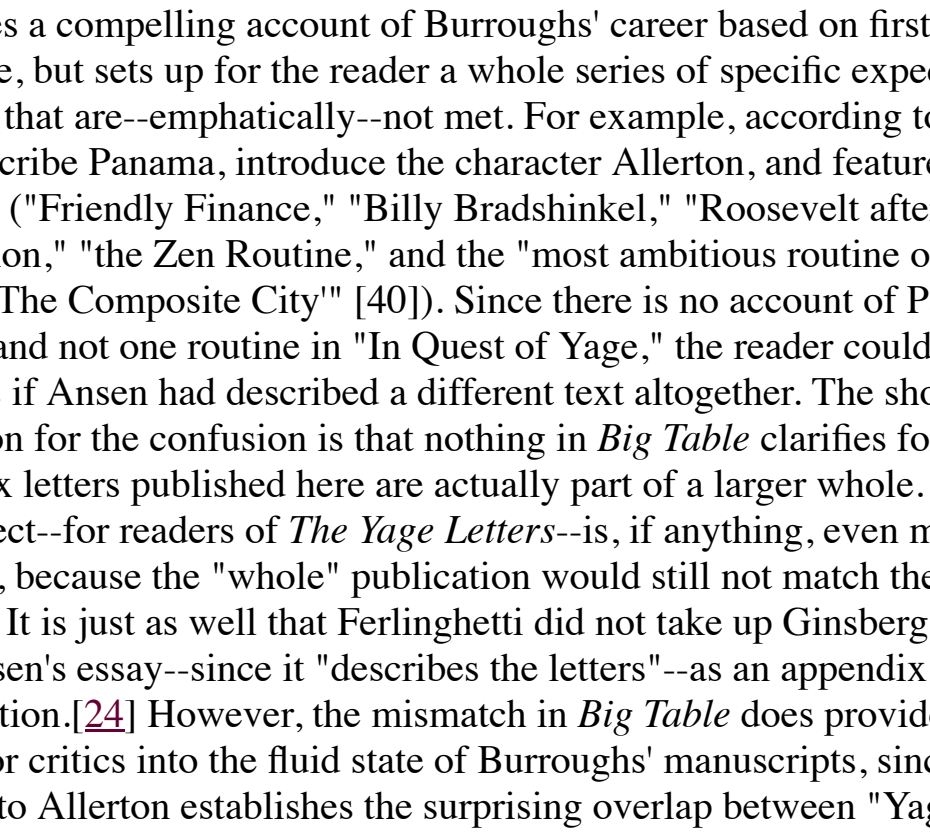
33. The bibliographic and intertextual time travel that began with *Black Mountain Review* might go still further--to analyze, for example, the version of the Composite City that appears in *Naked Lunch*--but the central point remains the remarkable multiplication of its relations and meanings in comparison to its original magazine publication. How ironic that this specific letter--which not only concluded "In Search of Yage" but was partly made from recycling its materials--should have been published first and without any context so that it appeared to be self-contained. Then again, that is precisely why Ginsberg--acting on Kerouac's recommendation in September 1956[20]--chose it from among Burroughs' other manuscripts for Creeley's magazine.

Big Table

34. Burroughs' involvement with *Big Table* has become familiar, but only in terms of its publication of the *Naked Lunch* "Episodes." The untold story of its relation to *The Yage Letters* is, however, of equal significance for the relation between magazine and book publications.

35. After the suppression of *The Chicago Review*, the inception of the new magazine was, as Peter Michelson observed, "a stunning counterattack" against the academy that in turn "helped give shape to the Beat and Black Mountain 'revolution' in poetics" (350, 353). The "*Chicago Review*-cum-*Big Table* war" was therefore a decisive cultural moment, showing how the Beats "even turned apparent tactical defeats into strategic victory" (346). *Big Table* was also exemplary of the "kamikaze" little magazine that realized a specific function and then folded (after five issues). As Peter Martin notes, "it began as a controversial magazine, publishing suppressed material, but did not shift its emphasis or settle into a less incendiary editorial policy" (683). Burroughs' praise was certainly emphatic. When he saw the Spring 1958 issue of *Chicago Review*, he told its editor, Irving Rosenthal, that it was "way ahead of these dead, academic periodicals like *Partisan Review* and *Hudson Review*," and to be compared only with *BMR*.[21] In November 1959 he told editor Paul Carroll that "*Big Table* is the best in the field."[22]

36. Controversy was essential to *Big Table*'s existence, and it is important to recall, as Martin does, that the first issue "was itself banned in March 1959, and more than four hundred copies were impounded by the Post Office" (683). In a lawsuit supported by the ACLU, on 5 July, judge Julius J. Hoffman ruled that the ban declaring *Big Table* "non-mailable" was null and void, and this second attempt at censorship ironically ensured the new magazine's celebrity and the sale of its 10,000 print run. It also established the publishing context for the letters presented under the title "In Quest of Yage." That is to say, the specific epistolary character of Burroughs' text took on potential meaning insofar as it appeared in a magazine not only created from and then subjected to earlier acts of censorship involving publication of his fiction, but specifically in relation to censorship of this material distributed through the mail.



IN QUEST OF YAGE

February 28, 1953
Hotel Niza, Pasto

Dear Allen:
On my way back to Bogota with nothing accomplished. I have been conned by medicine men (the most inveterate drunk, liar and loafer in the village is invariably the medicine man), incarcerated by the law, rolled by a local hustler (I thought I was getting that innocent back woods ass, but the kid had been to bed with six American oil men, a Swedish Botanist, a Dutch Ethno-

44

Figure 2: Image from *Big Table* 1.
Image used by permission of William S. Burroughs Trust and Estate.

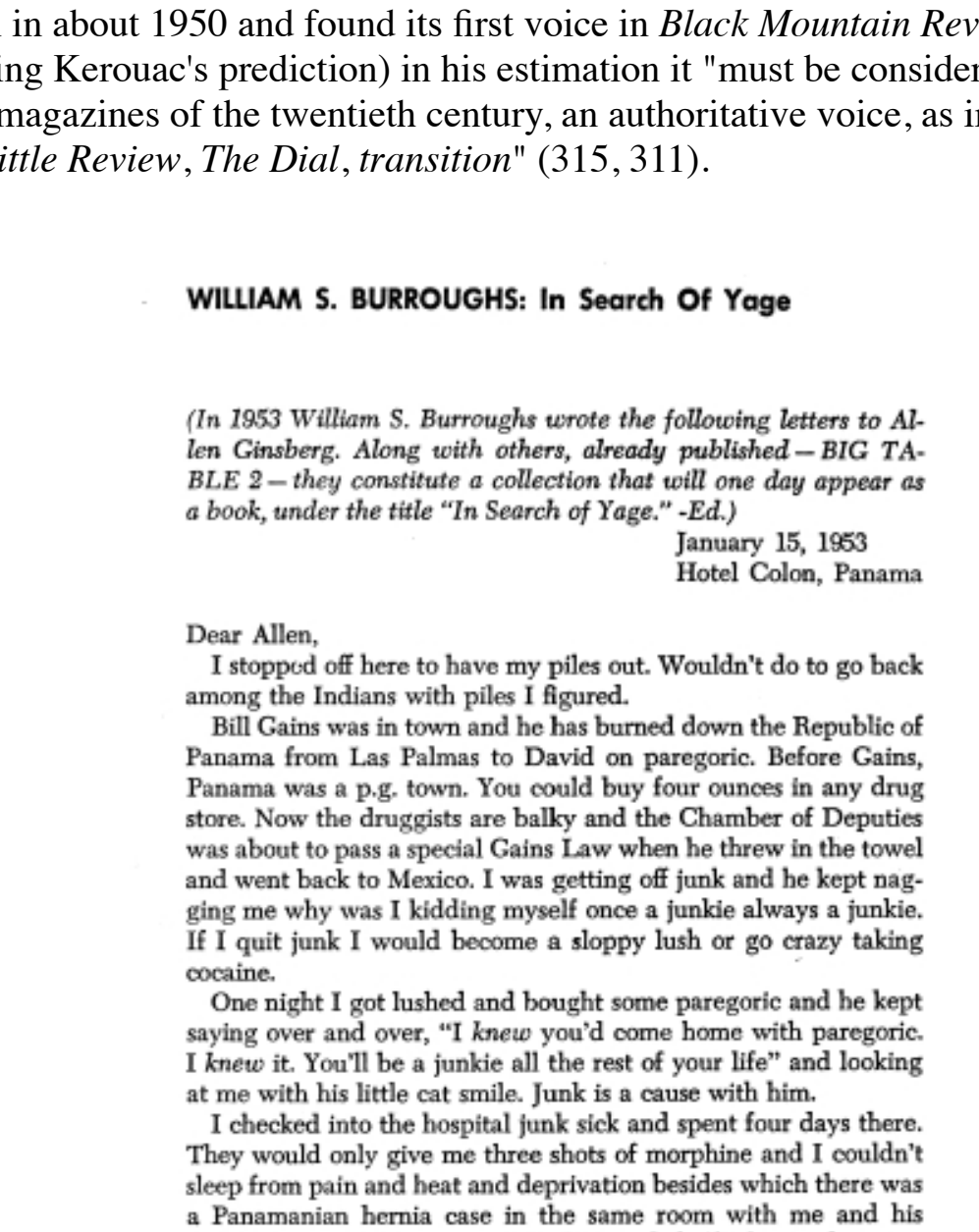
37. The reception of "In Quest of Yage" in *Big Table* is determined by its immediate bibliographical context in unique ways. In contrast to the material's presentation in other magazines or in *The Yage Letters*, here it is packaged with introductory texts by other authors, Paul Bowles and Alan Ansen, and with photographs of Burroughs by Ginsberg. Although Bowles's essay, entitled "Burroughs in Tangier," makes no direct reference to the letters, he does introduce them by way of a memorable personal portrait of Burroughs that must have had some bearing on the text's reception.[23] Ansen's essay, however, is the more precisely determining and significant. The first issue of *Big Table* had trailed the appearance of his "critical and biographical study" (2), and this substantial essay--over a third the length of "In Quest of Yage"--duly appears, before the Bowles piece. Ansen's essay gives a compelling account of Burroughs' career based on first-hand knowledge, but sets up for the reader a whole series of specific expectations about the letters that are--emphatically--not met. For example, according to Ansen, the letters describe Panama, introduce the character Allerton, and feature five "routines" ("Friendly Finance," "Billy Bradshinkel," "Roosevelt after Inauguration," "the Zen Routine," and the "most ambitious routine of all . . . a vision of 'The Composite City'" [40]). Since there is no account of Panama, no Allerton, and not one routine in "In Quest of Yage," the reader could only be left baffled, as if Ansen had described a different text altogether. The short explanation for the confusion is that nothing in *Big Table* clarifies for the reader that the six letters published here are actually part of a larger whole. But the view in retrospect--for readers of *The Yage Letters*--is, if anything, even more confusing, because the "whole" publication would still not match the text Ansen describes. It is just as well that Ferlinghetti did not take up Ginsberg's suggestion to use Ansen's essay--since it "describes the letters"--as an appendix for the City Lights edition.[24] However, the mismatch in *Big Table* does provide invaluable insights for critics into the fluid state of Burroughs' manuscripts, since the reference to Allerton establishes the surprising overlap between "Yage" and "Queer" in the mid-1950s, while the inclusion of the "Friendly Finance" routine confirms that the "Epilogue" added to *Queer* in 1985 (where the routine appears) originally belonged to "Yage." Another "In Search of Yage" becomes suddenly visible, one entirely different from the version eventually published.

38. Finally, what of the text made by the letters themselves? Since "In Quest of Yage" comprises the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, tenth, and eleventh letters in the whole sequence of "In Search of Yage," the reader inevitably confronts gaps in the narrative chronology. Thus the first letter--dated "February 28, 1953"--begins with Burroughs on his "way back to Bogota" (44), even though we've not seen him go there in the first place. Likewise, Doc Schindler is mentioned in the "March 3" letter, as if we had already been introduced to him (which happens in the second letter of "In Search of Yage"). On the other hand, the final letter, of "July 8," makes similar references to "the Naval Lieutenant" and "the furniture salesman" (62)--and these are never explained in the whole sequence either. In other words, the very fact of epistolary presentation makes it easy to naturalize such gaps or

ships as generic textual features, even to interpret them as signs of authenticity. This appearance is aided by the text's presentation here--by "William S. Burroughs"--and it is noticeable that all the letters are signed "William" or "Bill"--none "Lee"--so avoiding (very likely deliberately) the contradictory signals about literary authorship and epistolary authenticity given in "In Search of Yage" within *The Yage Letters*.

Kulchur

39. Where *Black Mountain Review* was the poetry magazine of an experimental College in North Carolina, and *Big Table* had emerged as an alternative to the censored press run by the University of Chicago, *Kulchur*, under the financial patronage of Lita Horlick, was formed in 1960 as "a determinedly New York publication" (Burns 41), with an intellectual outlook of "high seriousness and wide-ranging interest" that included the Beats (Clay and Phillips 85). For Gilbert Sorrentino, "*Kulchur* most definitely reflected the close of a literary era that had begun in about 1950 and found its first voice in *Black Mountain Review*," and (echoing Kerouac's prediction) in his estimation it "must be considered one of the great magazines of the twentieth century, an authoritative voice, as important as *The Little Review*, *The Dial*, *transition*" (315, 311).



WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS: In Search Of Yage

(In 1953 William S. Burroughs wrote the following letters to Allen Ginsberg. Along with others, already published — BIG TABLE 2 — they constitute a collection that will one day appear as a book, under the title "In Search of Yage." -Ed.)

January 15, 1953
Hotel Colon, Panama

Dear Allen,

I stopped off here to have my piles out. Wouldn't do to go back among the Indians with piles I figured.

Bill Gains was in town and he has burned down the Republic of Panama from Las Palmas to David on paregoric. Before Gains, Panama was a p.g. town. You could buy four ounces in any drug store. Now the druggists are balky and the Chamber of Deputies was about to pass a special Gains Law when he threw in the towel and went back to Mexico. I was getting off junk and he kept nagging me why was I kidding myself once a junkie always a junkie. If I quit junk I would become a sloppy lush or go crazy taking cocaine.

One night I got lushed and bought some paregoric and he kept saying over and over, "I *knew* you'd come home with paregoric. I *knew* it. You'll be a junkie all the rest of your life" and looking at me with his little cat smile. Junk is a cause with him.

I checked into the hospital junk sick and spent four days there. They would only give me three shots of morphine and I couldn't sleep from pain and heat and deprivation besides which there was a Panamanian hernia case in the same room with me and his friends came and stayed all day and half the night — one of them did in fact stay until midnight.

Recall walking by some American women in the corridor who looked like officers' wives. One of them was saying, "I don't know why but I just can't eat sweets."

"You got diabetes lady," I said. They all whirled around and gave me an outraged stare.

After checking out of the hospital, I stopped off at the U.S. Embassy. In front of the Embassy is a vacant lot with weeds and trees where boys undress to swim in the polluted waters of the

Figure 3: Image from *Kulchur* 3.
Image used by permission of William S. Burroughs Trust and Estate.

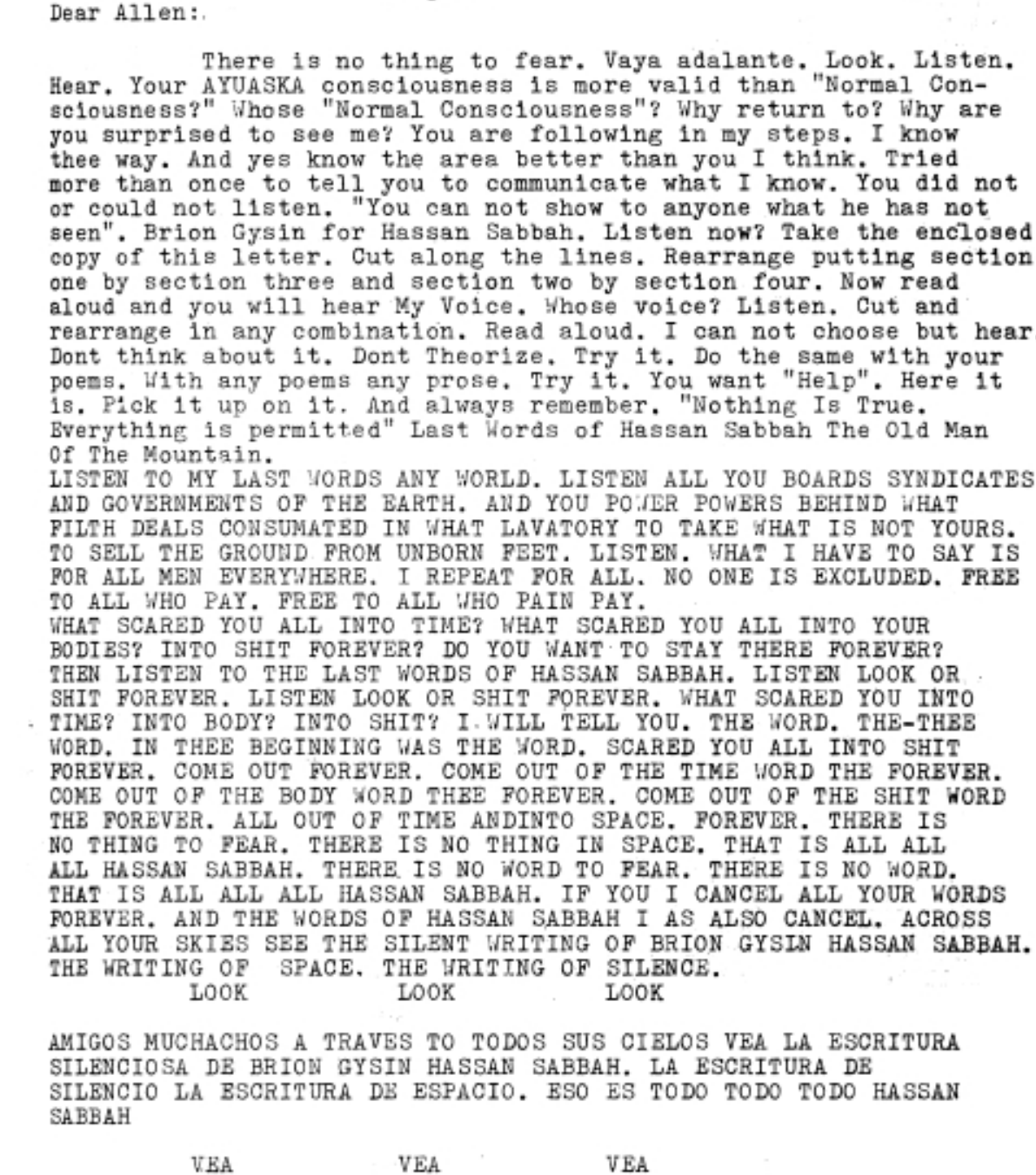
40. Predictably then, in issue number 3, Burroughs' "In Search of Yage" appeared in familiar company, alongside poems by Ginsberg and Olson, and texts by Kerouac and Bowles. And, as with *Big Table*, Burroughs' text also appeared here in the context of his own work's publication in an earlier issue. In fact, the relations between texts in *Kulchur* are far more significant, since the text that appeared in number 1--"The Conspiracy"--was Burroughs' unique, explicit fictional development of his interest in *yagé*, here described as an elixir of creative power and a weapon of political resistance. This would have set the *Kulchur* reader up to be disappointed, since the five letters presented here make almost no reference to *yagé*, let alone to its vital role in global conspiracies.

41. The letters in *Kulchur* are directly introduced by a short editorial note that acknowledges their relation to "others, already published--BIG TABLE 2," claiming that, together, "they constitute a collection that will one day appear as a book, under the title 'In Search of Yage'" (7). Of course, when that one day came, the book that appeared would not bear this title, since by then "In Search of Yage" had itself become a part in a larger whole. However, the note at least explains the otherwise perplexing gap in the chronology of the letters--after three letters, all dated within two weeks of each other, the sequence cuts from "January 30" to "May 12" and from Pasto to Lima, with no journey in between--a gap, this time, too large to naturalize.

42. In the structure of "In Search of Yage" published in *The Yage Letters*, the letters here are the first, second, third, eighth and ninth. So, putting the selections from *Big Table* and *Kulchur* together, a reader can now interleave the two separate blocks of text used in each magazine to construct the proper sequence. Or the reader could do so, if a footnote to the last letter, "May 23" (1953), didn't direct readers to yet another text in yet another magazine: "'The Routine' appears in *The Floating Bear* (#9), distributed solely by mailing list" (18). Adding to the bibliographical confusion, the routine referred to in the letter--"Roosevelt after Inauguration"--appeared in *The Floating Bear* four issues after that magazine had already published another element soon to appear in *The Yage Letters* (Burroughs' letter of June 21, 1960), written some seven years *after* the routine; yet again, the publishing history of the text contrives to scramble the chronology of its parts.

The Floating Bear

43. Although its contents and readership partly overlapped those of quarterlies like *Kulchur*, *The Floating Bear*, at first distributed semi-monthly, was an altogether different type of magazine. Edited by Diane di Prima and Leroi Jones, and published out of a West Village bookshop's storeroom, the *Bear* was a key player in the avant-garde "mimeograph revolution" of the early 1960s. Peter Martin describes one reason for its importance: "The subtitle 'A Newsletter' is the key to *The Floating Bear*'s chief contribution to literature of the 1960s; it *was* a newsletter, a speedy line of communication between experimental poets" (699). Di Prima elaborates on this aspect, noting that it "was like writing a letter to a bunch of friends" and that she and Jones had a common "sense of urgency of getting the technological advances of, say, Olson, into the hands of, say, Creeley, within two weeks, back and forth" (x-xi). Her comments give rise to two ironies, the first of which is that, performing a broadly similar function, *Black Mountain Review* had actually "developed from the friendship in daily correspondence between Creeley and Black Mountain Rector Charles Olson" (Clay and Phillips 107)--which made all the more appropriate their magazine's publication of Burroughs' "July 10, 1953" letter. The second irony concerns the material appearance in *Floating Bear* of the two Burroughs texts that would later appear in *The Yage Letters*.



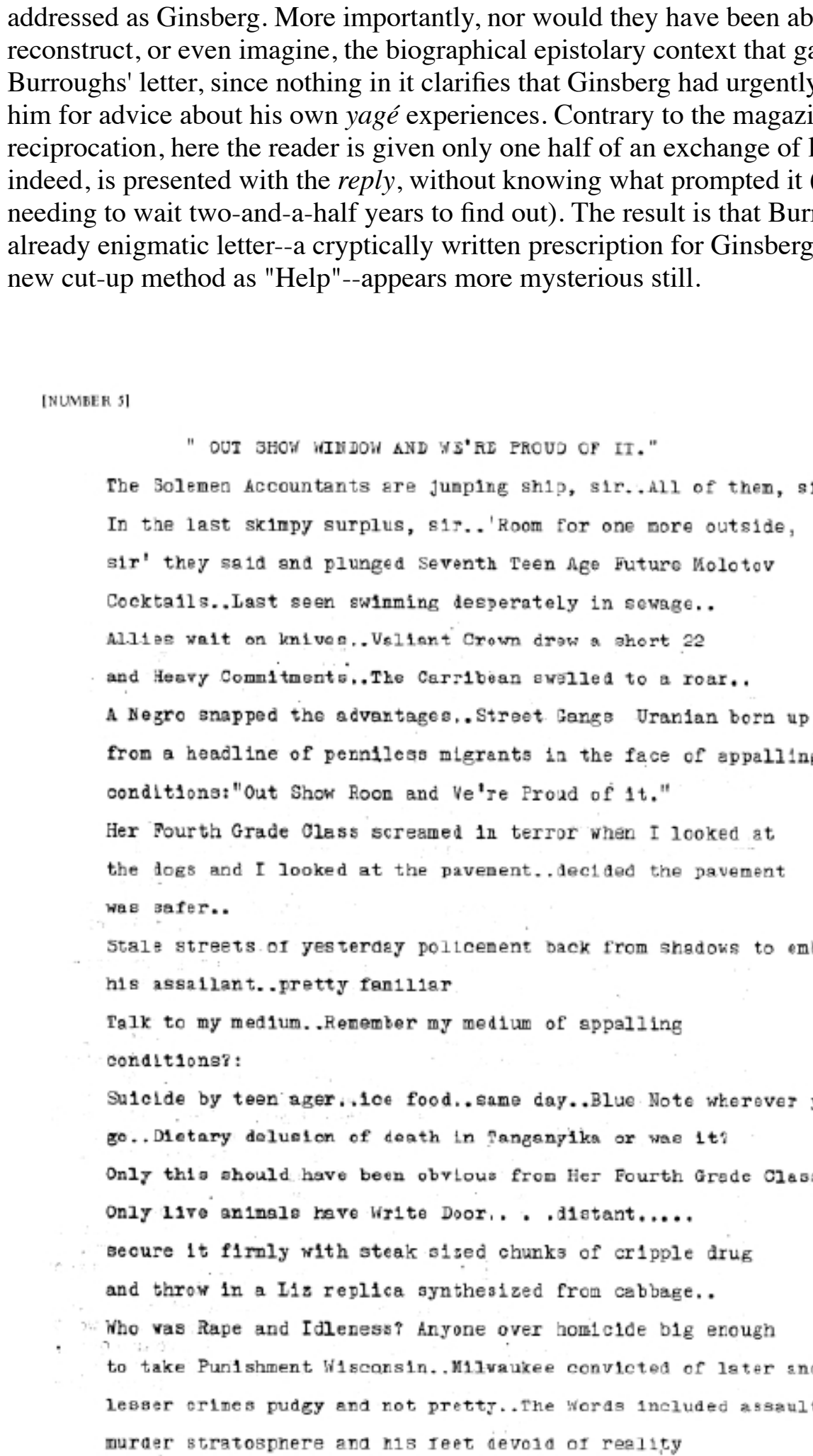
[NUMBER 5]

```
 June 2I  1960 Present Time Pre- Sent Time
Cargo American Express
  London                   England
Dear Allen:.
           There is no thing to fear. Vaya adalante. Look. Listen.
Hear. Your AYUASKA consciousness is more valid than "Normal Con-
sciousness?" Whose "Normal Consciousness"? Why return to? Why are
you surprised to see me? You are following in my steps. I know
thee way. And yes know the area better than you I think. Tried
more than once to tell you to communicate what I know. You did not
or could not listen. "You can not show to anyone what he has not
seen". Brion Gysin for Hassan Sabbah. Listen now? Take the enclosed
copy of this letter. Cut along the lines. Rearrange putting section
one by section three and section two by section four. Now read
aloud and you will hear My Voice. Whose voice? Listen. Cut and
rearrange in any combination. Read aloud. I can not choose but hear.
Dont think about it. Dont Theorize. Try it. Do the same with your
poems. With any poems any prose. Try it. You want "Help". Here it
is. Pick it up on it. And always remember. "Nothing Is True.
Everything is permitted" Last Words of Hassan Sabbah The Old Man
Of The Mountain.
LISTEN TO MY LAST WORDS ANY WORLD. LISTEN ALL YOU BOARDS SYNDICATES
AND GOVERNMENTS OF THE EARTH. AND YOU POWER POWERS BEHIND WHAT
FILTH DEALS CONSUMATED IN WHAT LAVATORY TO TAKE WHAT IS NOT YOURS.
TO SELL THE GROUND FROM UNBORN FEET. LISTEN. WHAT I HAVE TO SAY IS
FOR ALL MEN EVERYWHERE. I REPEAT FOR ALL. NO ONE IS EXCLUDED. FREE
TO ALL WHO PAY. FREE TO ALL WHO PAIN PAY.
WHAT SCARED YOU ALL INTO TIME? WHAT SCARED YOU ALL INTO YOUR
BODIES? INTO SHIT FOREVER? DO YOU WANT TO STAY THERE FOREVER?
THEN LISTEN TO THE LAST WORDS OF HASSAN SABBAH. LISTEN LOOK OR
SHIT FOREVER. LISTEN LOOK OR SHIT FOREVER. WHAT SCARED YOU INTO
TIME? INTO BODY? INTO SHIT? I WILL TELL YOU. THE WORD. THE-THEE
WORD. IN THEE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. SCARED YOU ALL INTO SHIT
FOREVER. COME OUT FOREVER. COME OUT OF THE TIME WORD THE FOREVER.
COME OUT OF THE BODY WORD THEE FOREVER. COME OUT OF THE SHIT WORD
THE FOREVER. ALL OUT OF TIME ANDINTO SPACE. FOREVER. THERE IS
NO THING TO FEAR. THERE IS NO THING IN SPACE. THAT IS ALL ALL
ALL HASSAN SABBAH. THERE IS NO WORD TO FEAR. THERE IS NO WORD.
THAT IS ALL ALL ALL HASSAN SABBAH. IF YOU I CANCEL ALL YOUR WORDS
FOREVER. AND THE WORDS OF HASSAN SABBAH I AS ALSO CANCEL. ACROSS
ALL YOUR SKIES SEE THE SILENT WRITING OF BRION GYSIN HASSAN SABBAH.
THE WRITING OF  SPACE. THE WRITING OF SILENCE.
           LOOK          LOOK          LOOK

AMIGOS MUCHACHOS A TRAVES TO TODOS SUS CIELOS VEA LA ESCRITURA
SILENCIOSA DE BRION GYSIN HASSAN SABBAH. LA ESCRITURA DE
SILENCIO LA ESCRITURA DE ESPACIO. ESO ES TODO TODO TODO HASSAN
SABBAH

           VEA           VEA           VEA
```

[43]

Figure 4: Image from *The Floating Bear* 5.
Image used by permission of William S. Burroughs Trust and Estate.

44. To begin with, the readers of Burroughs' June 21, 1960 letter in *Bear* number 5 (April 1961) would not have been able to identify the "Allen" to whom it is addressed as Ginsberg. More importantly, nor would they have been able to reconstruct, or even imagine, the biographical epistolary context that gave rise to Burroughs' letter, since nothing in it clarifies that Ginsberg had urgently asked him for advice about his own *yagé* experiences. Contrary to the magazine's aim of reciprocation, here the reader is given only one half of an exchange of letters--indeed, is presented with the *reply*, without knowing what prompted it (and needing to wait two-and-a-half years to find out). The result is that Burroughs' already enigmatic letter--a cryptically written prescription for Ginsberg to use his new cut-up method as "Help"--appears more mysterious still.



[NUMBER 5]

```
        " OUT SHOW WINDOW AND WE'RE PROUD OF IT."
The Solemen Accountants are jumping ship, sir..All of them, sir..
In the last skimpy surplus, sir..'Room for one more outside,
sir' they said and plunged Seventh Teen Age Future Molotov
Cocktails..Last seen swimming desperately in sewage..
Allies wait on knives..Valiant Crown drew a short 22
and Heavy Commitments..The Carribean swelled to a roar..
A Negro snapped the advantages..Street Gangs  Uranian born up
from a headline of penniless migrants in the face of appalling
conditions:"Out Show Room and We're Proud of it."
Her Fourth Grade Class screamed in terror when I looked at
the dogs and I looked at the pavement..decided the pavement
was safer..
Stale streets of yesterday policement back from shadows to embrace
his assailant..pretty familiar
Talk to my medium..Remember my medium of appalling
conditions?:
Suicide by teen ager..ice food..same day..Blue Note wherever you
go..Dietary delusion of death in Tanganyika or was it?
Only this should have been obvious from Her Fourth Grade Class:
Only live animals have Write Door.. . .distant.....
secure it firmly with steak sized chunks of cripple drug
and throw in a Liz replica synthesized from cabbage..
Who was Rape and Idleness? Anyone over homicide big enough
to take Punishment Wisconsin..Milwaukee convicted of later and
lesser crimes pudgy and not pretty..The Words included assault
murder stratosphere and his feet devoid of reality
Will Hollywood never learn?
Unimaginable disaster...Royal Knights Ten Age Future Time
                                          -- William Burroughs
```

[42]

Figure 5: Image from *The Floating Bear* 5.
Image used by permission of William S. Burroughs Trust and Estate.

45. The bibliographical environment does, however, produce a direct context for Burroughs' letter.[25] For it is immediately preceded by "OUT SHOW WINDOW AND WE'RE PROUD OF IT." Although there is no acknowledgement, this short cut-up text is almost exactly the same as "FROM SAN DIEGO UP TO MAINE" that had appeared in *Minutes to Go* (1960)--the launching manifesto of the cut-up method, to which Burroughs' letter actually directs Ginsberg. In other words, *Floating Bear* expanded on Burroughs' letter by juxtaposing it with a specific and presumably relevant example of his cut-up practice. On the other hand, while the text illustrates and so helps disseminate what Di Prima called "technological advances" in literary technique, it does absolutely nothing to clarify the *therapeutic* function cryptically claimed in the letter.

46. The same can be said of *The Yage Letters*, where Burroughs' 1960 letter is followed by his cut-up text, "I Am Dying, Meester?" and where, once again, any demonstration of the method's therapeutic function remains obscure. However, while a direct relation between Burroughs' letter and "I Am Dying, Meester?" appears self-evident, the invitation to read the second text as an illustration of the method announced in the first is, in fact, the product of entirely contingent publication circumstances. For Burroughs' decision to include "I Am Dying, Meester?" turns out to have preceded by some sixth months the plan to include his letter. The addition of this 1960 material therefore disguised and usurped the original intention, according to which the cut-up text from 1963 followed sequentially and logically after the 1953 letters of "In Search of Yage."

47. Finally, the material features of the text as it appears in *Floating Bear* are of particular importance. Ben Lee argues that the "willfully haphazard production" of the newsletter resulted in an improvisatory "slapdash aesthetic" that was "meant to mirror the sort of 'open form' its contributors favored in poetry and prose" (379, 375, 374). The low-cost mimeo format determined the physical appearance of the text on the page. Di Prima was specifically conscious of this point in relation to the *Bear*'s use of 8-1/2" x 11" paper and standard typewriter font: "Almost everybody writes on typewriters, and I felt that a lot of what they were doing had to do with the shape of their page" (xi). Burroughs' letter has, therefore, an appearance of authenticity that is entirely appropriate: at first sight, the letter printed in the *Bear* appears to be an exact facsimile of his original manuscript, down to his use of sections in block capitals and unusual layout. On closer inspection, it proves not to be, and the autograph signature reproduced here isn't in Burroughs' distinctive hand. This is also entirely appropriate given the letter's cut-up critique of authorship ("My Voice. Whose Voice?") and the fact that the signature is not actually for Burroughs' name but for that of his spiritual patron, "Hassan Sabbah" (*Yage Letters* 59, 61). Nevertheless, it is a nice irony that by far the cheapest of the little magazines should have been the only one to approximate the material form of Burroughs' letters, and that this particular letter should have been the only one to make decisive use of formal features.

48. As for the appearance of "Routine: Roosevelt after Inauguration" in *Bear* number 9, no contemporary reader would likely have made any connection between it and the texts published in number 5. Although it is undated, readers familiar with Burroughs' new cut-up methods would surely have recognized it as writing from the previous decade. Then again, there's no obvious internal evidence for any connection to his various "Yage" publications, and it appears a self-contained and free-standing satire. This, the first part of the "Yage" manuscript to be completed (in May 1953), would be the very last part to be included in "In Search of Yage," only appearing in the third edition, twenty-five years after the first. The reason for this delay was censorship exercised by the British printers in 1963, itself the renewal of an earlier act of censorship on the routine's appearance in *Floating Bear*. Fittingly, this act had inserted the routine (back) into an epistolary context, since the censorship was directed against the magazine's distribution to its mailing list. It came about when a copy sent to one man on the list, who was in a New Jersey prison, was intercepted by the censor. In October 1961, Di Prima and Jones were arrested for using the mail to disseminate obscene materials and, although cleared, their confrontation with the forces of censorship was certainly noted by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.[26]

City Lights

49. City Lights was set up in the mid-1950s as an independent publisher closely aligned with the emerging alternative poetry magazine culture, a position that led Ferlinghetti to fight the same battles against censorship (he supported *Big Table*, for example, and had famously gone to court over his publication of Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* in 1957). The cultural identity and social meaning of *The Yage Letters* was, therefore, decisively shaped by its publication as a City Lights paperback. City Lights' ideal status as a publisher of Burroughs' "Yage" material is evidenced by the dialogue conducted throughout the mid-1950s and early '60s between Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti concerning the destiny of Burroughs' manuscripts. Although, in September 1953, Ginsberg initially contacted Malcolm Cowley at Viking about "Yage," he would soon begin to exert what he referred to as "golden pressure" on Ferlinghetti, driven by his belief that the expatriate Burroughs needed to be published not just in an American context but in one specifically determined as Beat.[27] Ferlinghetti, for his part, resisted Ginsberg's lobbying, not only turning down the chance to publish the material in the banned issue of *The Chicago Review* simply because it had been censored--unlike Maurice Girodias, he was no opportunist--but also resisting for almost six years Ginsberg's repeated suggestion he publish "Yage."

50. Burroughs had returned from South America in September 1953 and moved into Ginsberg's East 7th Street apartment, where they worked together on his "Yage" and "Queer" manuscripts. So far as "Yage" was concerned, Ginsberg knew that no one "in the publishing business in N. Y. will find it an acceptable commodity."[28] From the outset, Ginsberg expected censorship problems, and a decade later he even anticipated *self*-censorship by Burroughs in the run-up to the City Lights publication, asking Ferlinghetti: "Are you sure Burroughs' Yage mss. is same as was published in Kulchur & Float bear & Big Table? Hope he hasn't edited too much."[29] Ginsberg's anxiety was misplaced--and for a reason that reveals something fundamental about the editing history of *The Yage Letters*. The fact is that Ferlinghetti never saw an original manuscript, because Burroughs no longer had one; instead, he simply collected into a whole those parts that were in print. As the internal evidence of transcription errors carried over suggests, and as the City Lights editorial files at Berkeley prove, "In Search of Yage" was materially based on those texts already published in the little magazines,[30] and these were accepted by all concerned to define the complete text.[31]

51. Now at last we can settle the question of agency and authorship with respect of the material that did (and did not) appear in *The Yage Letters*, by answering the whodunnit question posed by the censorship claims made by Mullins and Martinez. The short answer is that *both* of them are wrong, because neither Burroughs nor Ferlinghetti "edited out" anything. Martinez's claim that Ferlinghetti "cleaned-up" Burroughs' "original letters" for publication is based on two false assumptions: firstly, that the publisher was dealing with the manuscripts of Burroughs' real correspondence (as later published in *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1945-1959*), which is contradicted by the fact that his "Yage" manuscript was entirely separate (and mostly not even based on real letters), and secondly, that Ferlinghetti worked on any Burroughs manuscript at all, whereas actually, apart from the two Ginsberg letters, everything in *The Yage Letters* derived directly from earlier magazine publications. If any censorship had affected "In Search of Yage," it would have been the responsibility of Creeley, Carroll, or Horlick. In fact, the racially "offensive" passage probably was in the lost "Yage" manuscript Burroughs completed in December 1953; if so, it was contained in a separate, fabricated letter (dated "June 23/28," Pucallpa) that wasn't available to Ferlinghetti precisely because this (and one other, dated "July 20," Mexico) had not previously been offered for magazine publication.[32] Rather than a deliberate act of last-minute editing, what took place was a prolonged, messy process of piecemeal manuscript cannibalization, an operation conducted long-distance, first from Tangier and then from Paris, always mediated by Ginsberg, and shaped decisively by other publishing contingencies in North Carolina, Chicago, New York and San Francisco.

52. To a striking degree, the City Lights publication was determined by multiple and divided agencies and by contingent factors, affecting not just "In Search of Yage" but also the work's other two sections. Thus, it turns out that Burroughs' June 21, 1960 letter was only included on the suggestion of Ginsberg, six months before publication, and he only suggested it because Ferlinghetti had just then (by "a real stroke of luck")[33] stumbled across, via a third party, Ginsberg's June 10, 1960 letter, to which Burroughs' letter was the reply. In other words, Ginsberg's efforts to get "In Search of Yage" published brought about the creation of an entirely new section of 1960 letters, "Seven Years Later," written by both men but never intended for the book. Paradoxically, the book that Ginsberg had been promoting on Burroughs' behalf was itself radically transformed by his efforts. Burroughs approved the addition of the two 1960 letters, or perhaps simply acquiesced. He did not entirely surrender authorial control to Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, however, overruling both of them when each expressed doubts about the inclusion of "I Am Dying, Meester?" as the final text. And yet, even here, Burroughs had the last word in the book only in a paradoxical fashion. After the cut-up text, there appears his name--but only because John Sankey, Ferlinghetti's London printer, suggested it should be there, since otherwise the "reader cannot see if this is by Ginsberg or Burroughs."[34] The very name of the author thus reflects the determinism of a social agency.

53. In the "Roosevelt" routine--a text only admitted into *The Yage Letters* in 1988 after a contingent publishing career determined by acts of censorship--there's a passage where Burroughs fantasizes the post of Congressional Librarian being awarded to a "transvestite lizzie" who "barred the male sex from the premises" so that "a world-famous professor of philology suffered a broken jaw at the hands of a bull dyke when he attempted to enter the Library" (36). Given Burroughs' own experience of being barred from fulfillment by those institutions regulating sexuality and literature, this vision of aggressive hybrid creatures taking over the academy and roughing up the venerable authority of philology seems strangely prophetic.

Naked Lunch Restored

54. In a comprehensive critical review of D.C. Greetham's attempt to postmodernize editing theory, Paul Eggert contests his verdict in *Theories of the Text* that we now live in "post-philological days," arguing that "the moment of editorial theory is over" (331). Then again, Greetham had himself questioned the value of McGann's influential theory of social text editing ("I am by no means sure I understand exactly what is a socialized text" [406]), expressing the central doubt about the *practical* value of theory with which Thomas Tanselle began his millennial review of textual criticism, noting how "a focus on texts as social products came to characterize the bulk of discussion of textual theory, *if not editions themselves*" (1; my emphasis). "What we need now" is not more theory, Eggert concludes, but "the practical responses: the reports from the editorial trenches" (332).

55. Before concluding my own "report" from the front-line of Burroughs editing, what of the "Restored" *Naked Lunch* as a response to Loranger's call for a postmodern, hypertext edition? Although it has many other merits, the edition produced by Grauerholz and Miles overlooks the value of her analysis for presenting, if not an interactive hypertext, then at least a text that (to cite the quotation in her title) "spill[s] off the page in all directions." Most simply, it does this by providing a contents page that locates each of the book's many sections. Since one of the most distinctive features of *Naked Lunch* is the extraordinary difficulty every reader experiences in finding their way around it, the effect--to *stop* the words spilling off the page--is, in Loranger's terms, "a grave editorial sin" (23).

56. More substantially, the "Restored" edition falls short in theoretical and practical respects. As Eggert notes, even "if there is no stoutly defensible philosophical grounding for editing," practice can at least "be self-consciously aware that its operations are necessarily contextualised by the present" (331). The "restored" *Naked Lunch* misses this opportunity because, while it does describe and reflect on its own workings, there's almost no development either in terms of theoretical models or in terms of practical detail. Thus in their "Editors' Note," Grauerholz and Miles observe--unlike Loranger--that the texts of the 1959 Olympia and 1962 Grove *Naked Lunch* "are quite different" (234), but since they give no details, it remains unclear how a comparative descriptive analysis informed their editing practice. Equally, while both editors are well aware of the complex, contingent circumstances of the text's production and publication, they do not position their work with respect to the old or the new "grails" of editing theory--put reductively, the single, intentional, originating authorial genius and the socially collaborative multitude of equally valid contributing agents.

57. One especially fitting example should illustrate this editorial practice in *Naked Lunch*. In the "Editors' Note," the author's "authority" is called upon to approve the removal of certain duplicate passages: "Miles once asked Burroughs if the repeated passages in the book were all intentional; Burroughs replied that they were there by mistake, caused by the rush to get the text to Girodias" (245). It might seem that the issue here is whether the editors should have chosen, as a matter of principle, a social rather than authorial model of agency, and let the repetitions stand. But it is also a question of which "repetition" should be cut. In "the market" section they remove the passage beginning "the room seems to shake and vibrate with motion" from what was its *first* appearance in the text. This material at the start of the section, however, reproduces the "July 10, 1953" letter as published in *Black Mountain Review* (minus its opening lines and with other minor differences). By deleting the passage in *this* context, rather than when it reappeared a few lines after this material, the editors overlook the longstanding integrity of the "Composite City" text as it had existed in its manuscript, magazine, and book publishing histories. The descriptive potentials of a socialized approach could have better guided the editors' decisions, even if they were framed by a traditional theory of final authorial intentions.

The Yage Letters Redux

58. I have already argued that *The Yage Letters* is suited to a social text approach to editing because of the text's bibliographical variability--both its external multiplicity (as Stillinger would term it) and also (adapting Bakhtin) its internal multiplicity--and because of the strong material parallels between its thematic and formal hybridity. In describing the publishing history of its various parts, I have made it possible to recognize the ways in which the published edition of *The Yage Letters*, in the very act of "restoring" these part-texts to their proper chronological place in the whole, also removed them from their social embedding and material histories. Those several histories in turn clarify that this "whole" was no more than the retrospective sum of the parts.

59. In order to suggest the implications for editing of these acts of historical repression and recovery, I want to focus on perhaps the smallest possible concrete instance of editorial practice, one with minimal semantic value. In the text, certain letters have a comma while others have a colon to conclude the opening line of address ("Dear Allen:" etc.). Burroughs' letters have seven colons and six commas, which looks like a simple matter of inconsistency in his use of epistolary formats. Since both the French and German editions of *The Yage Letters* standardize the use of the comma, the issue seems to be the appropriateness of editing for internal consistency. Given the heterogeneity of materials and the hybridity of the text overall, such homogenizing might seem a mistaken effort to resolve contradictions and unify dissonant parts into a singular whole. Equally, we might appeal to authorial practice to question such regularization. In the case of Burroughs' letters, however, a striking fact emerges with exceptional clarity. Up until late 1959, Burroughs *never* used a colon to punctuate his address, but *always* a comma. After November 1959, he shifted--suddenly and almost completely--from comma to colon. Therefore, the use of the colon in his June 21, 1960 letter appears consistent with his letter-writing, while its use in six of his "1953" letters now appears inconsistent. The implication for any editing intervention seems clear.

60. However, something else might be involved if a *pattern* were observable. The six 1953 letters that use colons are the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, tenth and eleventh letters in the sequence of "In Search of Yage." In short, these were all the letters first published in *Big Table*. And of course the fact that this issue was published in Summer 1959 (*before* Burroughs changed his epistolary practice) establishes that the use of the colon in them cannot be attributed to Burroughs' making belated revisions, but must be accounted for by the house style of the magazine's editor, Paul Carroll.

61. What, then, is the editorial upshot of unraveling this history of the comma and the colon? Should the 1953 colons be replaced by commas to bring the letters correctly into line with the author's practice and to remove the "corruption" of Carroll's editing? Or should the colons be retained for this very reason, since they are material traces carried over from the text's original part-publication, evidence of the determinism of material history at the level of even the smallest bibliographic code? Allowing the contradiction in punctuation to stand across the text of "In Search of Yage" becomes, then, a way to respect internal units of consistency by acknowledging the separate authority of the part-publications. In that case, the new edition would make no change, and it may seem a metaphysical distinction to have arrived at this conclusion by such a long and circuitous path. However, if we take up Tanselle's argument for the "constructed" rather than "emended" text ("editors should not be thinking in terms of altering a particular existing text but of building up a new text, word by word and punctuation mark by punctuation mark, evaluating all available evidence at each step" [71]), then *The Yage Letters Redux* becomes the first edition to knowingly employ both forms of punctuation, guided by the larger aim to represent the multiple histories and composite agency of the text.

62. Clearly, there's no need to detail the micro-editing decisions made for *Redux*, but the descriptive analysis in previous sections should have demonstrated the validity of a practice informed by the full social and bibliographical life of the text in its multiple material histories. To give just the example involving the largest number of interventions; the third edition of 1988 made wholesale changes in accidentals and bibliographical codes, altering most visibly the first edition's layout in twelve out of the fifteen letters. Here, a precise knowledge of the magazine formats establishes the arbitrary nature of these alterations, which are neither internally consistent nor motivated by being grounded in previously published versions (let alone manuscripts). But if the third edition (being the most complete) can still be used as the base text, should the first be used as the copy text in its accidentals? A socialized approach might suggest restoring the formats of the magazines rather than that of the first City Lights edition. This would bring differences in original codes to the foreground, to display rather than conceal the text's multiple material histories. And yet there's a distinction between removing arbitrary homogenizations (as in the punctuation of the French and German editions) and preventing a smooth, consistent reading by crudely maximizing heterogeneity to the extent, for example, of reproducing different typefaces to make visible the historicity and provenance of each part.

63. In any event, there are practical limits to such variability. What to do about layout features particular to one bibliographical format that cannot be carried over to another, such as the line spacing of letters manipulated to fit page size? Likewise, if social editing suggests a "diplomatic" documentation to reproduce the mimeograph qualities of Burroughs' letter in *The Floating Bear*, then how is one to justify clear-text elsewhere? Then again, the key practical limits, the most materially determining consequences of the collaborative agency of publication, are those set by the publisher. Although immune to theory, commercial publishers work with the practical contingencies of the world, and it would be ironic and naïve for a social text approach to forget it. Take, for example, the label "definitive": discredited in theory as the chimera of positivist philology (for implying an autonomous, timeless text that exists beyond the historical contingencies of its own making), it returns in practice if the publisher has the last say on the title and the sales department wants it on the cover (see my Introduction to *Junky: the definitive text of 'Junk'*), or if the marketing term seems useful to promote the book on the publisher's website. And so for *The Yage Letters*, as a City Lights publication, the challenge remains how best to exploit the rich descriptive and interpretive opportunities of a social text approach while still retaining the reader-friendly clear-text demanded by publishing.

64. A new edition can advance interpretive criticism by materializing the text's neglected histories of formal, thematic, and bibliographical "space time travel," while being itself part of that historical process and not its conclusion. As Eggert acknowledges, "one does one's best. The result is practical, not ideal; useful and usable, not perfect" (334). Burroughs himself knew the "fix" is never final, even if, at the time, that is what he wanted to or did believe, which is surely why he did not include in his text the verdict he reached in July 1953 about the object of his own grail quest: "Yage is it" (*Letters* 180).

Department of American Studies
Keele University
o.c.g.harris@ams.keele.ac.uk

Talk Back

COPYRIGHT © 2006 OLIVER HARRIS. READERS MAY USE PORTIONS OF THIS WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FAIR USE PROVISIONS OF U.S. COPYRIGHT LAW. IN ADDITION, SUBSCRIBERS AND MEMBERS OF SUBSCRIBED INSTITUTIONS MAY USE THE ENTIRE WORK FOR ANY INTERNAL NONCOMMERCIAL PURPOSE BUT, OTHER THAN ONE COPY SENT BY EMAIL, PRINT OR FAX TO ONE PERSON AT ANOTHER LOCATION FOR THAT INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL USE, DISTRIBUTION OF THIS ARTICLE OUTSIDE OF A SUBSCRIBED INSTITUTION WITHOUT EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM EITHER THE AUTHOR OR THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN.

THIS ARTICLE AND OTHER CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE ARE AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE UNTIL RELEASE OF THE NEXT ISSUE. A TEXT-ONLY ARCHIVE OF THE JOURNAL IS ALSO AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE. FOR FULL HYPERTEXT ACCESS TO BACK ISSUES, SEARCH UTILITIES, AND OTHER VALUABLE FEATURES, YOU OR YOUR INSTITUTION MAY SUBSCRIBE TO PROJECT MUSE, THE ON-LINE JOURNALS PROJECT OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Tables

Table 1: Editions of *The Yage Letters*

1st edition	2nd edition	3rd edition
Nov. 1963	June 1975	Feb. 1988
Contents: b + c + d + f	Contents: 1st edition + a	Contents: 2nd edition + e

All editions contained Ginsberg's June 10, 1960 letter in "Seven Years Later" and "To Whom It May Concern" (letter, August 28, 1963) in the "Epilogue." A printing in October 1990 mistakenly identified itself as the 4th edition; in fact, *The Yage Letters Redux* (April 2006) is the true 4th edition.

Table 2: Magazine Publication of Burroughs Material Appearing in *The Yage Letters*

a	b	c	d	e	f
Autumn 1957 (issued Spring 1958)	Summer 1959	1960	April 1961	June 1961	1963
Black Mountain Review 7	*Big Table* 2	*Kulchur* 3	*Floating Bear* 5	*Floating Bear* 9	*City Lights Journal* 1
"from Naked Lunch, Book III: In Search of Yage"	"In Quest of Yage"	In Search of Yage"	Untitled	"Routine: Roosevelt after Inauguration"	"I Am Dying, Meester?"
"July 10, 1953"	"February 28, 1953," "March 3," "April 15," "May 5," "June 18," "July 8"	"January 15, 1953," "January 25, 1953," "January 30," "May 12, 1953," "May 23"	Text of Burroughs' letter to Ginsberg, June 21, 1960	Text of "Roosevelt After Inauguration"	Text of "I Am Dying, Meester?"
12th in "In Search of Yage" in *The Yage Letters* (2nd and 3rd editions)	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th in "In Search of Yage" in *The Yage Letters* (all editions)	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 9th in "In Search of Yage" in *The Yage Letters* (all editions)	In "Seven Years Later" in *The Yage Letters* (all editions)	In "In Search of Yage" in *The Yage Letters* (3rd edition)	In "Epilogue" in *The Yage Letters* (all editions)

Notes

I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Keele University for generously providing the leave needed to carry out the research for this essay, and Jim McLaverty for giving supportive feedback.

For permissions to publish material and for their personal assistance, I want to thank Anthony Bliss (Curator, Rare Books and Literary Manuscripts, The

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley); Richard Clement (Special Collections Librarian, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas); Bernard Crystal (Head of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Columbia University, New York); and Sandra Roscoe and Jessica Westphal (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library).

1. Compromising precision for the sake of convenience, I ignore the fact that the definite article in the title was only dropped after the first edition of 1959.

2. On closer inspection, paragraphs Loranger identifies as having been "deleted" from *Big Table* (105 and 107) were actually moved elsewhere in *Naked Lunch* ([New York: Grove, 1966; Black Cat edition] 160).

3. The Olympia edition also had two hundred more words that did not appear in later editions.

4. Like many other critics, Loranger confusingly refers to the two dozen separate sections of *Naked Lunch*--divisions of the text that, inconsistently in the first edition, were given their own titles--as "routines," a term Burroughs only ever applied to self-contained material of up to a few pages in length.

5. Equally, knowledge of the manuscript history would have changed dramatically Loranger's analysis of the genetic relation between material appearing in *Big Table* and in *Naked Lunch* where she sees the texts "developing" from magazine to book--"Burroughs makes extensive revisions of all but two episodes" (8); in fact, in almost all cases it can be shown that the "revised" material was not new at all, but was already present in his 1958 "Interzone" manuscript, from which Burroughs had made selections for *Big Table* designed to avoid American censorship. Although she employs appropriate caveats here ("It is reasonable to assume" [9]), the detailed tables that document her comparative analysis give an impression of more materially-grounded rigor. For example, in her Table 2, "Revision from *Big Table* to *Naked Lunch*," Loranger describes the relationship between "Episode 6" in *Big Table* and the "Islam Incorporated" section of *Naked Lunch*, noting "additional material on 147, 148-52 including Sample Menu." Far from being new material written in 1959, all this material was in the 1958 "Interzone" manuscript.

6. Loranger refers only to "cosmetic changes--the numbered episodes in *Big Table* become unnumbered, titled routines in *Naked Lunch*" (8).

7. For my terms here, see Young's excellent article. There are signs that the field of Burroughs textual scholarship is starting to expand. Most notably, Davis Schneiderman has produced strong, culturally informed materialist readings in two recent conference papers: "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except for Me and My Lawsuit: DJ Danger Mouse, William S. Burroughs, and the Politics of Grey Tuesday" (Collage as Cultural Practice Conference, University of Iowa [March 2005]), and "If I hold a conch shell to my ear, do I owe a royalty to Neptune? Scribbles on the a-history of pla(y)giarism" (Association of Writing Programs Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia [April 2005]).

8. This is a case I have made with reference to the radical errors in bibliographic chronology that led another of Burroughs' otherwise finest critics, Robin Lydenberg, to get backwards the relationship between "early" and "late" texts in her deconstructive analysis of his cut-up novels. See my *Secret of Fascination*, 244-45.

9. *Junkie* published in "unexpurgated" form as *Junky* in 1977; I quote from the re-edited 2003 text; see my introduction for a detailed publishing history.

10. The relation seems especially self-evident in the 1978 German edition, which prints the two books back-to-back so that the last page of *Junkie*, with the words "Vielleicht ist Yage der endgültige Fix" (206), is followed by the first page of "Auf der Suche nach Yage" (confusingly using the title of just one section to identify the whole).

11. Although all editions carried a note acknowledging these part-publications, full details were never given, and were given sometimes only to be obscured (e.g., the second edition of 1975 did give full bibliographical details of the "July 10, 1953" letter it now included, but by the eighth printing [February 1978] the information had been reduced to read only as follows: "A 1953 letter was in *Black Mountain Review* No. 7").

12. The phrase comes from Burroughs' letter to Mel Hardiment, 23 Jan. 1961 (The Ginsberg Circle: Burroughs-Hardiment Collection, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas).

13. See my "Cutting Up Politics."

14. Here and throughout, I cite the date of each letter from "In Search of Yage" as if it were the title of a text precisely in order to make clear their fictional status as dated letters.

15. Ironically, Ginsberg's contribution, his poem "America," actually names Burroughs.

16. As Ginsberg recalled, this specific text was actually "the seed of *Naked Lunch*" (Lotringer 807). The letter's compositional history can also be seen as another materialization of its "space time travel" theme. For while the bulk of the text dated "July 10, 1953" does derive from Burroughs' real letter from Lima of the same date, the final paragraphs--from "Followers of obsolete unthinkable trades" to "waiting for a live one"--were composed in Tangier, two years later.

17. For example, the account of a literal trip "across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island" returns the reader to the *yagé* trip in Mocoa (in the "April 15" letter), where a hut seems to take on "an archaic far-Pacific look with Easter Island heads" (44, 24), while the Composite City, where "the untended dead are eaten by vultures in the street," echoes the gross sight in Esmeraldas, Ecuador (in the "May 5" letter) of "vultures eating a dead pig in the main drag" (45, 31).

18. Indeed, agency and authority are interrogated as a coded joke in the very first line --"Panama clung to our bodies -- Probably cut --" (65)--which takes the reader back to the first letter of "In Search of Yage": "I wonder what a Panamanian boy would be like. Probably cut" (4). The repetition of the phrase is at once fully motivated--a precisely contrived pun on the cutting-up of physical and textual bodies, deconstructing their integrity--and yet called into doubt by the very notion of "probability" that governs the production of meaning in the cut-up text. An intertextual analysis of "I Am Dying, Meester?" would also include its extensive overlap with material in the "Where the Awning Flaps" chapter of *The Soft Machine* (2nd and 3rd editions).

19. Interestingly, at about the same time, Burroughs did make a cut-up version of the whole "July 10, 1953" letter, possibly intended for *The Yage Letters*.

20. "Tell Allen the piece of Burroughs I suggest for *Black Mountain [Review]* would be the whole vision of the Yage City" (*Selected Letters* 586). It seems Ginsberg initially considered offering Creeley another letter as well, as evidenced by a version of his "January 25, 1953" letter headed "2 letters from Bk III of Naked Lunch by Wm. Seward Burroughs (pseud. is William Lee)" (Burroughs Collection, Columbia University). In contrast to the "July 10, 1953" letter, this one is clearly part of an ongoing epistolary narrative.

21. Letter, Burroughs to Rosenthal, 17 May 1958 (The *Chicago Review* Papers, University of Chicago).

22. Letter, Burroughs to Carroll, 14 Nov. 1959 (Paul Carroll Papers, Series 2, University of Chicago).

23. Unlike Ansen's essay, Bowles's was not commissioned by *Big Table*, and was, in fact, originally written as a letter to the poet John Montgomery.

24. Letter, Ginsberg to Ferlinghetti, 19 Sept. 1962 (City Lights Records 1955-1970, Correspondence Files, University of California, Berkeley) [hereafter CLR, UCB].

25. There is also an indirect context, since, before the cut-up text, there appears an undated letter from "Roi" (Jones) to "Diane" (Di Prima), in which he advances his understanding of *Floating Bear* as, precisely, "letters."

26. "Re ROUTINE, you were not very happy about it yourself, especially the name Roosevelt, and we had already discussed some possible modifications from your own point of view before they [Scorpion, who refused to print the text] came along." Letter, Sankey to Ferlinghetti, 8 Oct. 1963 (CLR, UCB).

27. Letter, Ginsberg to Kerouac, 9 Oct. 1957 (Miles Collection, Columbia University).

28. Letter, Ginsberg to Cowley, 10 Dec. 1953 (Miles Collection, Columbia University).

29. Letter, Ginsberg to Ferlinghetti, Feb. 1963 (CLR, UCB).

30. The internal evidence shows the presence in the City Lights text of numerous transcription errors carried over from the magazine publications. In the City Lights Editorial Files, together with proofs and long galleys, Carton 1 contains the relevant pages cut from *Big Table* 2 and *Kulchur* 3, marked up with instructions (e.g., "Printer: Begin here") (CLR, UCB).

31. "Have you thought again of printing Burroughs' collected So American letters - they're *all* available in Big Table, Kulchur + Floating Bear -- It would make a nice small prose book + it's *all* there in print now." Letter, Ginsberg to Ferlinghetti, 26 Jun. 1962 (CLR, UCB). Italics added.

32. The "July 20" letter overlapped extensively with the text later published as the Epilogue to *Queer*. Most of this material in turn derives from Burroughs' original notebook; see my introduction to *The Latin American Notebook of William S. Burroughs* (forthcoming from The Ohio State University Press).

33. Letter, Ferlinghetti to Ginsberg, 11 Jun. 1963 (Ginsberg Collection, Columbia University).

34. Letter, Sankey to Ferlinghetti, 16 Oct. 1963 (CLR, UCB).

Works Cited

Ansen, Alan. "Anyone Who Can Pick Up a Frying Pan Owns Death." *Big Table* 2 (Summer 1959): 32-41.

Burns, Jim. "Kulchur." *Beat Scene* 43 (Summer 2003): 38-41.

Burroughs, William S. "from *Naked Lunch, Book III: In Search of Yage*. " *Black Mountain Review* 7 (Autumn 1957): 144-48.

---. "In Quest of Yage." *Big Table* 2 (Summer 1959): 44-64.

---. "In Search of Yage." *Kulchur* 3 (1961): 7-18.

---. *Junkie, Auf der Suche nach Yahe, Naked Lunch, Nova Express*. Ed. and trans. Carl Weissner. Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 1978.

---. *Junky: The 'Definitive' Text of 'Junk'*. Ed. Oliver Harris. New York: Penguin, 2003.

---. Letter (June 21, 1960). *Floating Bear* 5 (1961): 7-8.

---. *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1945-1959*. Ed. Oliver Harris. New York: Viking, 1993.

---. *Naked Lunch: The Restored Text*. Eds. James Grauerholz and Barry Miles. New York: Grove, 2003.

---. "Out Show Window and We're Proud of It." *Floating Bear* 5 (1961): 6.

---. "Routine: Roosevelt after Inauguration." *Floating Bear* 9 (1961): 8-10.

Burroughs, William S., and Allen Ginsberg. *The Yage Letters*. San Francisco: City Lights, 1963; 1975; 1988.

Campbell, James. *This Is the Beat Generation*. London: Vintage, 2000.

Clay, Steve, and Rodney Phillips. *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side: Adventures in Writing, 1960-1980*. New York: Granary, 1998.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1988.

Creeley, Robert. "On *Black Mountain Review*." *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*. Eds. Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie. New York: Pushcart, 1978: 248-61.

Di Prima, Diane. "Introduction." *The Floating Bear: A Newsletter, Numbers 1-37, 1961-1969*. Eds. Di Prima and LeRoi Jones. La Jolla: Laurence McGilvery, 1973: vii-xviii.

Eggert, Paul. "These Post-Philological Days." *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies*. Vol. 15. Eds. W. Speed Hill and Edward Burns. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2003: 323-36.

Frankel, Nicholas. "The Hermeneutic Value of Material Texts." Rev. of George Bornstein, *Material Modernism*. Hill and Burns 350-60.

Greetham, D.C. *Theories of the Text*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Harris, Oliver. "Cutting Up Politics." *Retaking the Universe: William S. Burroughs and the Global Order.* Eds. Davis Schneiderman and Philip Walsh. London: Pluto, 2004: 175-200.

---. *William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003.

Kerouac, Jack. *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*. Ed. Ann Charters. New York: Viking, 1995.

Lee, Ben. "LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka and the Limits of Open Form." *African American Review* 37.2-3 (Spring 2003): 371-87.

Loranger, Carol. "'This Book Spill Off the Page in All Directions: What Is the Text of *Naked Lunch*?" *Postmodern Culture* (1999) 10.1. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/toc/pmc10.1.html>.

Lotringer, Sylvère, ed. *Burroughs Live: The Collected Interviews of William S. Burroughs*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001.

Martin, Peter. "An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Little Magazines." Anderson and Kinzie 666-750.

Martinez, Manuel Luis. *Countering the Counterculture: Reading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2003.

Maynard, Joe, and Barry Miles. *William S. Burroughs, A Bibliography, 1953-1973*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1978.

Michelson, Peter. "On *The Purple Sage*, *Chicago Review*, and *Big Table*." Anderson and Kinzie 340-75.

Morgan, Ted. *Literary Outlaw: The Life and Times of William S. Burroughs*. New York: Holt, 1988.

Mullins, Greg. *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs and Chester Write Tangier.* Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2002.

Skerl, Jennie. *William S. Burroughs*. Boston: Twayne, 1985.

Sorrentino, Gilbert. "Neon, *Kulchur*, etc." Anderson and Kinzie 298-316.

Tanselle, Thomas. "Textual Criticism at the Millenium." *Studies in Bibliography* 54. Ed. David L. Vander Meulen. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2003: 1-80.

Walsh, Marcus. "Hypotheses, Evidence, Editing, and Explication." *Yearbook of English Studies* 29 (1999): 24-42.

Watson, Steven. *The Birth of the Beat Generation: Visionaries, Rebels, and Hipsters, 1944-1960*. New York: Pantheon, 1995.

Young, John K. "Pynchon in Popular Magazines." 44.4 (Summer 2003): 389-404.

Talk Back This Issue MUSE IATH