Technology in the work of

Jack Kerouac

and

William S. Burroughs.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the use and significance of technologies of representation in the work of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) and William S. Burroughs (1914-1997), particularly in relation to the development of ideas of free and improvisatory expression in the 1950s. More specifically it focuses on the role played by the technologies of the typewriter and tape recorder in the textual production of key works of each writer and how these technologies are also thematically important in their exploration of the topics of individual creativity and freedom in relation to social and technological control. It also examines the centrality of epistolary practice in the creative process. The focus on these technologies will allow the thesis to develop from this base into a wider exploration of many of the key themes of Kerouac's and Burroughs' work, placing them within a context of wider debates and concerns over the power of mass media and technology among contemporary social commentators as well as writers of the Beat generation.

The thesis is broadly divided into two sections, with the first half concentrating on Kerouac and the second half on Burroughs. Chapter one explores Kerouac's writing practices in an analysis of the scroll draft of On The Road. Chapter two examines Kerouac's representation of a variety of media including the printed word and radio in Doctor Sax. In chapter three, I look at Kerouac's spontaneous prose method in an analysis of The Subterraneans. Chapter four concentrates specifically on Kerouac's experimentation with the tape recorder in Visions of Cody. Chapter five focuses on framing Burroughs' Junky and Queer in terms of cybernetics. In chapter six I present an analysis of Naked Lunch, looking at the techniques that Burroughs uses to disrupt the traditional narrative form, and in chapter seven I look at Burroughs' cut-up method by examining his Nova trilogy: The Soft Machine, The Ticket That Exploded, and Nova Express.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the use and significance of technologies of representation in the work of Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs, particularly in relation to the development of ideas of free and improvisatory expression in the 1950s. More specifically it focuses on the role played by the technologies of the typewriter and tape recorder in the textual production of key works of each writer and how these technologies are also thematically important in their exploration of the topics of individual creativity and freedom in relation to social and technological control. It also examines the centrality of epistolary practice in the creative process. The focus on these technologies will allow the thesis to develop from this base into a wider exploration of many of the key themes of Kerouac's and Burroughs' work, placing them within a context of wider debates and concerns over the power of mass media and technology among contemporary social commentators as well as writers of the Beat generation.

The Beat label that has been attached to both writers has often been an unhelpful generalisation. The Beats have been understood in many different ways: as literary movement, media creation and mutually exploitative marketing strategy, and for such a "statistically tiny group," a great deal of attention, statistical and otherwise, was paid to them in the Fifties.[1] The Beats' emphasis on the centrality of individual experience as exemplified in Kerouac's work led to difficulties of classification, with the suggestion

[1] Douglas T. Miller, and Marion Nowak, The Fifties: The Way We Really Were (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1977) 387.

being raised that the writers grouped together as Beats were in fact "too distinctly individualistic to allow their work to be classified."[2] The highly individualised styles and perceived thematic disparities between Kerouac and Burroughs' work have produced an uneasiness in categorising and containing them both under the umbrella term of Beat. Burroughs' status has in particular been contested, and as Oliver Harris points out, "He was never completely there and never quite belonged, but always marked a limit, a point of excess, a kind of strange inner extremity."[3] This thesis focuses on the ways in which each writer approaches the technologies of literary production and technology more generally, with the aim of establishing a wider framework in which to situate Kerouac and Burroughs so that more fruitful comparisons of their work can be made.

It is though, impossible to divorce Kerouac and Burroughs entirely from their Beat identity. However uneasy or problematic these relationships may be, these writers formed a community based, among other things, around epistolary practice and as such this links them together in a virtual communications network of a wider Beat circle that cannot be ignored. Moreover, as the correspondence of Kerouac and Burroughs is intimately and intricately tied up with the development of their novels, in order to understand their work it is essential to recognise this context. As Oliver Harris explains, the letter plays a central role in the development of the writing practices of Kerouac and Burroughs:

> For the Beats the letter represented a technology of self-expression and intimate communication opposed to the impersonal relations of commodity exchange and

[2] Wolfgang B. Fleischmann, "A Look at the 'Beat Generation' Writers," Recent American Fiction: Some Critical Views ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin co., 1963) 113.
[3] Oliver Harris, "'Virus-X': Kerouac's Visions of Burroughs," Reconstructing the Beats, ed. Jennie Skerl (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004) 206.

> the controlled uniformity of mass media. Put another way, the value of Beat letters is the product of their position as not just unpublished but *unpublishable* writers: the likes of Ginsberg and Kerouac invested essential energy in correspondence during the early Cold War years, when their social marginality was also economic and cultural. For those undesirables denied voice or place by Cold War discourses, the letter embodied postwar American dreams of an alternative personal and social space.[4]

Beat correspondence therefore forms a crucial part in developing an understanding of their relationship to the dominant culture, as it counters the perceived impersonality and homogeneity of mass communication and operates on the level of personal shared experience: "The tacit promise of the letter, therefore, was to extend those originally oral, intimate, and mutual confessions through a mode of writing inherently concerned with intimacy, orality, and mutuality."[5] The elevation of intense personal experience, the freedom to pursue it and the concern with improvisational and apparently anti-intellectual ways of representing it, led to criticism of Beat writers in the Fifties for being contemptuous of rationality, and to critics situating them within Cold War discourse as marginalised others outside of an ordered society. Norman Podhoretz for example used this notion of the Beat writers as outsiders to come to his damning conclusion that "This is the revolt of the spiritually underprivileged and the crippled of soul – young men who can't think straight and so hate anyone who can."[6] He also used this position to equate Beats with juvenile delinquents, believing that "juvenile crime can be explained partly in

[4] Oliver Harris, "Cold War Correspondents: Ginsberg, Kerouac, Cassady, and the Political Economy of Beat Letters," Twentieth Century Literature 46.2 (2000): 175.
[5] Harris, "Cold War Correspondents," 180.
[6] Norman Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," A Casebook on the Beat, ed. Thomas Parkinson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961) 211.

terms of the same resentment against normal feeling and the attempt to cope with the world through intelligence that lies behind Kerouac and Ginsberg."[7] Indeed for Podhoretz, the dangers of rejecting rationality and objectivity in favour of subjectivity were obvious and extreme: "for there is a suppressed cry in [Kerouac's] books: Kill the intellectuals who can talk coherently."[8]

Irving Howe also denounced the Beats for similar reasons, but rather than aligning them with delinquency like Podhoretz, he instead regarded them as analogous to what he disliked about the philistine middle classes: "In their contempt for mind, they are at one with the middle class suburbia they think they scorn."[9] Howe's equation of the Beats with the mindless suburban masses implies a dislike of mass culture and a defence of an elite group of rational 'expert' thinkers within society, of which neither Beats nor 'Squares' were part. In general the tendency was to distrust Beat rebellion as self-indulgent and empty, a form of freedom without much significance, as expressed by Paul Goodman in his analysis of On The Road; "For when you ask yourself what *is* expressed by this prose, by this buoyant writing about racing-across-the-continent, you find that it is the woeful emptiness of running away from even loneliness and vague discontent."[10] The idea that this might stem from a more robust critique of society, and contain a more philosophically radical idea of freedom, akin to existentialism is only fully to be found in Norman Mailer's critique of the hipster in his essay "The White Negro," in which he

[7] Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," 212.
[8] Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," 212.
[9] Irving Howe, "Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction," Recent American Fiction: Some Critical Views ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin co., 1963) 16.
[10] Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System (New York: Vintage Books, 1960) 279-280.

argues that it is this acceptance that allows the hipster to live only within the present. He describes him as

> The man who knows that if our collective condition is to live with instant death by atomic war … then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self.[11]

This quest for the moment is a trope in much Beat writing, and Mailer here suggests that it is specifically related to the social and cultural climate of the Fifties. Mailer's thesis suggests that the Beat desire for immediacy and their sense of the present is not based on optimism but on an understanding that in the nuclear age there may not in fact be a future. It is possible to see in these differing responses to the ideas of freedom, spontaneity and disengagement represented in Beat writing the reflection not only of a pervasive tension in the writings themselves between the sense of an irresponsible and unthinking freedom versus a considered and tragic nihilism, but also an obscure recognition of the wider paradoxes and promises of American society in the Fifties.

Whilst contemporary critics such as Howe, Podhoretz and Goodman regarded Beat texts as essentially empty of true feeling, and as displaying a dangerous sense of disengagement from society, this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which Kerouac and Burroughs' texts in fact demonstrate extremely powerful and imaginative attempts to engage with many of the issues at stake in mid-century American society, whilst simultaneously portraying an awareness of their own difficult and often contrary position

[11] Norman Mailer, "The White Negro," The Penguin Book of the Beats, ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin, 1993) 584.

within (or without) that society. The Beats' relationship to American society is more complex and nuanced than that of complete disengagement. This is reflected in Roy Kozlovsky's research where he argues that Beat writers were themselves intimately bound up in the technological developments occurring in America at mid-century. So for example, "Kerouac was employed during the war on the construction of the Pentagon, then the largest office building in the world; Ginsberg worked in the advertisement industry and on the instalment of the early warning system in the mid-1950s."[12] Their engagement is multi-layered, encompassing the relationship between ideas of the embodied self, technology and aesthetic production during the period, and it is these aspects of Kerouac and Burroughs' writing that this thesis focuses on, paying particular attention to the ways in which they explore the possibilities of free expression, at both a literary and social level.

Much of the popular writing on the Beats has put an excessive stress on individual rebellion and set it against a simplified image of American society as conformist and apolitical with the result that, as Manuel Luis Martinez observes "the central triumvirate of Beat writers, Kerouac, Burroughs, and Ginsberg, are credited as 'the source' of all significant postwar dissent."[13] One reason for this may be the writers' own quite conscious focus on creating a rich textual history, and of leaving behind a material record of the "alternative personal and social space" that they attempted to create through their writing – essentially forging their own history and providing a counter-narrative when

[12] Roy Kozlovsky, "Beat Spaces," Cold War Hothouses: Inventing Postwar Culture, from Cockpit to Playboy ed. Beatriz Colomina, Annmarie Brennan and Jeannie Kim (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004) 196. Kerouac makes reference to his employment in a letter to Norma Blickfelt in 1942: "I went to work as a laborer on the New War Department project … finally I was fired because the field-boss could never find me." (Jack Kerouac, "To Norma Blickfelt," 15 July 1942, Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin, 1996) 21-2.)

[13] Manuel Luis Martinez, Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) 24.

there was a danger that they would otherwise have been written out of the dominant social narrative. Certainly there is some evidence that Kerouac and Burroughs were aware that their personal correspondence would not ultimately remain private, with Kerouac asking Neal Cassady to keep his letters in order "to hand, personally, to Giroux the editor of Harcourt-Brace" for publication.[14] Burroughs also writes to Allen Ginsberg to ask him to "save my letters, maybe we can get out a book of them when I have a rep."[15]

This focus on the material processes of writing and publication is also foregrounded in the writing practices of the two authors, as they experimented with different ways of pushing the limits of the written word and the printed page. There is a specific interest in writing as a technology, and also in other forms of communications technologies such as the radio and television. In terms of postwar creativity, despite the fact that technology is so closely bound up with the repressive social order in the Fifties in many ways, it is notable that for writers like Kerouac and Burroughs, technology is both represented, and is itself often foregrounded, as offering modes of new and liberating representation or textual production. Whereas Beat writing is often read as critiquing and seeking to undermine mass culture, the work of these two writers also simultaneously makes significant use of elements of it. This thesis explores these relationships with the dominant culture that are often overlooked in mythologizing the Beats.

[14] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December 1950, Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin, 1996) 246.
[15] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April, 1952, Letters of William S.Burroughs, 1945-59, ed. Oliver Harris (London: Picador, 1993) 121.

Kerouac's awareness of the significance of different media is highlighted in his very conscious choice of communications methods, particularly with regard to writing. For example an extract from his journal entry for February 1948 reads: "Started all over again *in pencil* which has now proven itself the only way to write sincerely and sensibly. My thoughts can never keep up with a typewriter machine."[16] This makes it sound as though the typewriter actually goes too fast for him at this stage – it is possible, because as Nicosia points out, Kerouac had learned to speed-type at a young age.[17] Moreover, the fact that Kerouac connects pencil writing with "sincerity" suggests that he feels more of an attachment to his writing when he is transmitting it as directly as possible onto the page from his own hand. This is evidenced in one of Kerouac's earlier observations that "Sometimes my effort at writing becomes so fluid and smooth that too much is torn out of me at once, and it hurts."[18] The writing exists as part of him, and putting it down on paper is a physical act which he describes here as a sometimes painful and almost violent process of removal from his body.[19] As Kerouac regards the text that he has written as a physical part of him, it makes sense that the less mediation that it has to go through to reach the page, the more "sincere" it is likely to be. As Scott Bukatman recognises, "[Friedrich] Kittler makes a valuable distinction between a handwriting that *appears as* a direct emanation from the body, from nature, and a typewriting that is clearly mediated by cultural systems."[20] Bukatman emphasises here that handwriting is in fact in no way any more natural than the process of typewriting as it is still a way of translating

[16] Jack Kerouac, Windblown World: The Journals of Jack Kerouac 1947-1954, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: Penguin, 2006) 53. Kerouac's emphasis.
[17] Gerald Nicosia, Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac (N.p.: Grove Press, 1983) 33.
[18] Kerouac, Windblown World 29. Ellipses in published text.
[19] Again later on he describes writing as "bloodletting" (Kerouac, Windblown World 57).
[20] Scott Bukatman, Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 635.

experience into cultural sign-systems, but for Kerouac the technology seems to place further distance between himself and his writing.

Kerouac very much seems to view it as his responsibility as an artist to record as much of life as he possibly can, and he describes "the terror of knowing that I can't keep up with all of it. It's like finding a river of flowing gold when you haven't even got a cup to save a cupfull [sic] . . . you've but a thimble and that thimble is your pathetic brain and labor and humanness."[21] Indeed, as Ann Douglas points out, "In the age that invented the idea of classified information, Kerouac's effort was to *de*classify the secrets of the human body and soul. … sheer radically intimate expressiveness undid collective programming."[22] To this end, Kerouac experimented with a variety of ways to record as fully as possible the events of his life, focussing on achieving honesty and personal confession in his work. These methods included sketching and spontaneous prose, as well as later experiments with tape recorders. He also attempted to use the typewriter in different ways, and he exploited the technology by adapting it for his purposes, most notably and notoriously by typing on scrolls of paper. According to Ann Charters, Kerouac "was convinced that his verbal flow was hampered when he had to change paper at the end of a page," so his scroll experiments constituted an attempt to counter that, in order to achieve free-flowing prose.[23]

Long before Kerouac and Burroughs, the typewriter had, of course, played a significant role for creative writers, becoming in Lisa Gitelman's words "a sort of object-muse, a fetish in the creative processes of Henry James, William Carlos Williams, Ezra

[21] Kerouac, Windblown World 92.
[22] Ann Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic, by Jack Kerouac (London: Penguin, 2001) xiv.
[23] Ann Charters, introduction, On The Road, by Jack Kerouac (London: Penguin, 1991) xix.

Pound and many others."[24] Though Twain had pointed to its ability to "PILE AN AWFUL STACK OF WORDS ON ONE PAGE" it is significant that many of these writers were not using the typewriter to facilitate an unmediated flow or speed.[25] Pound and Williams were as interested in the place of words on the page as the flow – though Pound did describe himself as a "highly mechanized typing volcano." Kerouac's association of the typewriter with speed and his habit of filling pages to the margins has led to misreadings of his experiments with fast working, with Truman Capote famously dismissing On The Road with the comment "'That's not writing, that's typewriting.'"[26] Indeed, Tim Hunt's observation is pertinent in its suggestion that:

> As our avidity for Kerouac biographies attests, we're still apt to dismiss his writing as typewriting and focus more on Kerouac as a central, representative figure in this crucial cultural episode. His accounts of his travels and travails are too 'real' in what they report, too naked in their confessional introspection to be mere literature.[27]

My approach to Kerouac will take up precisely what it would mean to see his work as 'typewriting', and will aim to see him and Burroughs textually and contextually rather than in reductively biographical terms. As I demonstrate in chapter one, Kerouac's experiments with fast working on a scroll of paper were in fact an attempt to capture the detail and richness of experience in his prose, as were his experiments with new

[24] Lisa Gitelman, Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era (Stanford, Ca: Stanford UP, 1999) 218.
[25] Gitelman, 192.
[26] Capote, qtd in Tim Hunt, Kerouac's Crooked Road: The Development of A Fiction (University of California Press: London, 1996) xiii.
[27] Hunt, xiii, xiv.

compositional techniques. In focusing on the material processes surrounding the production of the texts I hope to unearth a dialogue between text and context.

For Burroughs, it is the space between words that becomes his focus of experimentation and in relation to this, Gitelman's description of space in terms of typewriting is apt:

> The newest immediate aspect of such textuality was probably the sound of blank space, as the spaces between words and lines of type had to be created, rather than simply 'left' blank as they were in the production of handwritten pages. In typewriting, space on the page was *made* as well as *used*: writing newly involved 'writing space.'[28]

Burroughs mentions the importance of the typewriter to his writing process at several points in his letters. In a letter to Ginsberg in 1954, Burroughs writes that he is "downright incapacitated without a typewriter" and later in the same letter, "this writing in long-hand is extremely exhausting."[29] Burroughs did not simply experiment with the layout of words on a page in terms of making use of space. After 1959 he would go on to experiment with a wide variety of cut-up techniques, again highlighting the importance of material practice, as he quite literally began to take a pair of scissors to pages of printed text in order to open up new spaces between words and phrases.

Whilst the materiality of writing is important, as Oliver Harris recognises, for the Beats there is also a link between writing in particular correspondence and orality, and indeed both Kerouac and Burroughs describe letter writing as akin to having a conversation at times. Burroughs, for example explains in a letter to Ginsberg in 1952

[28] Gitelman, 218.
[29] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 13 December, 1954, Letters 243, 244.

that "I just wrote [to Marker] because it was as near as I could come to contact with him like I was talking to him." [30] In the case of Kerouac, his interest in the sounds of words is highlighted in his representation of the radio in his texts, especially spoken-word plays. His attempts to portray conversation and speech also mean that he begins to make extensive use of the dash in his work in order to demarcate the breath space, and I discuss this in chapter three. His interest in conversational forms also leads him to experiment with alternative ways of representing the dynamic process of conversation and shared recollection, and he and Neal Cassady would experiment with tape recorders in an effort to capture this, offering new explorations of the processes of memory and recall. These experiments were fictionalised in Kerouac's work Visions of Cody and are discussed in chapter four.

Burroughs makes use of correspondence in order to develop the routine form, which specifically requires an audience or 'receiver,' and is a stylised act or performance based on oral forms of communication such as stand-up comedy or vaudeville performance. Burroughs also makes more direct use of postwar developments in science fiction to present dystopian visions within his work. His interest in communications is reflected in his more fundamental use of the growing field of cybernetics, particularly within his correspondence, as I discuss in chapter five. The term cybernetics was coined in 1948 by Norbert Wiener[31] who defined it as:

> Not only the study of language but the study of messages as a means of controlling machinery and society, the development of computing machines and

[30] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 4 June 1952, Letters 129.
[31] Although David Mindell points out that this by no means marks the first consideration of human-machine interaction, and his work seeks to trace its origins through the history of engineering and manufacturing. David Mindell, Between Human & Machine: Feedback, Control and Computing before Cybernetics (N.p.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 283.

other such automata, certain reflections upon psychology and the nervous system, and a tentative new theory of scientific method.[32]

Cybernetics is therefore the science of understanding all sorts of systems, both biological and mechanical in terms of feedback-controlled systems – that is to say a two-way process of information transmission and reception. Both the organic and the technological could now be conceived of as informational code, meaning that "any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code can be constructed for processing signals in a common language."[33] Thus cybernetics can be understood as "an ultimate science of control over communication, seeking laws governing the flow of information in any system, whether mechanical or human or something in between, a model or metaphor."[34] These rules of communication also potentially eliminate any random elements from the communications process, enabling outcomes to be predicted and controlled, which has fundamental implications if human systems are seen as effortlessly controllable by the same processes as mechanical systems.

Burroughs' work displays a keen interest in these themes. His writing deliberately blurs the boundaries between organic and mechanical, and in fact between science and fiction, so that conventional metaphors of body as machine become quite literal. Burroughs' interest in science fiction is reflected in his depiction of a speech made by an electronic engineer at a National Electronics Conference in 1956 in his text Naked Lunch (1959). The speech postulates a paranoid science fiction fantasy of a totalitarian technological future, and Burroughs' reproduction of part of the speech

[32] Norbert Wiener, The Human Use of Human Beings. (London: Sphere Books, 1968) 17.
[33] Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs And Women: The Reinvention of Nature (London: Free Association, 1991) 163.
[34] David Porush, The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction (London: Methuen, Inc. 1985) 21.

almost verbatim in Naked Lunch highlights how technological advances in America at mid-century were such that it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between science and science fiction.[35] Vance Packard had also used the extract from the Chicago conference in his book The Hidden Persuaders (1957) as a serious, if extreme example of the potential future control that could be wielded by both the advertising industry and the State. He suggested that technological advances would see advertisers moving away from the *psychological* manipulation that was prevalent in the Fifties, towards the more sinister possibility of biocontrol. Packard's text provides an excellent example of the extent to which technoparanoia had seeped into the American consciousness during the postwar period. Moreover, it is evident that fears over the rapid development of technology were closely linked to anxiety surrounding the spread of mass culture through advertising and as both technology and mass culture apparently sought to deny the autonomy of the individual, in combination they could be extremely powerful. Jack Kerouac's short story "cityCityCITY" (1959), also explores the potent role of science within the social imaginary. One of his most critically overlooked works, and one which, uncharacteristically for Kerouac, focuses sharply on the technological, the story depicts a society in which people are obliged to wear a

> Brow Multivision set, just a little rubber disc adhering to the brow, turned on and off at the breast control; the sensation to a newcomer was of seeing, hearing,

[35] "'The ultimate achievement of biocontrol may be the control of man himself. . . . The controlled subjects would never be permitted to think as individuals. A few months after birth, a surgeon would equip each child with a socket mounted under the scalp and electrodes reaching selected areas of brain tissue. . . . The child's sensory perceptions and muscular activity could be either modified or completely controlled by bioelectric signals from state-controlled transmitters.'" Curtiss R. Schafer, National Electronics Conference, Chicago 1956. qtd in Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders (London: Penguin, 1991) 196. "'Shortly after birth a surgeon could install connections in the brain. A miniature radio receiver could be plugged in and the subject controlled from State-controlled transmitters.'" William S. Burroughs, Naked Lunch (New York: Grove Weidenfield, 1992) 148.

> smelling, tasting, feeling and thinking the sensation of the vision, which was being waved out of Master Center Love Multivision Studios.[36]

The Brow Multivision set is also able to transmit advertising in the manner that Packard suggests. Thus a "commercial came on and [the wearer] felt a delicious wave of ecstasy from some spiel about a new Drug."[37] Kerouac's text highlights the potential for technology to be employed by a variety of sources not only to manipulate a particular aspect of the individual, but in fact to have the ability to exercise complete control over them. Although these themes are fairly unusual for Kerouac, as we will see, there is evidence of his concern with media manipulation elsewhere in his texts and this is significant as it exemplifies a deeper engagement with social issues than is often recognised in criticism of his work.

The relationship between technology, consumerism and political control was a subject of great anxiety in postwar America, and the issues raised by potential technological advances were being explored in ways that trouble any sharp distinction between science and science fiction, as well as reflecting concerns over the relation of the individual and individual freedom and creativity to political control. What is striking about the culture of the Fifties is how often it is possible to identify not only a panic about control of the individual from above or outside (which Timothy Melley terms 'agency panic'), but also a profound uneasiness about society itself, which is increasingly regarded in terms of undifferentiated mass rather than an organic community of

[36] Jack Kerouac, "cityCityCITY," Good Blonde & Others, ed. Donald Allen (Minneapolis: Grey Fox Press, 2001) 191-92.
[37] Kerouac, "cityCityCITY," 192.

differentiated individuals.[38] As Melley recognises, in works such as William Whyte's The Organization Man and David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd, technological changes that allowed mass communications to develop are seen as creating or exacerbating this 'massification' and standardisation, and as increasing the control and surveillance which reduces all individuals to the same units or ciphers.[39] The perceived social danger of the dissemination of mass culture through mass media technologies, and the rise of a consumer culture that was aided by the media, were subjects that elicited strong and often emotive debate, as they were deemed to have profound implications for the future of American society in their fundamental threat to the individual.

One important aspect of this sense of the endangered individual self was the sense that the integrity and privacy of the body, a theme highlighted in Beat writers and in the reactions to them. This ranged from the celebration of the body in sexuality and nakedness, as in Ginsberg, to Kerouac's use of the body as locus of spontaneous feeling to Burroughs' much more negative focus on the body. The threat to the integrity of the organic body is also found in social commentators and in science fiction writers of the time in the form of technological penetration of the boundaries of the human body with electrodes, radio receivers and the like in order to provide an actual physical attachment to a system of control. This was not an unusual anxiety during this period, and as Katherine Hayles recognises, during the postwar years one of the most radical and potentially disturbing ideas which arose from scientific research was the notion that the

[38] Timothy Melley, Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) vii.
[39] Melley, 6.

boundaries of the subject were constructed, not given.[40] The subject was under threat as not only could the mind be connected into an overarching system of control, it appeared that the physical body was no longer adequate in delimiting the boundaries of the individual, since it too could be extended or redefined.

Where such general scientific ideas intersect with the direct technical concerns of the writer is through the increased stress on the media of representation, which become not just an apparently neutral tool in representing human consciousness and subjectivity, but the shaper and controller of that consciousness. Marshall McLuhan amongst others broached this crucial issue during the period, and as well as offering a history of earlier technologies McLuhan's work identifies and compiles the many ways in which the individual is affected by modern technology: through media, through advertising, and through social and corporate structures. Beginning with detailed work on the effect of advertising in The Mechanical Bride (1951), and going on to research the effects of various media on the individual, by 1964 he was contending that:

> Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man – the technological stimulation of consciousness, when the collective process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media. Whether the extension of consciousness, so long

[40] N. Katherine Hayles, How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 84.

> sought after by advertisers for specific products, will be 'a good thing' is a question that admits of a wide solution.[41]

Whilst McLuhan understands the dangers inherent in this kind of reimagining of the boundaries of the individual, he tends to regard it in a more positive light than many of his contemporaries. Central to his understanding of technological society is his assertion that:

> As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree. It is this implosive factor that alters the position of the Negro, the teen-ager, and some other groups. They can no longer be *contained*, in the political sense of limited association. They are now *involved* in our lives, as we in theirs, thanks to the electric media.[42]

He argues that this sense of participation is leading to a fundamental change in the way people view themselves in relation to others, and he regards the loss of the "partial and specialized viewpoint" as potentially extremely liberating.[43] McLuhan is a key figure in the history of culture and technological thought and his work has particular relevance to my studies given the period in which his three major works, The Mechanical Bride, (1951) The Gutenberg Galaxy, (1962) and Understanding Media (1964) were published. McLuhan's positive view of technology as a counterpoint to the dominant perspective in the Fifties can be seen as a link to more recent critical theory. Hayles, for example, points

[41] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) 3-4.
[42] McLuhan, Understanding Media 5.
[43] McLuhan, Understanding Media 5.

to McLuhan's radical perspective: "McLuhan clearly sees that electronic media are capable of bringing about a reconfiguration so extensive as to change the nature of 'man.'"[44] Hayles sees McLuhan's view of the technologically extended nervous system as moving distinctly towards ideas of the 'posthuman'. Thus McLuhan, in demonstrating the potential for positive relationships between human and machine, is extremely forward-looking in one sense. Some caution must be exercised, though, as McLuhan's radicalism is premised upon a conservative implicitly Catholic viewpoint. This is particularly noticeable in terms of his view of the body, in that he sees the new electronic technologies as providing the opportunity for a return to a state of primitive wholeness by extending and unifying man. It is in fact McLuhan's focus on the return to a pre-lapsarian state which separates his theory from postmodern conceptions, but which also links his ideas to Kerouac.

If McLuhan and Wiener provide a context contemporary to Kerouac and Burroughs, then the later work of Donna Haraway allows me to link these ideas with more recent critical theory, and offer a way into Burroughs' more radical uses of cybernetic ideas. Burroughs has been described after all as having "acted as godfather for literary countercultures from the Beats to the Cyberpunks."[45] However, whilst it is important to trace the points of contact and difference in these theories, this is not to imply a linear model whereby the current critical paradigm enjoys automatic preference over the older, or vice versa. Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1983) employs the image of the cyborg specifically as a metaphor to invite new readings of feminist politics. Her interest in the cyborg lies in its potential for "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions,

[44] Hayles, Posthuman 34.
[45] Oliver Harris, "Can You See a Virus? The Queer Cold War of William Burroughs," Journal of American Studies 33.2 (1999): 243.

and dangerous possibilities."[46] This is because she believes that the myth of objective consciousness has resulted in "escalating dominations of abstract individuation," which in turn create binary divisions from which power structures arise.[47] Based upon hybridity and refusing any biological essentialism, Haraway's cyborg serves as a useful critical paradigm for understanding work that deals with issues of totalitarianism and control. Similarly, Burroughs also understands that binary divisions are extremely dangerous: "Dualism is the whole basis of this planet – good and evil, communism, fascism, man, woman, etc. As soon as you have a formula like that, of course you're going to have trouble."[48] Neither does Burroughs see that there is any easy solution to this dualism, as he recognises that "It isn't a question of [each side] just getting together and loving each other: they can't, 'cause their interests are not the same."[49] Haraway therefore proposes a solution to this problem. Rather than arguing for collectivism, Haraway's cyborg is "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence."[50] As a utopian construct, Haraway's reading of the possibilities presented by the integration of the organic and the mechanical in particular offers a positive way of reading breaches of the boundaries of the subject, and is therefore extremely useful when applied to Burroughs' texts.

Haraway's cyborg resists subjectivity, since any kind of singular standpoint, whether it makes claims to objectivity or subjectivity, is still based on the idea of an organic, unified whole that the cyborg denies. This also makes it a particularly useful tool for interrogating Kerouac's project, with his focus on the importance of the unified

[46] Haraway, Simians 154.
[47] Haraway, Simians 151.
[48] Daniel Odier, The Job: Interviews with William S. Burroughs (New York: Penguin, 1989) 97.
[49] William S.Burroughs, qtd in Odier, The Job 97.
[50] Haraway, Simians 151.

individual. Indeed, Leo Marx contends that Beat writers demonstrated a belief that "only a final, desperate mobilization of the organic – the human body conceived as the ultimate repository of the natural – could overcome the forms of political organization and domination associated with industrial technology."[51] Whilst this claim is rather too simplistic to be easily applied to Burroughs' work, it certainly appears to be Kerouac's aim, particularly in his earlier texts.

For the purpose of this thesis against this wider critical framework, it is the technologies employed by Kerouac and Burroughs and represented by them in their texts that are of particular interest, especially the ways that they use and represent technology as a means of exploring the limits of personal freedom and creativity. In terms of Kerouac and Burroughs' use of technology in the composition of their texts, the thesis investigates Kerouac's development of new methods of composition such as sketching and spontaneous prose, and his use of particular modes of production such as typing onto a scroll of paper. In chapter one I explore this mode of composition with reference to On The Road, and in chapter two I look at Kerouac's representation of a variety of media including the printed word and the radio in Doctor Sax. Letters, written or typed, are also important in the composition of Kerouac's work, and chapter three looks at how the epistolary form becomes part of the text itself in The Subterraneans. Kerouac's experiments with using a tape recorder as part of the composition process also produce important innovations, as portrayed in Visions of Cody, which will be the subject of chapter four. In Burroughs' work, I look at the cybernetic aspects of Burroughs' epistolary practices in the composition of Junky and Queer in chapter five. In chapter six

[51] Leo Marx, The Pilot and the Passenger: Essays on Literature, Technology, and Culture in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 199.

I explore his use of space in the layout of the text of Naked Lunch before examining his use of the cut-up method in the Nova trilogy, as well as his experiments with tape recording in chapter seven.

1. On The Road: Driving, Writing and Typing.

Tim Hunt has managed to disentangle the complex timeline of Kerouac's writing process, working out that "Kerouac began Doctor Sax immediately after The Town and the City in October 1948, abandoned it in his initial excitement over On the Road and factualism, then dabbled with it at various points during the work on On the Road, and completed it finally in 1952 in several months of intense work after finishing Visions of Cody."[1] Subsequently, the original draft of The Subterraneans was written in 3 days in October 1953, and it is these four texts – On the Road, Doctor Sax, The Subterraneans and Visions of Cody – that the thesis will examine in detail.[2] As Hunt establishes, the groundwork for each of these texts was being laid in close conjunction with work on the other texts, so that the period from roughly 1948 – 1953 marks the height of Kerouac's early experimentalism and is a key phase in terms of the development of his techniques of sketching, spontaneous prose and wild form. The thesis is not a genetic study, and as such will not focus on original manuscripts, but rather will make use of the published versions of the texts. In some cases these were published long after the writing had been completed, but the dates of composition are relevant in enabling us to group the texts as evidence of the development of Kerouac's new writing styles. My study examines the ways specific technologies appear thematically in these texts as well as the ways in which

[1] Hunt, Crooked Road 86.
[2] According to Ann Charters, The Subterraneans was "written in [Kerouac's] mother's kitchen in October [1953] in three all-night marathon typing sessions fuelled by Benzedrine." Kerouac, Selected Letters 401.

the texts demonstrate Kerouac's development of his own technologies of writing in creating new forms.

In examining Kerouac's portrayal and use of technology, my interest lies in the way that Kerouac often presents particular objects such as the radio and phonograph as having occult or magical significance. The technology is never something that simply advances, but always carries with it a mixture of the old and the new and the magical. Kerouac regularly makes use of everyday items, which at some stage of their development represented the future, to evoke a strong sense of history and the uncanny within his writing. Kerouac's work is multi-layered, containing elements of dream, memory, travelogue and movement between past and present, and it is his move away from traditional narrative structures and development of new techniques that allows him to intertwine these elements of the material and immaterial. The popular conception of Kerouac as Beat writer has tended to focus on the idea of type-writing and the automobile as exemplifying the image of freedom, spontaneity and forward momentum, but my approach here will be to tease out the relations to other technologies such as radio, film and tape, and the more complex associations involved in his work. In particular I want to explore the ways in which the use and depiction of technology is rarely positive or futuristic, and more often serves to heighten the sense of the phantasmagoric and the haunting presence of the past in his work.[3] Technology is portrayed as a potential mode of truth-telling (for example the tape-recorder in Visions of Cody) or as a channel into the mythic American past (the radio and the phonograph in Doctor Sax; the car in On the Road). Paradoxically, rather than offering the bright future of postwar commercial advertising, technology is often bound up with nostalgia for this larger mythic past, or

[3] Kerouac's short story "cityCityCITY" is a notable and interesting exception.

serves to evoke more personal memories and myths of childhood. In some of its forms it seems to provide a route to discover what is real or essential beneath the layers of culture and memory, but at the same time it harbours ghosts of the past, and is regularly described in terms of haunting. Kerouac's world is never silent, or simply about the present moment, for as much as he might try to focus on one moment in time he is constantly surrounded and interrupted by voices from the past, whether in the form of his own memories or the continual awareness of others. There is always a palimpsest of history and other voices underneath his writing that he seems highly conscious of and often draws attention to. Though this is particularly evident in Doctor Sax I also want to show some of the same elements in what follows on On The Road.

On The Road is generally regarded by critics as a prime example of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method.[4] It is often aligned with his methodological pieces, namely "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" and "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose" and read as Kerouac's key text, outside of any wider contextualisation of the work that would see it as part of a gradual development of his narrative form. This approach is problematic, as Kerouac completed his scroll version of On The Road in 1951, but did not complete his essays on style until two years later in 1953. Moreover, at the time of writing On The Road, Kerouac did not describe his writing style as spontaneous prose. In fact the development of a 'spontaneous prose' style did not truly come until after the scroll of On The Road was complete, which should suggest caution in reading it as embodying all the qualities explored and advocated in his essays. This chapter aims to unpick the development of his writing style more carefully, looking at letters and journals to trace

[4] See for example Regina Weinreich, The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac: A Study of the Fiction (New York: Paragon House, 1990) 39-56. Also Daniel Belgrad, The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation & The Arts in Postwar America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 204-06.

how the 1951 scroll version of On The Road came about, and to explore the production of the text in detail. It also looks at the ways in which Kerouac used correspondence during this period in his search for a voice. This will allow for a re-reading of the text that sees it as a carefully crafted piece of work that reflects Kerouac's interest in orality and how to represent or re-perform it textually. The conjunction of a technique which can catch the spontaneity and freshness of speech and the portrayal of a lifestyle which seems to exemplify the parallel freedom and spontaneity encourages a link between the paper unrolling in the machine and the road under the car, but this chapter also examines Kerouac's representation of the car as a space for conversations to take place, and the way in which it is presented as a technology that facilitates reflection on the national landscape as well as displacement within it. This re-evaluation does not regard the text as a complete departure from his earlier work, notably The Town and the City, but rather as part of an evolution of Kerouac's stylistic practice. It will also show, though, that concerns with technologies of representation are present at various levels, leading Kerouac to further experiment with his later texts.

Kerouac's letters and journals document his early years of work on On The Road and mark a key period in his development as a writer, as he struggles to find an adequate mode of expression. It is evident from these sources that Kerouac is determined that this text will mark a stylistic departure from The Town and the City and he searches for a new style that will allow him to experiment more radically. In August 1948, Kerouac mentions On The Road in his notes for the first time, in conjunction with "a new principle of writing" that he promises to elaborate upon in future entries.[5] A few days later he defines this new principle as "'True thoughts,' my new concept mentioned earlier

[5] Kerouac, Windblown World 123.

. . . the thoughts that come unannounced, unplanned, unforced, vividly *true* in their dazzling light."[6] In September 1948 he talks of his intention to write a new book "in one long clip without a pause" although here it is not On The Road but another piece that he has in mind.[7] A year later, in 1949, Kerouac reports that he "wrote 6000 words of 'On The Road,' but roughly, swiftly, experimentally – want to see how much a man can do. Will know soon."[8] There is a sense here that what Kerouac is attempting to develop is not only experimental in terms of form, but also in pushing the physical and emotional boundaries of the writer as he sets himself a challenge to "see how much a man can do" in order to thoroughly test his own limits. This highlights the physicality of writing for Kerouac, as the act of writing is never simply a mental effort, but always affects his body as well.[9] Given that Kerouac worked for so long on On The Road and was determined to find the emergence of his own narrative voice for it, this period marks a very significant stage in his growth as a writer. His development of form at this stage also impacts dramatically on the works that follow, namely Doctor Sax and The Subterraneans, and it is only in the composition of this latter text in 1953 that Kerouac fully employed his methods of spontaneous prose, which by then he had fully defined in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose."[10]

Throughout 1948 and 1949, Kerouac's journals chart his progress on On The Road, but this text is evidently a very different book to the one eventually published under that name. In spite of earlier entries which suggest that Kerouac is moving towards

[6] Kerouac, Windblown World 125. Kerouac's ellipses.
[7] Kerouac, Windblown World 129.
[8] Kerouac, Windblown World 165.
[9] According to Gerald Nicosia, the immense physical effort of typing the scroll version of On The Road meant that Kerouac "was sweating so badly he went through dozens of T-shirts a day." Nicosia, Memory Babe 343.
[10] Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," The Penguin Book of the Beats, ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin, 1992).

a fast, free writing style, late in 1949 he decides "that I will have to get used to writing slower than before. . . twice as slow. On The Road is rich, and moves along richly, with a great deal of depth in every line."[11] Thus whilst On The Road is often discussed in terms of speed, particularly in terms of its composition, Kerouac's original conception of the work suggests something entirely different. This desire to capture as much detail as possible becomes part of the process of writing, but although there seems to be a dichotomy here between fast working in terms of composing quickly and slow working in terms of methodically capturing every tiny detail, the two ideas are in fact linked: the physical process of writing speeds up while the passage of time represented gets slower, as more detail, produced by the less selective, more spontaneous form of composition, is included. Taken to its ultimate, the full account of the present, drenched with memory and associations, becomes a stasis, a move into the past, even while it is being furiously produced and represented, as is seen more clearly in Doctor Sax.

It is in an exchange of letters with Neal Cassady in late 1950 and early 1951 where Kerouac finally manages to find what he regards as a satisfactory mode in which to express himself. These letters give a real insight into the development of Kerouac's narrative form, based on some of the ideas that he had already been thinking about and experimenting with for some time, and it is through these letters that Kerouac finally finds a way to consolidate his experiments into a coherent mode of self-expression. Throughout the autumn of 1950, Kerouac and Cassady exchanged long letters in an attempt to tell their life stories. In one Kerouac explains to Cassady "I've been trying to find my voice" because "my important recent discovery and revelation is that the voice is

[11] Kerouac, Windblown World 244.

all."[12] He goes on to clarify that "this voice I now speak in, is the voice I use when writing to YOU."[13] Having identified his true voice as that which he uses in communication with Cassady, this prompts him in December 1950 to write "the confession of his life" to Neal.[14] He is determined that "in this confession I will travel again the experiences already written by me for the fiction-work (T&C) and tear them down systematically; have come to believe, like you, bullshit is bullshit. Everything's got to go this time."[15] Kerouac decides that there is a need for complete honesty and truth in his writing, but he confides to Cassady that he is in fact "haunted by the feeling that I am false." He also finds it very difficult to write completely freely and without inhibition, noting that his work tends to be "written with the mysterious outside reader, who is certainly not God, bending over my shoulder."[16] This 'mysterious reader' constrains his writing, forcing it into a 'literary' style rather than allowing him to simply say whatever he wants to in the way that he feels most comfortable: "I yearn to be non-literary."[17] However, before starting his confession he assures Cassady, "I have renounced fiction and fear. There is nothing to do but write the truth. There is no other reason to write. I have to write because of the compulsion in me."[18]

After another confessional letter to Cassady on January 3rd 1951, a week later on January 8th, Kerouac complains of the struggle to write freely and personally to Neal. He has once again been overcome by "a twinge of guilt that I would bore 'the reader.' Yes,

[12] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 6 October, 1950, Selected Letters, 233.
[13] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 6 October, 1950, Selected Letters, 233. Kerouac's emphasis.
[14] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 246.
[15] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 247.
[16] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 247.
[17] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 248.
[18] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 248.

the 'mysterious reader re-entered lately."[19] He goes on to explain that he wants to write to Cassady "just as though you and I were driving across the old U.S.A. in the night, with no mysterious readers, no literary demands, nothing but us telling . . . 'telling easily the million things we know,' as I said in 1947 in my crazy notebooks."[20] It is this style that he identifies for use in writing to Cassady from this point on, experimenting in letters with the form that he would later use for the scroll version of On The Road. It is clear that there will be no attempt to craft something that conforms to traditional ideas of the 'literary.' Rather the emphasis is on portraying the intimacy between two close friends sharing stories with one another. The writing will be fluid, in the same way that conversation flows naturally between two people and in the way that personal stories can be easily told, without regard for any particular style or form and without fear of being critically appraised.[21]

This will, though, be a constant challenge for Kerouac: he is writing for publication but equally he claims that he does not wish his prose to be compromised in any way by writing with an awareness of his potentially critical audience. This applies not just to his novels but also to his letters. Whilst the letters are private exchanges between himself and Neal Cassady, equally Kerouac is quite well aware that his letters may have some publishable value in the future – he tells Neal to either "burn" the letters he sends to him, or otherwise "keep them, to hand, personally, to Giroux the editor of

[19] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 8 January 1951, Selected Letters, 273. In the same letter he describes the "mysterious reader as "my grand auditor," (274) providing an interesting parallel to Burroughs' later experiments with Scientology.
[20] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 8 January 1951, Selected Letters, 274. Kerouac's ellipsis.
[21] As Kerouac explains in an interview just a year before his death, "Did you ever hear a guy telling a long wild tale to a bunch of men in a bar and all are listening and smiling, did you ever hear that guy stop to revise himself, go back to a previous sentence to improve it?" (Jack Kerouac, interview, The Paris Review Interviews ed. George Plimpton (London: Harvill, 1999) 107.)

Harcourt-Brace."[22] The letters to (and from) Cassady form a key part of Kerouac's development of a prose style, and as Oliver Harris explains:

> Kerouac is working toward a form of unchecked epistolary discourse, a paradox described in another context by Simon Bishoff: 'It is a dialogue with an absent partner, potentiated dialogue, an infinite and unhindered stream of monologue' (45). And this version of orality, as Hunt has ably demonstrated, was vital for Kerouac's development of a subjective, idiomatic, first-person narrative voice, a development that shaped his entire writing career after his debut novel, The Town and the City.[23]

This narrative quality is illustrated perfectly in Kerouac's letter to Cassady on May 22nd 1951, his first to him since the completion of the scroll version of On The Road. Kerouac writes, "Now you also know why I haven't written lately – novelwork- and soon as I finish I write you huge letter telling EVERYTHING about N.Y. Jerry Newman gossip etc. All. Don't have to write back – let me write all our letters."[24] Kerouac, it seems, has now found his own voice, and although it is the voice that he uses in conversation with Cassady, it is now so strong that Kerouac suggests ironically that he no longer needs

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[22] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December, 1950, Selected Letters, 246.

[23] Oliver Harris, "Cold War Correspondents," 183. Although Kerouac here seems to be almost bypassing Cassady , no longer needing his letters, Cassady's prose style had a significant influence on Kerouac's development of his own narrative form. Kerouac admits this, and describes how the style of Cassady's letters enabled him to write On The Road as they were "all first person, fast, mad, confessional, completely serious, all detailed." (Jack Kerouac, interview, The Paris Review Interviews 108.) The influence of Cassady is also evident in Kerouac's letters, so for example in October 1950, Kerouac praises Neal's recent letter to him: "You, man, must write exactly as everything rushes into your head and AT ONCE. The pain of writing is just that . . . cramps in the hand, nothing else, of course." (Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 6 October 1950, Selected Letters, 233.) He also writes to Neal in December 1950, telling him to "keep it kickwriting at all costs too, that is, write only what kicks you and keeps you overtime awake from sheer mad joy." (Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 27 December 1950, Selected Letters, 242.) In the same letter, he also praises Neal's recent letter as it was written with "painful rapidity" and implores him not to undervalue "your excruciating details." (Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 27 December 1950, Selected Letters, 243.)

[24] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 22 May 1951, Selected Letters, 317.

any kind of reciprocity from Cassady at all, to the extent that he is happy for their epistolary discourse to now function entirely one-way.

The notion of the Kerouac-Cassady letters as "an infinite and unhindered stream of monologue" is also highlighted at the end of Kerouac's December 28th letter where he implores Cassady to "forgive me for anything but listen, just listen, as long as you listen I'll be alright."[25] Pleading with Cassady to listen rather than read implies that Kerouac still understands these letters to be in essence a form of oral exchange, although Cassady will here act as a silent partner – an audience for Kerouac, who will keep talking (writing) as long as he is confident that there is someone listening.[26] This desire for the spoken word is affirmed in an earlier letter from Kerouac where he tells Cassady: "Well man, it's one of those nights when I'd much rather talk to you than write it. Please don't abandon tape-recorder."[27] Writing is here portrayed as an inferior form of communication to the spoken word, perhaps simply because it seems to be more laborious but possibly also because oral speech seems somehow more personal, and connects two people more adequately. Kerouac is evidently keen to hear Cassady's voice rather than simply writing and receiving letters from him, and his intention in On The Road to write in such a manner that the voice he uses is that used when speaking to Cassady again highlights the importance that Kerouac places on accurately capturing the nuances of oral speech on paper. In a letter to Cassady in October 1950, Kerouac

[25] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December 1950, Selected Letters, 262.
[26] As I shall discuss in later chapters, the need for someone to be listening is also central to William Burroughs' routine form.
[27] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 3 December 1950, Selected Letters, 238. Carolyn Cassady provides some details of Neal Cassady's tape experiments in her autobiography: Carolyn Cassady, Off The Road: My Years With Cassady, Kerouac, and Ginsberg (London: Penguin, 1991) 169-70.

discusses the importance of voice, beginning with descriptions of the tonal qualities of the voices of various baseball announcers on the radio. He goes on to tell Cassady:

> What I'm going to do is let the voices speak for themselves. I'm going to write one book in nigger dialect, another in bum dialect, another in hip-musician dialect, another in French-Canadian-English dialect, another in American-Mexican dialect, another in Indian dialect, another in cool dialect, and I might one day write a slim little volume narrated by an effeminate queer.[28]

Once he has found his own voice, Kerouac believes that he may also be able to find other voices that he can use in his writing, although this of course immediately raises serious issues over quite how he intends to "let the voices speak for themselves" rather than simply appropriating particular voices. There is no sense of the dangers inherent in speaking for others, particularly the marginalized groups he derogatively mentions here. Voices are central to the text of On The Road itself, and this is reflected in one of its most oft-quoted lines: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are *mad to talk*, mad to live, mad to be saved."[29] Whilst critics have regularly cited the importance of sound in On The Road, this is generally connected to the portrayal of music, particularly jazz, within the work, rather than with the oral forms within the novel.[30] The relationship between the printed word and oral speech is a recurrent theme in Kerouac's work. In October 1951, Kerouac writes to Neal that "Incidentally this ROAD is now really a book & will make something – Try reading it on your tape, slowly."[31] It is not clear precisely

[28] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 6 October 1950, Selected Letters, 233.
[29] Jack Kerouac, On The Road (London: Penguin, 1991) 8. My emphasis.
[30] See for example Warren Tallman's essay, "Kerouac's Sound" in A Casebook on the Beat ed. Thomas Parkinson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961) 215-229. Also Weinreich and Belgrad who focus how on the structure of Bebop jazz, involving improvisations on a theme or on a series of chords, influenced Kerouac's narrative style.
[31] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 9 October 1951, Selected Letters, 327.

which version of On The Road Kerouac is referring to here, but it is interesting that he specifies to Neal that the text should be read slowly, particularly as it is often regarded as a fast text with speed as the most important aspect. Instead this seems to return to Kerouac's earlier conception of the work as a rich, slow text, whilst also highlighting the importance of the voice.

During Sal's early experiences of being on the road he hitchhikes, and storytelling is central to this experience to the point that it becomes wearing: "one of the biggest troubles hitchhiking is having to talk to innumerable people, make them feel that they didn't make a mistake picking you up, even entertain them almost, all of which is a great strain."[32] Later on, the car journeys become the focus for experiments with language and with storytelling of the kind that later become central to Visions of Cody: "We all decided to tell our stories, but one by one, and Stan was first. 'We've got a long way to go,' preambled Dean, 'and so you must take every indulgence and deal with every single detail you can bring to mind – and still it won't all be told.'"[33] Here, paralleling the Kerouac-Cassady letters, Dean acts as "arbiter, old man, judge, listener, approver, nodder."[34] His role is that of providing affirmation and validity to others above all else – an almost silent partner. Dean's role evolves as the novel progresses, and later in the text the relationship between Sal and Dean becomes more equal in this respect as they begin to share their stories with each other:

> We were telling these things and both sweating. We had completely forgotten the people up front who had begun to wonder what was going on in the back seat. … the car was swaying as Dean and I both swayed to the rhythm and the IT of our

[32] Kerouac, On The Road 16.
[33] Kerouac, On The Road 269.
[34] Kerouac, On The Road 269.

> final excited joy in talking and living to the blank tranced end of all innumerable riotous angelic particulars that had been lurking in our souls all our lives.[35]

There is a double impulse reflected here, which runs through much of Kerouac's experimentalism – the desire to record everything, including the past, and to perform all this in the present moment. The car itself plays a significant role in providing a suitable space for these conversations to take place, and in his letters to Cassady, Kerouac makes the link between car journeys and the particular style of narrative that will finally allow him the freedom to write On The Road "just as if you and I were driving across the old U.S.A. in the night."[36] There is evidently something special about this experience that Kerouac wishes to capture within his prose, and the movement of the car and the darkness appear to be key facets of this experience. It is the sense of movement rather than the ultimate destination that is important, as well as perhaps the sense of privacy and containment in the car which gives a feeling of womb-like security and disconnection from the outside.[37]

The car's movement facilitates discussions because it displaces its passengers, allowing them to pass through race, class and gender boundaries. Whilst the car cannot offer any kind of ultimate escape from these dominant social narratives, it does temporarily insulate the characters in a state of transit, which can be seen as both movement and stasis. This enables the characters to traverse through these dominant narratives, meaning that the passengers are no longer bound by them and can thus talk

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[35] Kerouac, On the Road 208. Also see Jack Kerouac, Visions of Cody (London: Flamingo, 2001) 415-16.
[36] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 8 January 1951, Selected Letters, 274.
[37] The notion of the car as providing womb-like protection is exemplified by Sal's habit of retreating to the back seat when Dean's energy and propensity to cause road accidents by speeding become too much for him. (Kerouac, On The Road 234, 236.) Burroughs' short story "Driving Lesson" similarly figures the car as a safe womblike space and as a dangerous weapon, while raising questions of sexual identity. (William S. Burroughs, "Driving Lesson," Interzone, ed. James Grauerholz (New York: Penguin, 1989) 18-22.

freely. However, this sense of freedom is illusory as it always comes within the constraints of the car. There are some interesting parallels here to Robert Creeley's poem, "I Know A Man," which also brings together the acts of driving and performative talking:

As I sd to my
friend, because I am
always talking, - John I

sd, which was not his
name, the darkness sur-
rounds us, what

can we do against
it, or else, shall we &
why not, buy a goddamn big car,

drive, he sd, for
christ's sake, look
out where yr going.[38]

Creeley's much-discussed poem sets up at one level an opposition between words and actions, but at another level the poem itself is asserting, much as Kerouac does, a dynamic of speech and movement which are interlocking. The poem also connects driving with darkness and with conversation, as well as the need to move forward. The

[38]Robert Creeley, Poems, 1950-65 (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966) 38.

illusory sense of freedom offered by the car is also noted in the final stanza: it is crucial to "look / out where yr going". The poem suggests that a car can somehow hold off the darkness, and Kerouac also specifies the night as time for his conversations to take place. Talking at night in the car may offer the sensation of being isolated from the world whilst others are sleeping, and this may lead to a heightened appreciation of language. According to Marshall McLuhan, "If we sit and talk in a dark room, words suddenly acquire new meanings and different textures. … All those gestural qualities that the printed page strips from language come back in the dark, and on the radio."[39] In addition, darkness may also be related to the figuring of the car as confessional box in that it means that one cannot necessarily see the other person, while being highly aware of their presence. When regarded in this way, the act of telling one's story is thus no longer quite a free or willed act. Rather, the narrator is compelled to tell everything and to make an honest confession – perhaps there are fleeting senses of the car as confessional box – returning to Kerouac's assertion that "I have to write because of the compulsion in me" and again pointing to the lack of any real two-way dialogue.[40]

Louis Menand argues that in On The Road:

> The car is also a male space. The women who end up being driven in (never driving) the car are either shared by the guys (Marylou, for example, whom Dean hands off to Sal, as Cassady handed off LuAnne to Kerouac) or abandoned (as happens to the character Galatea Dunkel, and as happened to her real-life counterpart, Helen Hinkle). But the car is not an erotic space. Driving is a way for

[39] McLuhan, Understanding Media 303.
[40] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 28 December 1950, Selected Letters, 248.

men to be together without the need to answer questions about why they want to be together.[41]

As Menand mentions, the car provides a safe masculine environment and this is another reason that it is so important as a conversational space. However, whilst the car may be portrayed as a male-dominated space, it is also presented in the text as an ambiguously gendered object. The speed and power of the car act as an affirmation of male potency, as evidenced by Dean's reaction to a slower car on the road: "the car was what Dean called a 'fag Plymouth'; it had no pickup and no real power. 'Effeminate car!' whispered Dean in my ear."[42] At one point they obtain a Cadillac and use it in an attempt "to pick up girls all up and down Chicago."[43] They have no success, and in keeping with the idea of the car as reinforcing their masculinity, Sal believes this to be because the women "were frightened of our big, scarred, prophetic car."[44] Thus whilst the interior of the car in itself may not be an "erotic space," Menand overlooks the fact that it is often portrayed in ways that overtly link it to male sexuality. Interestingly, the car is also often referred to as female, or in quite feminine terms: "It was a magnificent car; it could hold the road …. Gradual curves were its singing ease"; "this old Ford can roll if y'know how to talk to her and ease her along"; "the car hugged the line"; "the poor Hudson … was receiving her beating."[45] This paradox is recognised by McLuhan, who observes in The Mechanical Bride that "there is a widespread acceptance of the car as a womb symbol and, paradoxically enough, as a phallic power symbol."[46] He observes that "The attempt

[41] Louis Menand, "Drive, He Wrote: What the Beats were about," The New Yorker 1 Oct. 2007.
[42] Kerouac, On The Road 206.
[43] Kerouac, On The Road 241.
[44] Kerouac, On The Road 241.
[45] Kerouac, On The Road 229, 271, 120, 134.
[46] Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1967) 84.

to represent speed and phallic power, so much in demand on the distaff side, is crossed up by the attempt to create a world of 'floating power' and womblike comfort and ease."[47] The car's various functions thus enable it to be regarded both as a symbol of masculinity and femininity, and throughout the text, the car acts as a technology that can not only move through but indeed also transcend gender and class boundaries.

The safety of the car's interior allows for dialogue, and throughout many of the conversations in On The Road, the radio provides background noise. Whilst the characters often listen to "wild bop to urge us on through the night," speech forms are also featured, and they listen to radio plays. A mystery play forms the backdrop to one of Sal and Dean's key experiences of the South.[48] With "the radio on to a mystery programme" one evening they make their way through Louisiana and into the swamps. Their imaginations turn to "'what it would be like if we found a jazzjoint in these swamps, with great big black fellas moanin guitar blues and drinkin snakejuice and makin signs at us'" and they convince themselves that "there were mysteries around here."[49] Shortly afterwards "we passed an apparition; it was a Negro man in a white shirt walking along with his arms upspread to the inky firmament. He must have been praying or calling down a curse. We zoomed right by; I looked out the back window to see his white eyes."[50] Sal projects onto the body of the African-American a ghostly and mysterious persona, imbued with magical powers, and particularly a very powerful body language of prayer or some kind of witchcraft. His white shirt is also seemingly an invitation to write the body, offering a blank page on to which Sal and Dean are able to

[47] McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride 84.
[48] Kerouac, On The Road 156.
[49] Kerouac, On The Road 157.
[50] Kerouac, On The Road 157.

project their fears of the unfamiliar. This relationship to writing is further highlighted as the body is seen in relief against the backdrop of the "inky firmament," with the repeated contrast of black and white evoking the printed page (a theme seen more clearly in Doctor Sax). As for the imagined "big black fellas," they are exoticised: "drinking snakejuice" and also somehow removed from language as they can only "moan" and "make signs." The African-American is viewed as an almost savage figure, and as a kind of totem, existing beyond the boundaries of white culture and connected to an 'authentic' oral culture. The white shirt also offers the possibility that the figure can effectively be written over. It has been argued that radio mystery and thriller programmes in the fifties and earlier "effectively represented the seductive and horrific power of the 'other.'"[51] Here, it appears that the radio mystery programme leads Sal and Dean to employ precisely this reading of the 'other' – in this case the people and landscape outside of the car – in order to try to make some sense of their surroundings.

This heightened sense of the mysterious continues, as Sal describes how a few minutes later they find themselves "surrounded by a great forest of viny trees in which we could almost hear the slither of a million copperheads. The only thing we could see was the red ampere button on the Hudson dashboard."[52] The light on the car radio here becomes the focus, and also provides the only reality as the snakes are purely imaginary: "we could almost hear… ." Once again the characters here project a sense of mystery and danger onto the outside world. Soon after this, the power of suggestion becomes too much for Marylou and she "squealed with fright. We began laughing manic laughs to

[51] Allison McCracken, "Scary Women and Scarred Men: *Suspense*, Gender Trouble, and Postwar Change, 1942-1950," Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio, ed. Michele Hilmes & Jason Loviglio (New York: Routledge, 2002), 184.
[52] Kerouac, On The Road 157.

scare her. We were scared too. We wanted to get out of this mansion of the snake, this mireful drooping dark, and zoom on back to familiar American ground and cowtowns. This was a manuscript of the night we couldn't read."[53] The earlier description of the night sky as "inky" and the landscape described here as a "manuscript" emphasises the constructed nature of the scenes around them, and suggests an over-dramatisation, as though the radio mystery show has led them to imbue the landscape and people with particularly supernatural and eerie qualities, leading them to read it as something mysterious and other, outside of their field of comprehension. What they hear on the radio influences the way that they see the world, as they find a way to project their fears on to the outside world. Indeed as Allen Weiss suggests in relation to the possibilities of radio drama, "with no visible body emitting the sound, and with no image whatsoever to anchor the sound, the radiophonic work leaves a sufficient space for fantasizing."[54] Here, Sal and Dean's fantasies are projected on to the outside world. Whilst the link between radio, oral speech and the printed word or visual image is not fully articulated here, it is the relationships between these forms of communication that will come to the fore in Kerouac's later work Doctor Sax.

The car itself at times creates a space for fantasy, and in a letter to Cassady in January 1951, Kerouac wonders:

> How many Americans remember their first car-rides and the phantom horse that ran alongside the car; or even the phantom of themselves that kept abreast running frantically in the earth of night, through rain, over raw clay cuts, around trees,

[53] Kerouac, On The Road 157-58.
[54] Allen S. Weiss, "Radio, Death, and the Devil, Artaud's Pour En Finir Avec Le Jugement de Dieu," Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio & The Avant Garde, ed. Douglas Kahn, Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994) 301.

> over rooftops, never for once lagging till the car itself slowed down: I do wish I could ask Americans if this didn't happen to them too? – and if so, then these poor hasty words of mine may mean something to them.[55]

This theme reappears in On The Road, this time refigured as a conversation between Sal and Dean as they both remember the powerful feelings associated with car rides during their childhoods, and particularly the sense of the car as being able to create an alternate superhuman self, one who in Dean's case "actually *ran* on foot along the car and at incredible speeds sometimes ninety."[56] There is a sense here that new technology is linked to phantasmagoria and the past, enabling the self to be projected outside the car as a ghost. The ghost also becomes a symbol for displacement from social norms – Kerouac becomes a phantom because he does not fit with any stable social signifiers. Sal's comment here recalls McLuhan's assertion that "the car is an extension of man that turns the rider into a superman."[57] Indeed the whole passage relates to the idea implicit in McLuhan that the extensions of man represent progress but also return us to a past, which in his case is the past of orality and non-linearity.

The importance of the past is highlighted in Kerouac and Cassady's confessional letters, which are part of a wider project of recording all of the details of their lives, and that is not just confined to the two of them. Kerouac writes to Cassady that he is "having Joan write hers in utter detail from beginning to end."[58] Kerouac is convinced that their stories are valuable: "I've just got to read every word you've got to say and take it all in.

[55] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 3 January 1951, Selected Letters, 271.
[56] Kerouac, On The Road 208.
[57] McLuhan, Understanding Media 221.
[58] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 27 December 1950, Selected Letters, 243.

If that ain't life nothing ain't."[59] This emphasis on recording the details of their lives, and their conversations leads to a major difficulty, namely that unless they are recorded on tape at the time they must be written down after the fact, relying on individual memory and restricted by the perennial problems of transcribing speech. As Erik Mortenson recognises:

> The irony of Kerouac's work is that Sal's adventures with Dean can never be truly recorded, since describing a memory is not the same as being present during it. A book is an ersatz substitute for a lived life, just as a recording of a jazz set will never allow the audience to fully connect with the audience that was actually there. Sal may critique the idea of 'history' and seek transcendence in the beyond, but his need to record signals a fear of the chaos occasioned by time's ceaseless flow.[60]

Recording seems to be a way of stopping the chaos, but this leads to the problem of how to use the tapes, and particularly how to use them in a text. This is why the choice of technology is so crucial: the form of the scroll text does not allow Kerouac to grapple with these issues adequately, but it does offer him a new direction, and is a starting point for his development of future versions of On The Road, most notably Visions of Cody, where Kerouac experiments further with different forms of representation. I explore this in chapter four.

Later versions of the scroll and tape experiments also enable Kerouac to deal much more adequately with his preoccupation with issues of space and time. In January 1951, Kerouac explains to Cassady that he has been thinking about "who's laid down the

[59] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 27 December 1950, Selected Letters, 243.
[60] Erik R. Mortenson, "Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac's On the Road," College Literature 28.3 (2001) 73.

laws of 'literary' form? Who says that a work must be chronological; that the reader wants to know what happened anyhow … Let's tear time up. Let's rip the guts out of reality. The man on his deathbed has wild cursorial visions that begin here and end anywhere. I am, pops, that man."[61] It is with these thoughts in mind that Kerouac continues his letter. Kerouac's thinking on time is later reflected in On The Road, in which the linear and temporal aspects of journeys – the start and end points of the characters' various road trips - are not really as significant as the journey itself. Whilst the rhetoric within the text is of forward movement and continuity, there is also a constant tension between this desire to always advance, and the infiltration of a sense of history, of ghosts and of moving backwards. The road journey is never simply a linear movement through time and space from one place to another. The nature of the text as a record of past events means that not only the past but also the future can be entwined into the narrative. So for example Sal describes "a town in Iowa where years later Dean and I were stopped on suspicion in what looked like a stolen Cadillac."[62] Although Erik Mortenson contends that Dean has learnt that "you need to continually move to stay in sync with time, to always live on its perpetually unfolding edge" and hence exist in the "continual present," this is certainly not the case for Sal.[63] (We could see them as the two characters in Creeley's poem, quoted earlier, representing different relations to action and speech). As their road journeys begin to cross and recross the U.S., memories of earlier journeys begin to overtake Sal's experience of the present, leading to a sense of displacement and confusion – of being out of time: "I saw flashing by outside several scenes that I remembered from 1947 – a long stretch where Eddie and I had been

[61] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 8 January 1951, Selected Letters, 274.
[62] Kerouac, On The Road 16.
[63] Mortenson, 65.

stranded two hours. All that old road of the past unreeling dizzily as if the cup of life had been overturned and everything gone mad. My eyes ached in nightmare day."[64] Here the past seems to overtake the present, and Jean-Paul Sartre's use of the experience of travelling in a car in his discussion of Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury is relevant. Sartre argues that in Faulkner's text events only begin to make sense as they become past, and he compares the reader's experience of the novel with that of a passenger in a car, restricted to looking out of the rear window:

> At every moment, formless shadows, flickerings, faint tremblings and patches of light rise up on either side of him, and only afterwards, when he has a little perspective, do they becomes trees and men and cars.
>
> The past takes on a sort of super-reality; its contours are hard and clear, unchangeable. The present, nameless and fleeting, is helpless before it. It is full of gaps, and, through these gaps, things of the past, fixed, motionless and silent as judges or glances, come to invade it.[65]

Movement makes past events easier to understand than the present, as distance clarifies vision, and whereas the past as something fixed, the present is fluid, changeable and difficult to make sense of. Whilst Sal and Dean's road trips are an attempt at constant forward movement towards new experiences, which would suggest the sort of forward – looking existential action that Sartre would favour over Faulkner's retrospective patterns, the reality is that they begin to find themselves simultaneously moving backwards, constantly pulled to memories of past events that seem more palpable than the present. In this respect they are surprisingly close to what Sartre finds in Faulkner, and Proust:

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[64] Kerouac, On The Road 234.
[65] Jean-Paul Sartre, "On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner," 4 Aug. 2007 <http://www.usask.ca/english/faulkner/main/criticism/sartre.html>

> This unspeakable present, leaking at every seam, these sudden invasions of the past, this emotional order, the opposite of the voluntary and intellectual order that is chronological but lacking in reality, these memories, these monstrous and discontinuous obsessions, these intermittences of the heart - are not these reminiscent of the lost and recaptured time of Marcel Proust?[66]

Palimpsests of Sal and Dean's earlier journeys inevitably begin to encroach on their fresh travels, and "here again I was crisscrossing the old map again, same place Marylou and I had held hands on a snowy morning in 1949."[67] At one stage on a trip, Sal describes himself, Dean and Marylou as "three children of the earth trying to decide something in the night and having all the weight of past centuries ballooning in the dark before them."[68] Here the past is depicted as being in front of them, in a complete inversion of traditional conceptions of linear time. Eventually the "nightmare" created by the slippage between past and present becomes too much for Sal and he retreats to the floor of the car where he:

> could feel the road some twenty inches beneath me, unfurling and flying and hissing at incredible speeds across the groaning continent with that mad Ahab at the wheel. When I closed my eyes all I could see was the road unwinding into me. When I opened them I saw flashing shadows of trees vibrating on the floor of the car. There was no escaping it. I resigned myself to it all.[69]

He is consumed by the process of travelling at speed and he has no choice but to succumb to the strangeness of it. There is an amalgamation of body and road as the road "unwinds

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[66] Sartre, <http://www.usask.ca/english/faulkner/main/criticism/sartre.html>
[67] Kerouac, On The Road 271.
[68] Kerouac, On The Road 132.
[69] Kerouac, On The Road 234.

into" Sal, as though instead of moving forwards, the road is now somehow moving backwards into him. And of course the ribbon of the road inevitably suggests Kerouac's famous endless scroll of paper in the typewriter, so that we can see the scroll representing both relentless movement and productivity but also the reverse as the sequence of meaning and associations pulls him back, even as he goes forward.

Sal's awareness of the great weight of both his own personal history and the history of America means that he is not only haunted by his own past, but also more widely by the mythic American past that exists in his imagination. As they travel through the U.S.A., Sal is continually disappointed at the reality of the country, compared to his visions of it: "All winter I'd been reading of wagon parties that held council there before hitting the Oregon and Santa Fe trails; and of course now it was only cute suburban cottages of one damn kind and another."[70] This is repeated throughout the text. Upon his arrival in Cheyenne, for instance, he is immediately saddened that the West does not offer what he had hoped. It is 'Wild West Week' and the streets are populated with "Big crowds of businessmen, fat businessmen in boots and ten-gallon hats, with their hefty wives in cowgirl attire."[71] Sal is "amazed, and at the same time I felt it was ridiculous: in my first shot at the West I was seeing to what absurd devices it had fallen to keep its proud tradition."[72] But he also disapproves of the effects of modernity without the false traditions. "We bowled for Amarillo, and reached it in the morning among windy panhandle grasses that only a few years ago waved around a collection of buffalo tents. Now there were gas stations and new 1950 jukeboxes with immense ornate snouts and

[70] Kerouac, On The Road 19.
[71] Kerouac, On The Road 33.
[72] Kerouac, On The Road 33.

ten-cent slots and awful songs."[73] Sal's fixed, imagined notion of an American past is more real to him than the actuality that he discovers, and this inevitably leads to disenchantment.

Early in the text, Sal describes one moment when "I really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared; I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost. I was halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future, and maybe that's why it happened right there and then, that strange red afternoon.[74] He is caught between past and future, but he does not feel that he exists in the present. He is haunted by a past that does not seem to be his own and yet he has no conception of a future. As a ghost, he exists outside of space and time, and he almost ceases to exist for these few seconds. Later in the novel he has a similar experience, but this time he has a very strong sense of having lived before and of knowing who he was in this past life. This sense of identity allows for a very different experience, so:

> for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I had always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness.[75]

On this occasion, Sal moves out of time and finds some sort of freedom. The description highlights his desire to reach a point of empty space outside of time, which brings with it

[73] Kerouac, On The Road 270.
[74] Kerouac, On The Road 17.
[75] Kerouac, On The Road 173.

the opportunity to create something completely new, as it is only by entirely escaping from history that the present can become a "holy void of uncreated emptiness." It is this desire to find a more appropriate method of portraying this non-linear experience of time, space and place that would lead to Kerouac's further and more radical experiments that would later become Visions of Cody. As Albright argues:

> "[On The] Road, despite its compositional method, is still a retelling of a very linear narrative, out of the narrator's past. [Visions of] Cody, on the other hand, employs verbatim tape recordings and lots of sketching to 'restructure time and space beyond' the 'fiction' of traditional narrative form. The result is a circular, rather than linear design, which approximates how we actually experience time as it flows: moments are blown up into larger significances, time sometimes slows down in them and at other times speeds up."[76]

The circularity that Albright highlights echoes the forms of the tape spool and the scroll themselves. In relation to these forms, imagery of unfolding or unrolling appears several times within On The Road in relation to forward movement and a sense of continuity. Hence the towns "unroll with dreamlike rapidity as we roared ahead and talked"; "The state of Illinois unfolded before my eyes in one vast movement that lasted a matter of hours as Dean balled straight across at the same speed."[77] For Sal, though, constantly advancing is not always positive as at times he feels he is simply moving too quickly: "with frantic Dean I was rushing through the world without a chance to see it."[78] Equally Kerouac's prose style is not simply about speed, but rather also stresses the importance of

[76] Alex Albright, "Ammons, Kerouac & Their New Romantic Scrolls," Complexities of Motion: New Essays on A.R. Ammons Long Poems, ed. Steven P. Scheider (N.p.: Farleigh Dickinson, 1999) 98-99.
[77] Kerouac, On The Road 229, 232, 235.
[78] Kerouac, On The Road 205.

not missing out the details. Whereas Tim Hunt cautions that "Kerouac's decision to attempt to write his book at high speed was more of an act of desperation than a demonstration of aesthetic principles," there is evidence that Kerouac's project was in fact more considered than this.[79] The tensions inherent in Kerouac's project – between speed and forward momentum and memory and an almost infinite regression – are not solved by the idea of the scroll. Sentences like "The magnificent car made the wind roar; it made the plains unfold like a roll of paper" might suggest the forward momentum made possible by the scroll, but his actual reasoning behind composing on a scroll of paper, and the act of this composition, needs more examination.

Kerouac wrote the now notorious scroll version of On The Road in April 1951. He writes to Neal Cassady shortly after completing it, explaining how "from Apr. 2 to Apr. 22 I wrote 125,000 [word] full-length novel averaging 6 thous. a day, 12 thous. first day, 15,000 thous. last day."[80] John Clellon Holmes recounts how Kerouac became increasingly frustrated with his struggle to find a suitable form for his writing, and one day he "announced irritably: 'You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get me a roll of shelf-paper, feed it into the typewriter, and just write it down as fast as I can, exactly like it happened, all in a rush, the hell with these phony architectures – and worry about it later.'"[81] Holmes' recollection of events implies that the scroll version of the text was never intended as a final draft. This is corroborated in Kerouac's letters, where he writes to Cassady that after completing the scroll, "of course since Apr. 22 I've been

[79] Hunt, Crooked Road 110.
[80] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 22 May 1951, Selected Letters, 315.
[81] John Clellon Holmes, Nothing More to Declare (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968) 78. Kerouac's frustration with slow progress on the text is evident as he writes to Neal of his need "to write that fucking Road. Down the road night; American road night; Look out for Your Boy; Boy on the road; Hit the road; lost on the road – I don't even know what to call it." (Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 3 December 1950, Selected Letters, 238.)

typing and revising. Thirty days on that."[82] Kerouac never intended the scroll version of the text to be the finished copy, hence the danger in applying the principles listed in 'Essentials' such as "no revisions" to texts that were written earlier than this methodological piece.[83] Furthermore, as Douglas Brinkley recognises, the scroll version of On The Road was produced from a "fastidious process of outlining, character sketching, chapter drafting, and meticulous trimming" which took place between 1948-50.[84] As Kerouac's letters show, the work went on even longer than this as he was still working on versions of the text in 1951 just prior to producing the scroll; evidence of his strong discipline as a writer.[85] At one stage, Kerouac complains to Neal that in terms of his writing "A lot of people say I don't know what I'm doing, but of course, I do."[86]

Photographs of parts of the On The Road scroll are now freely available on the internet, making it very easy to see what it looks like and to look in detail at small parts of the text. In spite of this, earlier misreadings still persist. The scroll version has very little white space. It is typed without any paragraph breaks or other spaces, and it has extremely narrow margins. It does, though, have punctuation, contrary to Weinreich's statement that it "consisted entirely of one sentence."[87] This misreading of the scroll as being free of all punctuation recurs in other critiques of On The Road making it seem as though Kerouac's text was in fact very heavily edited in order to make it readable:

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[82] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 22 May 1951, Selected Letters, 317.
[83] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[84] Kerouac, Windblown World, xxiii-xxiv.
[85] A recent exhibition of Kerouac's work, including archival material, at the New York Public Library traces the fascinating material history of the development of On the Road from 1947 onwards that is present in Kerouac's "drafts, fragments, and journal notes." Isaac Gewirtz, Beatific Soul: Jack Kerouac on the Road (New York: New York Public Library, 2007) 73.
[86] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 27 December 1950, Selected Letters, 243.
[87] Weinreich, 40. See scroll photographs at: http://www.ontheroad.org/ Punctuation including full stops is clearly visible in the text. Parts of the scroll are reproduced in full colour in Gewirtz, Beatific Soul 113-117.

"Kerouac was attempting to create a non-stop statement of an experience that kept moving, using language with enough energy to break through the limitations of conventional notions of sentence form."[88] These kinds of misreading also make the scroll version of the text sound more experimental than it actually was, leading to misconceptions that the text was later severely constrained by conventional notions of language and punctuation in order to make it publishable, and thus that the published version is nowhere near as free as the scroll version and very different from the text that Kerouac intended to write. In fact, Kerouac's scroll version of On The Road is clearly revised and was never intended as a final, finished piece. According to Hunt, Kerouac began working on the scroll as a "compositional exercise"; "a ploy to clarify his thoughts that would in turn allow him to write his book, rather than as an attempt at writing the book itself" and this seems clear from the accounts provided by Holmes, and from Kerouac himself.[89]

Nevertheless, critics have tended to place great emphasis on the centrality of the scroll itself, as well as focusing on the speed of composition in a misguided effort to uphold Kerouac's novel as an example of mythical American ideals of individual freedom, creativity and open space. Arguments abound over what type of paper it was and so on, and James Campbell has attempted to catalogue what he terms the "metamorphosis" of this scroll, as biographers have discussed the kind of paper Kerouac used, whether it was a single roll of paper or many sheets taped together and the length of

[88] Tim Cresswell, "Mobility as Resistance: A Geographical Reading of Kerouac's On The Road," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 18.2 (1993): 256.
[89] Hunt, Crooked Road, 112; 110. Holmes explains that "typing to Jack – in Jack's career – meant rewriting. That's how he rewrote." (John Clellon Holmes, qtd in Jack's Book: An Oral Biography of Jack Kerouac, Barry Gifford and Lawrence Lee. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 157.) Kerouac would often write in pencil first, and then type up pieces – so the second draft was the typed one. The typed scroll version of On The Road essentially a rewrite, drawing on work that he had been doing since at least 1948. He then revised in pencil onto the scroll, and then later on retyped the whole piece again.

the finished roll, seemingly to fit their own individual arguments.[90] One reason for the focus on this text in particular is Kerouac's later stress on the importance of spontaneity, newness and working without revision and this is the first text where there exists a complete, coherent draft which is regarded as the 'truth' based on Kerouac's later assertions about his writing. Again here we see how Kerouac's text is (mis)read to fit with his own later statements on prose style. However, the scroll was not just a one-off exercise, as evidenced by the fact that Kerouac employed the scroll method again in writing The Subterraneans in 1953, The Dharma Bums in 1957, Big Sur in 1961 and Vanity of Duluoz in 1968.[91] These scrolls are rarely mentioned in any critical evaluations of Kerouac's work, giving the impression that the compositional style of On The Road is entirely unique, and elevating the Road scroll to almost mythic status in the Kerouac oeuvre. In fact, although On The Road is the first scroll that Kerouac wrote, his style developed after this first attempt into something even more experimental as he began to fully define and consolidate his spontaneous prose technique. Moreover, the fact that Kerouac did choose to use the scroll method several times implies that this came to form an integral part – but only a part – of his process of composition. It is imperative to recognise that the act of writing quickly onto a scroll of paper does not in itself make Kerouac's work 'spontaneous' as Kerouac wrote both spontaneous and non-spontaneous prose pieces on scrolls.

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[90] James Campbell, This is the Beat Generation: New York – San Francisco – Paris (London: Vintage, 2000) 134-35.

[91] Marcus Boon, The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2002) 197. In a letter to Sterling Lord, Kerouac lists the "original typed scroll" of The Dharma Bums and "orig. singlespace typed scroll" of Big Sur in a catalogue of his manuscripts. Jack Kerouac, "To Sterling Lord, 27 March 1965, Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1957 – 1969 ed. Ann Charters, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999) 395-96. A photograph of the Vanity of Duluoz scroll appears in The Paris Review Interviews 106.

The scroll enables the continuity of the physical activity of typing, and Holmes comments that Kerouac "just flung it down. He could disassociate himself from his fingers, and he was simply following the movie in his head."[92] Here the body – or at least the fingers become more like a part of the machine and Kerouac is described as almost automated. In an attempt to transmit whatever was in his head onto paper as quickly and accurately as possible, the body with the typewriter essentially becomes a writing machine for this process – they are just tools to get the job done. Kerouac does consciously choose his modes of composition, such as using typewriter over pencil for example.[93] The typewriter helps him to work at speed more than handwriting, and this enables him to get more down than if he were writing longhand. However, it should be noted that speed is not Kerouac's ultimate goal. Speed is only important to him as the object of his writing is to attempt to get down events in detail and to describe them as well as possible, and it is the use of this process to capture full and rich detail that is often overlooked. This technique of writing was widely criticised, and Tim Hunt points out that "Soon after On The Road was published, Truman Capote noted: 'That's not writing, that's typewriting.' His comment cast the book as some sort of author-less, machine-made commodity."[94] There is a suggestion that Kerouac's typing was a form of dictation, in that he was transcribing events, rather than composing as such, leading Marcus Boon to argue that "Kerouac's objective is to accelerate writing until it approaches the speed of thought."[95] This again foregrounds speed over the actual process of composition. As I

[92] John Clellon Holmes qtd in Gifford, Jack's Book 156.
[93] Kerouac used an Underwood portable typewriter, although in a letter in January 1951 he mentions "this antique L.C. Smith typewriter I'm taking to Frisco in our rattly truck next month" and he also uses another typewriter in Mexico. (Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 10 January 1951, Selected Letters, 294. Jack Kerouac, "To Allen Ginsberg," Selected Letters, 345.)
[94] Hunt, Crooked Road xiii.
[95] There are parallels here with Burroughs. Boon, Road of Excess 198.

have demonstrated though, the scroll not simply about speed and spontaneity, or the process of inexorable forward movement. It is also about looking backwards to the past and of finding a way to craft a non-linear thought process, as well as marking Kerouac's interest in finding a suitable mode of expression that centres on orality and the sound of the voice. Kerouac continues to explore these issues in Doctor Sax, as we see in the next chapter.

2. Doctor Sax

"Memory and dream are intermixed in this mad universe." [1]

Overlapping with the experiments with free composition represented by the use of the scroll was Kerouac's interest in what he came to call 'wild form' in the early fifties, which he saw as allowing him to free his writing from the linearity of traditional narrative structures. In a letter to John Clellon Holmes in 1952 when he was working on Doctor Sax, Kerouac talks excitedly of his discovery of this new method of writing:

> what I am beginning to discover now is something beyond the novel and beyond the arbitrary confines of the story . . . into the realms of revealed Picture . . . revealed whatever . . . revelated prose . . . *wild form*, man, *wild form*. Wild form's the only form holds what I have to say – my mind is exploding to say something about every image and every memory – I have now an irrational lust to set down everything I know – in narrowing circles around the core of my last writing, very last writing when I am an old man or ready to die will be calm like the center of whirlpools.[2]

Whilst the method is not really clearly defined here, Kerouac gives the impression that this kind of writing is a tool to enable him to uncover or restore something that already exists as a whole either in reality or in memory – the 'revealed Picture'. Kerouac's stress on the 'picture' also suggests that his new technique may allow him to describe scenes in incredible detail as a complete and immediate snapshot like a

[1] Jack Kerouac, Doctor Sax (London: Flamingo, 2001) 8.
[2] Jack Kerouac, "To John Clellon Holmes," 5 June 1952, Selected Letters, 371. Ellipses are in the published text and appear to be as per Kerouac's original typescript. My own ellipses will appear in the text as '…' and those reproduced from the text as '. . .'.

painted canvas or a movie still. Kerouac believes that wild form is the tool that will finally enable him to express everything that he wants, until ultimately he has nothing left to say, and entries in his early journals highlight how his inability to do this is a constant source of frustration to him.[3] The imagery of a whirlpool, in which the energy is contained and flows around a central core, expresses the tremendous energy that he feels this new writing style allows him. Wild form allows his prose a new freedom and flow, whilst simultaneously containing it to an extent by keeping it centred around a particular point of focus.

Wild form is evidently related to Kerouac's newly developed method of verbal sketching, which involved acting like a visual artist working on the street. A few weeks prior to his letter to Holmes, he had written to Ginsberg explaining his new approach:

> Everything activates in front of you in myriad profusion, you just have to purify your mind and let it pour the words (which effortless angels of the vision fly when you stand in front of reality) and write with 100% personal honesty both psychic & social etc. and slap it all down shameless, willy-nilly, rapidly until sometimes I got so inspired I lost consciousness I was writing. Traditional source: Yeat's trance writing, of course. It's the *only way to write*.[4]

The notion of capturing everything in writing is again evident here, but it seems that Kerouac was even more excited by wild form as an extension of this. Kerouac felt frustrated, though, that publishers were looking erroneously at the style and not seeing

[3] In a 1948 entry, Kerouac writes, "you notice the notebook is full of 'so-ons' . . . that's the terror of knowing that I can't keep up with all of it. It's like finding a river of flowing gold when you haven't even got a cup to save a cupfull [sic] . . . you've but a thimble and that thimble is your pathetic brain and labor and humanness." (Kerouac, Windblown World 92.)
[4] Jack Kerouac, "To Allen Ginsberg," 18 May, 1952, Selected Letters, 356. Emphasis in original.

how it developed an underlying structure as it went on. Moreover, according to Tim Hunt:

> That '*wild form*' relates to Spontaneous Prose is clear from a second letter to Holmes later that month [June], in which Kerouac complains that editors reject his work because they are concerned only with the action of the plot. Kerouac senses that these editors make no effort to get beyond the surface of his style and therefore do not see how the structure of the books exists implicitly, as both Kerouac and Burroughs say, 'on all levels' and not just the level of story action.[5]

This period of Kerouac's writing therefore appears to mark the development of three identifiable but closely interlinked models of writing, namely wild form, sketching and spontaneous prose.

The opening sentences of Doctor Sax immediately and self-consciously draw attention to the writing process, as the text begins with a description of the protagonist Jacky's dream about his method of composition: "'don't stop to think of words when you do stop, just stop to think of the picture better – and let your mind off yourself in this work.'"[6] This relates to part of Kerouac's description of spontaneous prose, and as Ann Charters points out:

> The following year in 1953, when Kerouac compiled a list … of thirty 'essentials' for a writer attempting his method of spontaneous prose, he incorporated a phrase from his first paragraph of Doctor Sax as item number 22: 'Don't think of words when you stop but to see picture better.' This followed item number 21 in Kerouac's 'Belief & Technique for Modern

[5] Hunt, Crooked Road 148.
[6] Jack Kerouac, Doctor Sax (London: Flamingo, 2001) 7.

> Prose,' his key to honest expression in his writing method: 'struggle to sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind.'[7]

The text of Doctor Sax begins from his encounter with "the wrinkly tar" of a sidewalk from Jacky's childhood, and the first paragraph reads:

> The other night I had a dream that I was sitting on the sidewalk on Moody Street, Pawtucketville, Lowell, Mass., with a pencil and paper in my hand saying to myself 'Describe the wrinkly tar of this sidewalk, also the iron pickets of Textile Institute, or the doorway where Lousy and you and G.J.'s always sittin and dont [sic] stop to think of words when you do stop, just stop to think of the picture better – and let your mind off yourself in this work.'[8]

The work is structured so that memories are spun out from this image of "wrinkly tar," and this is a recurrent image throughout Doctor Sax, particularly during the early chapters, as the writer focuses on this and writes as much as possible from it, before returning to it to begin the process again. Richard Ellis points out that the continual return to this image also marks out Jacky's progress from childhood to adolescence and the ways "the obsessive circlings around the doorway/corner work as dream-repetitions of this progress."[9]

The complexity of Doctor Sax is immediately apparent from the composition of the very first paragraph. Kerouac's experimental writing methods enable him to produce a text where dreams, memories, the imaginary and the reality of the present moment continually intersect. His use of this form to portray childhood experience is particularly pertinent and effective, as the structure of the text reflects the freedom that children have to exist at once within the real world and simultaneously within the

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[7] Ann Charters, "'True-Story' Novels as Autobiography: The Influence of *The Shadow* on Jack Kerouac's Doctor Sax," Writing Lives: American Biography and Autobiography, ed. Hans Brek & Hans Krabbendam, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998) 97-105. 103.
[8] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 7.
[9] Richard J. Ellis, Liar! Liar! Jack Kerouac – Novelist (London: Greenwich Exchange, 1999) 120.

imaginary spaces that they create for themselves, and the lack of any necessary distinction between the two. Kerouac also skilfully evokes the sense of immediacy one has as a child, and his writing gives the impression of the child at times being almost entirely overwhelmed by the world and his experience of it. It also captures the way in which so many things, both real and imaginary, take on huge and immediate significance in a child's life, but are then quickly forgotten as the child exists continually in the present moment. So for example one major event in Jacky's childhood is a flood that occurs which is significant enough to have a whole section of the text – "The Flood" section (Book Five) – devoted to it. By the following section, however, Jacky realises that himself and his sister have "almost forgotten the Flood – "[10] The text also evokes the sense of mystery that surrounds the adult world, and as the text charts the passage from childhood to adulthood, the child must begin to "put an end to childish play," and is called upon to "face the awful world of black without your aeroplane balloons in your hand" (and black is a term which grows in potency from the wrinkled tar to the many associations of black ink later in the book).[11]

Whilst Doctor Sax is narrated as closely as possible from the standpoint of the child, it is always through memory and retrospective, rather than a present, as in Faulkner's presentation of Benjy in The Sound and the Fury, and there are many occasions in the text where the adult narrator looks back on himself as a child: "We felt we'd grown up because these places and scenes were now more than child's play."[12] This filtering of memory through later experience is also evident in the use of language in Doctor Sax, as the language of Jacky's childhood is not the language of his adult writing, and this creates a gap between writing and memory. According to Nicosia, therefore, in Doctor Sax "four layers of reality are superimposed: the

[10] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 163
[11] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 70.
[12] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 140.

physical world, a dream of the physical world, an artistic representation of the physical world in a dream, and an artistic representation of the dream representation of the physical world."[13] Kerouac's use of different languages contributes to this multilayering. Many of Jacky's childhood memories are in French, particularly those that are most vivid and involve close relationships with his family and members of the French-Canadian community. The first chapter of Book Six contains one of the most evocative scenes of Jacky's childhood, when he describes himself and his sister Nin walking home from the library. As they walk they grow hungry and begin to talk about what they would like to eat, describing to each other in great detail the meals that they would enjoy, from "a good porkball stew very hot" to "some nice big crêpes with maple syrup, and sausages well cooked sitting in the plate hot with a big beautiful glass of milk."[14] The children are evidently enjoying themselves immensely and for a short time become entirely caught up in imagining fantastic meals. Their speech is presented with the French first followed by an English translation, as the whole original exchange takes place in French. This produces a sense of an enclosed and intimate childhood experience using the immediacy of the original language to describe the comforting food, but presented from outside of this frame.

The use of French in the text means that the reader's attention is inescapably drawn to the importance of language and in an early chapter, Jacky recalls from his very early childhood "the day I learned to say door in English . . . door, door, *porte, porte*."[15] This raises the issue of the adequacy of the language of the text in portraying formative memories that existed – and still exist – in the mind in a completely different language, and Kerouac addresses this to an extent by presenting the original remembered French in the text along with an English translation. This is

[13] Nicosia, Memory Babe 393.
[14] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 162.
[15] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 20. Emphasis in original.

something that Kerouac grappled with in the composition of Doctor Sax, as is evident in his correspondence with Ginsberg, who criticised the writing style in parts of the text. Kerouac's response is interesting as he highlights the difficulties of attempting to ensure that his language adequately portrays his childhood memories, but also the way in which this is complicated by the fact that as he writes, his thoughts must be translated into another language, and quickly:

> I'm trying to speak to you brother to brother, - like we were French Canadian brothers. Literature as you see it, using words like 'verbal' and 'images' etc. and things like, well all the 'paraphernalia' of criticism etc. is no longer my concern, because the thing makes me say 'shitty little beach in the reeds' is Pre-Literary, it happened to me to think that way before I learned the words the literateurs use to describe what they're doing, - At this moment I'm writing directly from the French in my head.[16]

Kerouac's attempt to present a child's view of the world and to use the language of the child in doing so is obviously a highly conscious and sophisticated literary tactic, and at many times during the text, the language is not childlike at all as there is often a process of filtering through the adult's eyes, as the layering of the text extends to include the narrative voice. Hence Jacky's childhood memories are sometimes presented in the text as filtered through a lifetime of experience: "I saw my brother in a satin coffin, he was nine, he lay with the stillness of the face of my former wife in her sleep, accomplished, regretted."[17] Memories are layered upon memories and experiences are filtered through others. Sometimes the text focuses directly on the experiences of the child, whereas at other times the distance between the child and the adult writer is foregrounded with self-aware comments such as this.

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[16] Jack Kerouac, "To Allen Ginsberg," 8 November, 1952, Selected Letters, 383.
[17] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 61.

The process of layering is also emphasised in the ways in which the past continually permeates the present, and this is evident in the constant presence of ghosts in Jacky's childhood. Death, and in particular the death of children, pervades the text: "Rainy funerals for little boys, I saw several including the funeral of my own poor brother" and "the poor little girls of Lowell I knew that died at 6, 7, 8, their rosy little lips, and little eye glasses of school … all, all, underdusted in fading graves soon sinking fields."[18] This very early and very personal exposure to human mortality affects Jacky, and heightens his sense of living in a world where the dead do not simply disappear, but where instead the ghosts of those who have passed haunt his daily life. After the death of Jacky's friend Zap, he "began to see the ghost of Zap Plouffe mixed with other shrouds when I walked home."[19] Jacky's "editorial desk" where he writes his self-produced newspapers is also haunted by the ghost of his brother: "On the back of that desk still were chalkmarks Gerard had made when he was alive in the green desk – this desk rattled in my dreams because of Gerard's ghost in it."[20] The chalk marks made in life serve to keep Gerard alive in the mind of the child, and at one stage "in darkness in mid-sleep night I saw him standing over my crib with wild hair, my heart stoned, I turned horrified, my mother and sister were sleeping in big bed, I was in crib, implacable stood Gerard-O my brother."[21] The thought that immediately follows this sighting, though is that "it might have been the arrangement of the shadows" suggesting that the adult narrator, looking back on his childhood is no longer convinced of his sightings of ghosts – they may, like Doctor Sax himself, have simply been shadows.[22]

[18] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 34, 161.
[19] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 41.
[20] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 84.
[21] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 34-5.
[22] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 35.

Even as a child, Jacky is aware that not all children appear to be haunted by ghosts and living in fear, as he is. The difference between the world of the child and the adult becomes apparent to him as he compares his world to that of one of his friends: "Joe avoided shrouds, knew no mystery, wasn't scared, didn't care … Joe had turrets and attics in his house but he wasn't afraid of sailing ghosts . . . his phantoms were reality, work and earn money, fix your knife, straighten the screw, figure for tomorrow."[23] Joe is not troubled by the demons that lurk in a childish imagination, as he exists in a very adult world and he is constantly occupied with practical tasks rather than the make-believe games that form such a large part of Jacky's childhood. Jacky is also able to take some comfort in the games of adults, who turn his fears into party tricks:

> madcap Duquette would get Blanche to put all the lights out and start playing spooky music on the piano, up riseth a face powdered in white flour, framed in an empty picture frame, with flashlight under chin … at least I had the satisfaction of knowing that no real shades would come to get me in the midst of such strong adult mockery and racket.[24]

The framing of the ghostly face very clearly emphasises its artificiality, but this pastiche of Jacky's fears does not make his ghosts any less real to him, instead simply making it less likely that they will "come to get him" in the presence of adults. The adult Kerouac, though, later dismisses the realities of work and adult life as phantoms, suggesting his sense of the greater reality and depth of his own childhood sensations.

As the child becomes aware of the differences between the world of the child and that of the adult, so too must he develop a concept of time, and an awareness of his own movement through time towards maturity. The bookmovie section of the text

[23] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 56.
[24] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 58.

provides some good examples of the way in which time is foregrounded in Doctor Sax. There is a conscious attempt in this section, as there is elsewhere in the text, to draw the reader's attention to time and the first scene immediately does so: "Two o'clock – strange – thunder and the yellow walls of my mother's kitchen with the green electric clock."[25] Scene ten describes "the second hand of the green electric clock turning relentlessly."[26] There is also a shift in this scene away from the perspective of the child and back to the older narrator: "when I was a very little kid I used to read the funnies on my belly, listen on the floor to boiling waters of stove, with a feeling of indescribable peace and burble, suppertime, funnies time, potato time, warm home time."[27] Here once again we have an exposition of the sense of time that a child inhabits – defined by activities and routine rather than any specific awareness of the linear passage of time, but juxtaposed with the adult narrator's understanding of the "relentless" passage of clock time. This difference between the life of the child who is able to spend hours in his room playing games is later very keenly contrasted against the adult world inhabited by his father:

> It now occurs to me my father spent most of his time when I was 13 in the winter of 1936, thinking about a hundred details to be done in the Club alone, not to mention home and business shop – the energy of our fathers, they raised us to sit on nails – While I sat around all the time with my little diary, my Turf, my hockey games, Sunday afternoon tragic football games on the toy pooltable white chalkmarked . . . father and son on separate toys, the toys get less friendly when you grow up – my football games occupied me with the same seriousness of the angels – we had little time to talk to each other.[28]

[25] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 75.
[26] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 78.
[27] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 78.
[28] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 88.

This passage again entails a shift of perspective, as once more we momentarily move out of the immediate experience of the child and shift to the view of the narrator looking back at himself with an adult awareness of time, and indeed the whole text is made up of the ingredients that suffuse this section of the novel.

Another passage in the text clearly demonstrates the child's arbitrary concept of time as Jacky creates his own clock to measure his and his friends' running times:

> Then we – I invented – I took apart the old Victrola we had, just lifted the motor out, intact, and pasted paper around turntable, measured 'seconds' and theoretical time-laws of my own related to 'seconds' and took it outside to the park, crank and all, to time athletes of my track meet.[29]

The clock is supposed to be nothing more than a device to inspire competitiveness between the boys during their running, but it in fact becomes a source of tension and anxiety: "G.J. comes twapping down the cinders, his time is miserably slow, he's done all that running for nothing – He gets sore and sick of my machine -"[30] Unless one can somehow beat time, the effort of running becomes completely futile. As soon as activities are placed within finite space and measurable time, they no longer exist only in the present, but also, paradoxically become inextricably linked to infinite space and time, and to past and future, so G.J. is described as being "lost in Eternity" during his run, and his efforts become desperate and futile as he "[strains] in his heartbreaking void trying to catch time with his feeble tired boylegs."[31] This description of the run is followed by a passage that clearly indicates an adult fear of the passage of time:

> As I say Cy and Bert were dreadfully young in a long-ago of moving Time that is so remote it for the first time assumes that rigid post of posture

[29] Kerouac, Doctor Sax, 51.
[30] Kerouac, Doctor Sax, 52.
[31] Kerouac, Doctor Sax, 52.

> deathlike denoting the cessation of its operation in my memory and therefore the world's – a time about to become extinct – except that now it can never be, because it happened, it – which led to further levels – as time unveiled her ugly old cold mouth of death to the worst hopes – fears – Bert Desjardins and Cy Ladeau like any prescience of a dream are unerasable.[32]

If the writer's memory fails, there is a real danger that parts of his life will be irrevocably lost and forgotten, and Kerouac's experimental writing methods constitute an attempt to move away from this; an effort, in Theado's words, to "freeze time and restore the scenes of his youth by summoning them up in memory and preserving them in prose."[33] In fact Kerouac's project is more active than a process of freezing or preserving and his stylistic and compositional innovations are central to this. It is also about keeping his memories and the people within them alive through time. The activity of composition serves to bring these things to life within his own imagination, and through this process also shifts them into the present so that they are no longer "remote" and at risk of being lost completely.

Jacky's act of converting the phonograph into a stopwatch is particularly interesting given that one of the key features of the technology in its original form is its ability to record and play back sounds. As Dave Laing points out, "to record sound, like taking photographs, was to somehow freeze a moment in time and take it into the future."[34] This 'frozen' sound could then be listened to time and again in different times and spaces. The phonograph's fundamental function is to bring the past into the present. It disrupts the sense of a linear passage of time by suggesting circularity and a permeation of past into present, thus effectively denying a sense of

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[32] Kerouac, Doctor Sax, 69.
[33] Matt Theado, Understanding Jack Kerouac (N.p.: University of South Carolina Press, 2000) 98.
[34] Dave Laing, "A Voice without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph in the 1890s," Popular Music, 10.1 (1991): 3.

linear movement through space and time. And it does this by literally turning the linear – the tracks or grooves – into the circular – the record and its revolution.

As a child, Jacky effectively inverts the function of the machine so that rather than recording sound, it records individual effort, or time – something which cannot ever be repeated once it has been completed, without being physically reenacted all over again.[35] Jacky does not make use of the machine in order to freeze time in terms of capturing a particular action to then replay it at a later date, but rather its function is to make the boys fully aware of time passing. Jacky's use of the phonograph for this purpose makes perfect sense when we consider that "records were not immortal. Nor could they be spun in reverse. They are just like life in fact; they come to an end, and there is no way of backtracking."[36] This analogy is really only partially correct because of course although during playback on the older machines there was no easy way of returning to an earlier part of the piece, once the record had ended one could return the needle to the start and play the piece over and over again, giving the impression of something endlessly repeatable and everlasting. It does, though, highlight the sense of inexorable forward movement through time that Jacky's stopwatch/phonograph captures, as the record can only ever run forwards once it has been started.

The phonograph's potential to bring the past into the present is a source of both fear and delight for the child. Early in Doctor Sax Jacky tells of a nightmare "of the rattling red livingroom, newly painted a strange 1929 varnish red and I saw it in the dream all dancing and rattling like skeletons because my brother Gerard haunted them and I dreamed I woke up screaming by the phonograph machine in the adjoining

[35] There are echoes here of Ann Douglas' explanation of Kerouac's writing style that "he felt no more free to revise his draft than a football player was to replay a game or a musician to repeat a gig, except in future practice and performance." (Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xii.)
[36] Colin Symes, "From Tomorrow's Eve to High Fidelity: Novel Responses to the Gramophone in Twentieth Century Literature," Popular Music 24.2 (2005): 197.

room with its Masters Voice curves in the brown wood."[37] The phonograph is here juxtaposed with the notion of haunting, and according to Colin Symes, phonographs have long been associated with the uncanny:

> From the first, phonographs provoked consternation. The general public was mesmerized by their capacity to transcend the ordinates of time and space, which had previously confined sound to the present tense. The capacity to transfer sound into the future often invoked the theme of communing with the dead – even for the thoroughly pragmatic Edison. His own 'literary' reflections on the phonograph included references to the immortalising effects of recordings, that they possessed the capacity to 'annihilate time and space' (Edison 1878, p. 536), enabling formerly fugitive utterances to be 'transmitted to posterity' (Edison 1888, p. 646).[38]

Jacky understands that the voices of the past are somehow being contained within the phonograph's wooden throat. He recalls that "I had an old Victrola in my bedroom which was also ghostly, it was haunted by the old songs and old records of sad American antiquity in its old mahogany craw."[39] For Jacky, the phonograph makes him very keenly aware of what is past and what is present, although the machine itself seems to enable these boundaries to be transgressed. The description of "sad American antiquity" suggests that the past weighs heavily upon Jacky, but it also suggests Kerouac's larger sense of America as old and haunted, in contrast to idea of modernity and newly technologised. As Charles Grivel notes, the phonograph is peculiarly associated with time as it:

> contains one who has departed; it reproduces the one who is no longer there; it noisily presents his mark. Man phonographically recovers what he had lost:

[37] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 8.
[38] Symes, "Gramophone," 194.
[39] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 43.

> primordial eternity. The machine tells me I am audible, possible beyond the circle in which I keep myself, beyond here and now, outside of time, absent or dead."[40]

Whilst Grivel explains that the machine allows a person to understand themselves as existing outside of time, the effect on the child Jacky appears to be somewhat different. If anything, the phonograph enables Jacky to begin to recognise his place within time, as by forcing an awareness of the past, it disrupts the child's existence within the continual present and places him within a framework of past, present, and ultimately future. Whilst this should underscore the child's consciousness of the linear passage of time, the fact that Jacky believes the phonograph to be haunted in fact complicates this sense of linearity as it suggests that the past is co-present with the current time, and this creates the uncanny. As we have seen, the phonograph becomes inextricably linked to the passage of time as soon as Jacky cannibalises it to create his own clock.

As well as providing an awareness of time, the phonograph also functions as a device that allows us to stop or freeze time, by capturing sounds quite literally as a permanent record: "We have always wished we could stop the flow, the direction, of what passes intolerably then disappears, the voice that dissolves after having resonated, the past that vanishes after having lived."[41] This is also precisely what Kerouac attempts to do through his experimental prose style, as it goes through different processes.[42] He uses this technique in Doctor Sax; so for example one passage describes him playing on the flood-swollen Merrimac river. As he stands on

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[40] Charles Grivel, "The Phonograph's Horned Mouth," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde, ed. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) 40.
[41] Grivel, "Horned Mouth," 43.
[42] As Matt Theado points out, "Kerouac had discovered the method of manipulating time while writing Visions Of Cody as he repeated scenes from different angles or interjected long asides in the middle of an action or a piece of dialogue." (Theado, Understanding Jack Kerouac 98.)

his raft surveying the scene, we have not only a description of what he can see, but over a page of prose detailing all of the things he is thinking about in that short time, so for instance "I might have been dreaming of Skunk … the time Skunk was supposed to fight Dicky in the park-trail and somebody intervened in the long red dusk of ancient heroic events and now Skunk was a baseball star on our team but also his house in Rosemont was probably floating away."[43] Kerouac here tries to capture everything that is happening in this fleeting moment, slowing down time to describe both what is being seen and what is being thought by the young Jacky from the moment he jumps onto the raft to the point at which he jumps off to safety. Kerouac uses dashes rather than full stops in this section as the thoughts tend to flow from one another, and this also gives the passage the feel of a stream of consciousness, paralleling the actual flow of water.

In October 1954, Kerouac sent an excerpt from Doctor Sax to Alfred Kazin and wrote that: "the first part is printed exactly as scribbled swiftly in toilet in Mexico City in spring 1952. The main thing, I feel, is that the urgency of explaining something has its own words and rhythm, and time is of the essence – Modern Prose."[44] The place of composition relates Kerouac's writing to scatology in the most literal sense. It also fits with Kerouac's earlier description of his writing method, telling Ginsberg that his sketching technique involves "[slapping] it all down shameless, willy-nilly, rapidly."[45] Kerouac later refines this description even further and in 'Essentials of Spontaneous Prose' lists one of the key features of the method as "no pause to think of proper word but the infantile pileup of scatological buildup

[43] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 142.
[44] Jack Kerouac, "To Alfred Kazin," 27 October, 1954, Selected Letters, 450. Nicosia explains that "If Bill had a lot of company, Jack would smoke in the toilet, writing in pencil in his notebook. It was getting risky to smoke pot in Mexico City." (Nicosia, Memory Babe 390.)
[45] Jack Kerouac, "To Allen Ginsberg," 18 May, 1952, Selected Letters 356.

words till satisfaction is gained."[46] This mode of composition that emphasises the inclusion of all one's thoughts, even those which would not normally be written about is reflected in the text itself in the imagery of detritus and shit that appears repeatedly throughout Doctor Sax, most notably in connection with the Merrimac river which is central to the narrative. The relationship between Kerouac's writing method and the depiction of the river in the text is not merely coincidental, and is clearly referred to in the line "- Deep in myself I'm mindful of the action of the river, in words that sneak slowly like the river, and sometimes flood."[47] The river is a standard symbol of the passage of time, but it is also full of "crap;" its banks strewn with "movie magazines, empty cans, rat rags, dirt."[48] Jacky and his friends play in the river, "fish[ing] out crap from the stream."[49] They also "went swimming, three times a day in the white sand dumped there – where regularly you saw lumps of human shit floating – I have nightmares of swallowing a cud of crap."[50]

Whilst Jacky has nightmares of literally ingesting shit, he comically takes in his friends, taking pleasure in his ability to make his friend Dicky metaphorically "[swallow] a cud of crap" by making him believe in Jacky's increasingly elaborate creation of the figure of the Black Thief: "For some odd reason having to do with his personal psychological position (psyche) Dicky became terrified of the Black Thief – he began to believe in the sinister and heinous aspects of the deal – or the – secretive – perfectly silent – action."[51] Another key facet of the success of the deception are the notes that Jacky leaves for Dicky purporting to be from the Black Thief: "I was the Black Thief, I put notes in his door. 'Beware, Tonight the Black Thief will Strike

[46] Jack Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[47] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 137.
[48] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 60.
[49] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 60.
[50] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 63.
[51] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 45.

Again. Signed, the Black Thief!!!'"[52] As Dicky becomes increasingly scared of the Black Thief and convinced of his existence, Jacky begins to suspect that this is because the notes that he leaves are particularly potent in some way: "The Black Thief note I printed, by hand, in ink, thickly, on beautiful scraps of glazed paper I got from my father's printing shop – The paper was sinister, rich, might have scared Dicky – "[53] For a child, the notes provide tangible evidence of the Black Thief's existence, and their sophisticated presentation places them outside of the realms of the everyday world and marks them instead as a product of a dark, sinister and mysterious other world in which anything is possible. Jacky's physical appearance as the Black Thief is comical, in his "cape made of rubber (my sister's beach cape of the thirties, red and black like Mephistopheles)" and an "old slouch hat" but his written notes are far more convincing, and he wonders "'What foolish power had I discovered and been possessed by?'"[54] The 'foolish power' is in fact that of print and writing and it is noticeable that printing is at the heart of the community that Jacky inhabits throughout his childhood. "Dicky's father worked in a printing plant on a canal, just like my father."[55] The notes that Jacky writes for Dicky are especially powerful and deceptive because of their presentation: "it was so sinister – like the paper I used to Black Thief Dicky, sinister – "[56] The paper is from the world of print rather than writing, and interestingly he chooses to say that he "prints" the text onto the paper, even though he does this by hand. The appearance of the text on these notes is such that it is not obvious that it has been handwritten, therefore detaching the notes from the everyday realm of the human and adding to their uncanny effect. As an adult, he only has a "pencil and paper" to write/sketch with, and even as the editor of his newspaper as a

[52] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 45.
[53] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 47.
[54] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 45, 47.
[55] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 44.
[56] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 69.

child he has simply a "pencil," thus the fact that the notes are written in ink heightens their effect, again placing them outside of his normal sphere of textual production.[57]

As a child, Jacky emulates the adult world of print with great solemnity, and produces his own newspapers with meticulous details of the horse races that he stages using marbles, as well as made-up stories, all of which are then "printed by hand on gloomy gray-green sheets of Time."[58] Again this description of "printing" by hand is an interesting slippage. It is not clear precisely how Jacky achieves this, as the examples of his newspaper that appear in the text of Doctor Sax are set in typeface rather than a reproduction of handwriting made to look like print. It is probable that Jacky reproduced the printed typeface of the adult world by hand, although there are suggestions that as a child, Kerouac himself had access to a typewriter.[59] Jacky describes "running off" copies of his newspaper, the Mohican Futurity, as though it is in printed form and easily reproducible but this could easily be attributed to imaginative childhood play.[60] In "printing" rather than merely handwriting, he is creating an object which does not emanate from himself as a child, but from his alter-ego Jack Lewis, who "was Commissioner, Track Handicapper, President of the Racing Association, Secretary of the Treasury - Jack Lewis had nothing lacking, while he lived – his newspapers flourished – he wrote editorials against the Shade, he was not afraid of Black Thieves."[61] Whilst the child clearly emulates in his play what he sees around him, this printed world that Jacky creates is very important to him, and his newspaper allows him to build an elaborate fantasy world that has a reality for him. Whilst the content of the newspapers is important to Jacky in terms of creating a

[57] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 7, 84.
[58] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 82.
[59] According to Nicosia, Kerouac learned to type at a young age and used his father's typewriter. (Nicosia, Memory Babe 33.)
[60] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 82. The name of the paper again quite obviously juxtaposes the past and the future.
[61] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 83.

complete history of his marble racing games, it is the materiality of these papers and the technology of producing them that is most exciting to him, and most interesting for my larger argument.

The emphasis on the presentation of the Black Thief notes, and on the power of print and of writing plays on the notion of being able to write something into being, and of a child's imagination being vivid enough to conjure a reality from text. This is also captured in Jacky's memory of his dream of a visit to the library: "All the night before I've been dreaming of books – I'm standing in the children's library in the basement, rows of glazed brown books are in front of me – my soul thrills to touch the soft used meaty pages covered with avidities of reading – at last, at last, I'm opening the magic brown book – I see the great curlicued print, the immense candelabra firstletters at the beginnings of chapters."[62] The printed word, presented in all its materiality here, as medium more than message is magical in that it has the power to create new worlds for the child to explore. The printed comic books and magazines that Jacky and his friends are avid fans of form a central part of their childhood, and hold the same kind of thrill as opening a book at the library. The magazines provide the raw material for their imaginary play, and from these pages are conjured Doctor Sax, Count Condu and other shadowy figures: "I lay in my white sheets reading with cat and candy bar . . . that's where all these things were born."[63] The safety of home allows Jacky to start exploring things that he doesn't understand, through play and imagination. The white sheets on his bed here are like blank paper, providing a contrast with the blackness of ink.

As Matt Theado points out, "Doctor Sax's color is black, the color of deep impenetrable mystery, the imitation of which Jack sought when he became the Black

[62] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 159.
[63] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 42.

Thief."[64] Perhaps more specifically, black is the colour of the ink – the ink that Jacky used to write sinister notes in his guise as the Black Thief, and the ink that creates Doctor Sax – as well as the colour of the tar from which his memories begin. Printing and ink permeate Jacky's childhood, and he recalls his comic books most notably through their smell: "Saturday nights of funnies still smelling of ink."[65] Ink is portrayed as something powerful and highly evocative for Jacky and it is the aroma of the comic books that is most immediate to him and is the most memorable aspect of them, long after the stories have been forgotten. The notion of Doctor Sax as a comic book hero who comes to life is realised through descriptions which repeatedly describe him in terms of ink: "his black slouchcape like ink in the sun"; "a cape of ink furls upon the waters where Doctor Sax rows"; Sax "vanishes like ink in inky night."[66] Although Sax has escaped from the confines of the page, he still essentially exists as the product of the comic book, and although he has come to life in the world of the child, these descriptions of him still underline the fact that he does not exist as an actual physical presence. Eventually, Jacky, too, becomes temporarily part of this imaginary inky comic book world, giving him special powers: "I fly after [Sax] in a minor flare of ink."[67]

The relationship between Jacky and Doctor Sax is worth considering in more detail, because as well as the printed word, the text emphasises the importance of speech and self-expression, and this is clearly demonstrated in the portrayal of their relationship. The character of Doctor Sax is gradually developed throughout the text, and there is an obvious trajectory from Jacky's creation of Sax in childhood to the final rejection of him in early adolescence, which runs in parallel with Sax's move

[64] Theado, Understanding Jack Kerouac 100.
[65] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 100.
[66] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 31, 143, 133.
[67] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 181.

from silence to speech. In the early section of Doctor Sax, Sax is a shadowy figure. "I didn't know his name then. He didn't frighten me, either. I sensed he was my friend . . . my old, old friend . . . my ghost, personal angel, private shadow, secret lover."[68] Jacky is not afraid of the silent Doctor Sax, and in fact feels a deep affinity towards him as a protector and guide into the mysterious adult world. At this stage, Sax lurks on the margins of Jacky's daily life: "Doctor Sax is watching our pathetic sand game with an inscrutable silence."[69] The key word here is "silence" for as Jacky points out, "My early Doctor Sax was completely silent."[70] Slightly later in the text, Jacky calls on Sax to speak: "Doctor Sax, whirl me no Shrouds – open up your heart and talk to me – in those days he was silent, sardonic, laughed in tall darkness."[71] This is the first time that Jacky speaks directly to Sax, and his plea for speech is met with screamed gibberish as Sax and Jacky open lines of communication for the first time: "Now I hear him scream from the bed of the brim – 'The Snake is Rising Inch an Hour to destroy us – yet you sit, you sit. Aïeee, the horrors of the East – make no fancy up-carves to the Ti-bet wall than a Kangaroo's mule eared cousin – Frezels! Gawms!'"[72] Although Jacky cannot understand Sax, he feels that Sax can guide him through the mysteries of the adult world. The progression of Sax's speech from this point clearly mirrors Jacky's growth from child to adult in terms of discovering the power to express himself. Sax is Jacky's childhood creation, and as a child, he is at first unable to give an adult voice to Sax as he does not have the ability to express himself clearly, as we see here in Sax's first speech. Jacky and Sax's first true conversation comes much later in the text and centres around Sax's knowledge that Jacky "didn't read a book today, did you, about the power of drawing a circle in the

[68] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 33.
[69] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 44.
[70] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 43.
[71] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 71.
[72] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 71.

earth at night – you just stood here at nightfall with your mouth hanging open and fisting your entrail piece – ’”[73] Sax goes on to reveal further knowledge of Jacky’s secrets and “At that moment I knew that Doctor Sax was my friend.”[74] From this point onwards, Jacky is drawn into Sax’s view of his own childhood world, as they glide through Lowell observing everything from a distance. This gives Jacky a new perspective on his life, enabling to see things in the adult world that he has never before been party to, as he becomes detached from the places and people that have been so comforting and familiar to him as a child. He instead finds himself in the position of voyeur:

> Tall weepy Bert Desjardins’ brother is coming up Phebe from work … they think he’s been to work but he’s been to skew his girl in a dirty barn in the Dracut Woods, they stood against the raw drippy wood of the wall, near some piles of kidshit, and kicked some rocks aside, and he lifted her dress over the goose pimples of her thighs, and they leered together in the dark pant barn – [75]

This shared view of the town unites Jacky and Doctor Sax, thus “Gliding together in the dark shadows of the night Doctor Sax and I knew this and everything about Lowell.”[76] There is a sense of camaraderie here, Jacky feels that Doctor Sax has much to teach him, and feels privileged to be with him, believing that “Doctor Sax is speaking to the bottom of my boy problems and they could all be solved if I could fathom his speech.”[77] Sax goes on to explain the mysteries of the adult world to Jacky, including death, civilization, socialising, solitude, nightmares, love, old age and maturity, but tells Jacky that “you’ll never be as happy as you are now in your

[73] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 167.
[74] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 169.
[75] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 172.
[76] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 173.
[77] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 171.

quiltish innocent book-devouring boyhood immortal night."[78] At this point, Jacky still looks up to Sax as his guide into the adult world, and feels as though he is finally beginning to understand him. It does not take long, however, before Jacky becomes more fearful of Sax's speech and "shivered to hear him, not knowing what he meant, nor capable of understanding."[79] This fear soon gives way to a realisation that perhaps Sax is not in fact saying anything comprehensible at all: "'Dr Sax!' I cried. 'I don't understand what you're saying! You're mad!'"[80] As Jacky develops his own understanding of the adult world and is increasingly therefore able to express himself in his own words, Sax quite literally no longer makes sense to him. In fact, Jacky becomes progressively more afraid of Doctor Sax, and particularly his increasing inability to communicate with him. It is highly significant, then, that in order to make Sax listen to him, Jacky finally speaks to him in the language of his childhood – in French: "'Dr Sax,' I cried, 'Monsieur Sax, m'fa peur!' (You scare me!) 'Okay,' he instantly said and reared back to normal … He stood silently for a long while."[81] Just as Jacky here reverts to his childhood form of speech, so Sax too reverts to the silent figure of Jacky's early childhood imagination.

As Jacky reaches maturity and begins to cast aside aspects of his life as a child, Doctor Sax is finally revealed as simply an ordinary man:

> He had taken off his slouch hat, he had taken off his cape. They were on the ground, limp black vestments. He was just standing with his hands in his pockets, they were just poor old beatup trousers and he had a white shirt underneath, and regular brown shoes, and regular socks. And hawk nose – it

[78] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 175-6.
[79] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 180.
[80] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 181.
[81] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 184. Italics in original.

was morning again, his face was back to normal color, it turned green only at night [.][82]

As Jacky outgrows his childhood, so, too, he outgrows the creations of his childish imagination, and the "hanging coat in the dark, extended arms dripping folds of cloth, leer of dark face" that frightened him so much is revealed as nothing to be afraid of.[83] Moreover, it is only once Sax has been shown to be simply a man that he can say anything to the grownup Jacky that makes any sense. Towards the end of the text, Sax and Jacky finally both begin to work on the same level of comprehension and have the following conversation:

'nothing works in the end, you just – there's just absolutely nothing – nobody cares what happens to you, the universe doesn't care what happens to mankind . . . Well, we'll let it go at that, there's nothing we can do about it.'

I felt sick. 'Why can't we have another – why can't we have some more – why do we have to go through all this -'

'Well I know,' said Doctor Sax, 'but -'[84]

The disjointed speech patterns of Sax and Jacky here closely reflect each other, and the brief exchange demonstrates an understanding that neither of them has any more power over events than the other: "there's nothing *we* can do about it." Sax's final "I know" does not indicate that he has any knowledge to impart, but is rather a term of agreement with Jacky. Sax and Jacky finally share the same level of expression, as the child becomes an adult.

Sax's move from silence to sound reflects the fact that the entire text of Doctor Sax is filled with sound, whether of speech (which is often presented as a script within the prose); music; the eerie, theatrical laugh of Doctor Sax "mwee hee hee ha ha," or

[82] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 203.
[83] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 43.
[84] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 203.

the over-dramatised radio-style sound effects of various actions: "you hear my footsteps unmistakeably pounding up the stairs on the run, pleup plop plop pleep plip."[85] The radio, along with the phonograph, is a central feature in Doctor Sax, although again the technology seems to frighten Jackie slightly: "our first radio had a great shit-colored false-paper-disc speaker round and strange."[86] This description of the radio suggests that Jacky again regards it as slightly mysterious and otherworldly, and Allison McCracken explains that "the disembodied voice has long had the potential to discomfit listeners because it foregrounds the unnatural separation of the voice from the body."[87] Stations exploited this capacity of radio to scare listeners, and used the medium to best effect by broadcasting crime and detective broadcasts programmes, which became particularly popular during early 1940s.[88] Just as the notes of the Black Thief seem so mysterious by not appearing to emanate from any human hand, so too the disembodied voice had a similar effect.

As with the phonograph, there is also a sense of nostalgia in these descriptions of the radio, and again an indication that the radio offers a link to the past: "as on the radio thirties broadcasts of old gray soap operas and news from Boston about finnan haddie and the prices, East Port to Sandy Hook, gloomy serials, static, thunder of the old America that thundered on the plain."[89] The reference to "the old America" harks back to the mythic West, and the quotation also gives a sense of the variety of radio programming, covering quite literally everything from the price of fish. Whilst Jacky tends to listen to the phonograph by himself, the radio is a shared experience that reminds him of being either with friends or with his mother. He describes for example how he and his friends "lay on the sofa upside down in dark

[85] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 46, 78.
[86] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 66.
[87] McCracken, "Scary Women and Scarred Men," 184.
[88] McCracken, "Scary Women and Scarred Men," 185.
[89] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 78.

summer evenings with the window open and only the radio dial for a light, deep browngloom redglow."[90] In Doctor Sax, Jacky goes on to explain the childhood pleasure of listening to the radio: "We in the summer evening indulged ourselves in various listens to the radio (Gangbusters, The Shadow – which is on Saturday afternoon and always dismally short of the mark) – Orson Welles great-programs of Saturday night, 11 P.M. Witches' Tales on faint stations –)"[91] There is a sense of community here created through the shared experience of listening which is particularly interesting given that the medium was seen as having an "invisible, abstracted, and fragmented" audience.[92] Jacky's parenthetical aside here also highlights that this audience was also quite demanding. The radio version of the Shadow cannot match up to the character that he creates in his imagination, based on The Shadow magazine. The medium, whilst potentially very powerful, does not compare favourably to the printed version of The Shadow for Jacky. Jason Loviglio's analysis of the radio and magazine versions of The Shadow describes the printed version as creating "a world of twisting city streets, convoluted plots and foreign foes" for the character the Shadow to inhabit.[93] He contrasts this with the radio programme that presented a stripped-down version of this, with much less depth, and this may go some way towards explaining Jacky's dissatisfaction.[94]

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[90] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 63.
[91] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 64. This description echoes a scene in Burroughs' Junky where the radio briefly becomes the central focus of experience: "'…Say, this is sort of a fireside kick,' she said, pointing to the radio which was the only light in the room." (William S. Burroughs, Junky (London: Penguin, 2002), 16.) It also echoes the scene in On the Road when the light from the radio is all that can be seen in the car, as discussed in the previous chapter.
[92] Jason Loviglio, "The Shadow Meets the Phantom Public," Fear Itself: Enemies Real & Imagined in American Culture, ed. Nancy Lusignan Schultz (Indiana: Purdue UP, 1999), 313 – 330, 319-20. Loviglio's analysis of the Shadow also describes the Shadow's speech: "His clipped, telegraphic speech, his penchant for repeating phrases as if transmitting by Morse code; and the metallic sound of his filtered voice all contribute to the sense that the Shadow speaks in the idiom of electronic communication" (324). He also has "verbal and technical powers of mind control, surveillance, and persuasion" (317).
[93] Loviglio, "Shadow," 316.
[94] Loviglio, "Shadow," 316.

Whilst Jacky expresses disappointment with the representation of the Shadow on the radio, listening to music evidently excites him. The text contains several attempts to describe in words the sounds that emanate from the phonograph:

> From the maw-mouth of the Victrola the electric yoigle yurgle little thirties crooners wound too fast with a slam-bash Chinese restaurant orchestry we fly into the latest 1931 hit, ukeleles, ro-bo-bos, hey now, smash-ah! *hah*! atch a *tcha*! but usually it was just, 'Dow-dow-dow, tadoodle-lump!' – 'Gee I like hot jyazz' – Snazzz!'[95]

The onomatopoeia lends this piece a feeling of amazing energy, and the attempt to transcribe sounds onto the page is an excellent example of the way in which, in Hrebeniak's words, "The musical prose of Kerouac's favourite book, Doctor Sax … [weaves] in and out of more formal syntax to recover the sensuous grasp of the child's unfettered mind and bind an entire novel."[96] The radio provides background music on several occasions, and one particularly interesting description of Jacky listening to music on the radio appears to completely merge childhood experience with that of the adult: "– sit back, imagine – stoned beyond eternity as I listened to the for-the-first-time-to-me individual pieces of music and instruments."[97] This is an odd amalgamation of the experience of a child listening to a piece of music for the first time ever, and the use of a very adult description of this experience as being "stoned beyond eternity." The link here is perhaps the sensation of newness and the power of drugs to affect perception so that one has the feeling of listening to something familiar as if like a child for the first time, regaining that initial excitement and delight.

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[95] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 81-2.
[96] Michael Hrebeniak, Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2006) 144.
[97] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 66.

As well as the radio, phonograph records provide a soundtrack for Jacky's play, and so in turn for the Bookmovie section of the novel. Before he begins his all-important marble races, Jacky ensures that "the Victrola [is] already to go with *Dardanella* and crank hangs ready, stack of sad thirties thick records, among them Fred Astaire's *Cheek to Cheek*, *Parade of Wooden Soldiers* by John Philip Sousa."[98] This movie soundtrack is foregrounded in a couple of scenes in the Bookmovie, notably in Scene thirteen which is a single sentence: "I rush to the phonograph, turn on *Dardanella* with the push hook."[99] Again, scene nineteen in its entirety reads: "I'm at the Victrola putting in a new record, swiftly, it's *The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers*, everybody's leaving the racetrack – "[100] Whilst the Bookmovie section is not completely silent, it does draw heavily on the model of silent cinema with the action set to music, and its emphasis on the visual rather than speech.[101] The scenes themselves are organised as a series of juxtapositions, so that at times there is a sharp cut in the action between one scene and another. The emphasis on the visual is highlighted in Jacky's directions, for example to "look closeup"; "look up"; and finally the far more complex camera-eye description: "we are only looking in at the door, can't see the entire office, in fact we are looking in at the office from about six feet up in the door a foot from it on a stone step level with the office floor."[102] The Bookmovie as a whole in fact has a highly complicated structure. The name suggests some sort of hybrid combination drawing on characteristics of both forms, but the relation of the elements is not clear. On the one hand Jacky provides a narrative, as

[98] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 78.
[99] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 80.
[100] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 84.
[101] Exceptions are when his mother speaks (77); he does a voiceover for his horse races (79); and his father speaks (85). The text makes reference to several films, including the silent film The Big Parade (101).
[102] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 75, 76, 85. As we have already seen, Kerouac employs other cinematic techniques such as freeze-framing elsewhere in Doctor Sax.

he watches himself as though from a distance as he takes part in the action of the scene. However, intertwined with the action that he describes to us objectively are also memories and various asides, meaning that many of the scenes are also infused with highly subjective comments. In other words, Jacky does not simply present us with a description of a picture that we see before us as a stillframe, but adds depth and nuance to this with his own extra descriptions and memories that could never be part of an actual movie, so there is an internality here in terms of Jacky's memories, as they are not being played out for us to watch. There are obvious parallels here with Kerouac's own writing style, and indeed Kerouac would later list the bookmovie in his "Belief and Technique for Modern Prose" describing it as "the movie in words, the visual American form."[103]

This form is evidently something which interested Kerouac a great deal, and he would go on to experiment with similar kinds of representations in Visions of Cody. Indeed, Kerouac's use of these kinds of cinematic techniques within Doctor Sax lends weight to Tim Hunt's contention that "the most useful analogue for understanding Kerouac's sense of structure and 'wild form' is film."[104] I would argue, though, that in many ways Kerouac actually demonstrates the limitations of film in the bookmovie, even as he invokes it. The Bookmovie form evidently gave him more freedom than an actual film would do. In the most basic terms, the bookmovie in Doctor Sax is described as being in "technicolor," in contrast to the black and white films that he makes reference to throughout the rest of the text.[105] It is, though, this layering and juxtaposition of subjective and objective, which the text allows but a film itself would not, that particularly demonstrates why a "bookmovie"

[103] Jack Kerouac, "Belief and Technique for Modern Prose: List of Essentials," The Penguin Book of the Beats, ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin, 1992) 58-9.
[104] Hunt, Crooked Road 155.
[105] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 76.

may be a more satisfactory form of communication. Indeed, as Jacky and his sister walk past the movie theatre where they spent many hours as youngsters, Nin remarks how "we used to go to the Royal all the time hey? – that's all we thought about go to the Royal – now we are grown up we read books."[106] The children now privilege the printed word over the cinematic, (although comic books, of course are a hybrid of the two) and there is a sense that Kerouac ultimately does as well, despite his interest in, and experimentation with a wide array of forms of representation.

The tape recorder also plays a role in Kerouac's experimentation with modes of representation in Doctor Sax. In December 1951 Kerouac writes to Carl Solomon "I was up all last night a rainy night doing a two hour tape recording one hour of it the entire tale of Dr. Sax by myself while Neal and Carolyn and kiddies slept and rain fell on the roof. In other words I guess I have a novel. All I have to do is type it etc."[107] This early rendering of Doctor Sax as an oral piece suggests that Kerouac by this point had the entire story mapped out in his mind. This tape experiment may have been the logical extension of typewriting onto a continuous roll of paper that he had attempted earlier that year with a version of On The Road. His decision to tape the Doctor Sax piece rather than type it may have been a practical decision based on the fact that Kerouac found the physical act of typing to be less than satisfactory in attempting to capture a stream of consciousness. In June 1951 he complains to Neal Cassady that "I feel the pull and strain of having to type with a rusty typewriter like this and a dull ribbon that won't enact my tones and so, also; with a few brews my fingers flail and less than fly as usual."[108] He begins the letter in which he tells Solomon of his tape recording with an apology for the typing errors: "How are you, you old foof [sic]. This is a Spanish typewriter but I have a lot of important things to

[106] Kerouac, Doctor Sax 160.
[107] Jack Kerouac, "To Carl Solomon," 27 December, 1951, Selected Letters, 328.
[108] Jack Kerouac, "To Neal Cassady," 10 June, 1951, Selected Letters, 318.

talk to you about so don't worry about ?, etc."[109] Hence Kerouac may have consciously chosen to use the tape recorder to capture his stream of consciousness more efficiently than his faulty typewriter, especially after "a few brews." His letter to Cassady also suggests that the tape allowed him to capture the sounds of words more accurately than the typewriter. Carolyn Cassady remembers the composition of Doctor Sax, recalling how "We read aloud, discussed books and authors, and usually recorded it all. (Having few tapes, which were expensive, we short-sightedly erased most of what we recorded.) … Sometimes Jacky read to us from Dr Sax in a great booming voice."[110] The tape recorder here seems to give a sense of community and serves to create a performative space.

It is clear, though, that Kerouac did not simply type up the taped version of Doctor Sax to produce a final, complete piece, but used it as a framework from which to build the full text, as he writes to Ginsberg that "Doctor Sax was written high on tea without pausing to think, sometimes Bill would come in the room and so the chapter ended there."[111] Kerouac again here emphasises the need to work without interruption. He also suggests that the chapter lengths are arbitrary to an extent, rather than carefully planned, and this may explain why some of the chapters, notably in Book One and Book Five of the text, are only a paragraph or so long. It may also be the reason that some of the paragraphs end with ellipses or dashes. Kerouac's mode of composition appears, then, to use any combination of the following methods in no particular order: writing in draft; rewriting; taping as much as possible in a stream of consciousness; writing again using the taped piece as a framework. This use of tape also hints at a desire to produce a piece of writing that is not solely visual, but one which also works well on an aural/oral level, and Kerouac's interest in portraying

[109] Jack Kerouac, "To Carl Solomon," 27 December, 1951, Selected Letters, 328.
[110] Cassady, Off The Road 195-6.
[111] Jack Kerouac, "To Allen Ginsberg," 8 November, 1952, Selected Letters, 383.

sound and speech within the text reflects this.[112] In the next chapter, I explore Kerouac's mode of composition further, looking specifically at the development of his spontaneous prose technique and his portrayal of epistolary practice in The Subterraneans.

[112] These two facets of the text are reflected in a screenplay version of Doctor Sax, which was discovered in 1998, entitled "Doctor Sax and the Great World Snake" and released as an audio version in 2003.

3. Spontaneous Prose in The Subterraneans

The Subterraneans was written in October 1953 and was Kerouac's first novel to be produced entirely using the spontaneous prose method. He himself recognised the methodological departure that this constituted, particularly when compared to the length of time that it had taken him to produce his earlier work.[1] As he describes it "first formal novel T&C written in tradition of long work and revision, from 1946 to 1948, three years, published by Harcourt Brace in 1950. – Then discovered 'spontaneous prose' and wrote, say, The Subterraneans in three nights – wrote On The Road in 3 weeks. – "[2] The Subterraneans was one of several of Kerouac's works that was written on a scroll of paper, although the spontaneous prose method should not be seen as identical to this, as not all of his scrolls were written as pieces of spontaneous prose. Thus whilst Kerouac had experimented with fast working in the scroll draft of On The Road, The Subterraneans combined this with a new style of writing, enabling Kerouac to capture in prose the emotional rawness of an intimate relationship and its subsequent breakdown. In this chapter, I examine Kerouac's spontaneous prose method and the way that he both uses it as a mode of production, and self-knowingly represents and critiques it within the narrative of The Subterraneans.

[1] Nicosia notes that "[Alene Lee's] final rejection of Jack came in early October [1953]. Shortly after, he went home and in three days and nights of speed typing on Benzedrine produced a novel about their affair called The Subterraneans." (Nicosia, Memory Babe 445)
[2] Jack Kerouac, Lonesome Traveler (London: Penguin, 2000) 9.

By 1953, Kerouac had refined his spontaneous prose methodology sufficiently to produce a set of guidelines on spontaneous prose, consolidating his earlier experiments with sketching and wild form in Doctor Sax, and his emphasis on confessional and epistolary practice that helped to form On The Road. Ann Charters explains that this piece, that would eventually be published as "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," was something that "Kerouac wrote at Ginsberg's and Burroughs's request the previous fall, [1953] after astonishing them by finishing The Subterraneans in three nights."[3] Kerouac appeared to be bewildered by its popularity: "people on the west coast are copying down a manifesto I wrote about prose which Allen G. has and goddam it [sic] I'd like to see that manifesto myself since I wrote it swiftly in his kitchen and gave it to him . . . *people copying it down* – what is all this?"[4] Another methodological piece entitled "Belief & Technique For Modern Prose: List of Essentials" appeared in a letter in 1955 and was revised in 1959 shortly before its publication in Evergreen Review.[5] Kerouac described his prose style in The Subterraneans to Alfred Kazin in 1954: "I don't use periods and semicolons, just dashes, which are interior little releases, as if a saxophonist drawing breath there. The effect is good prose, don't you think? – certainly not obtuse, opaque, heavy-handed or dull."[6] He also compared it to his earlier work Doctor Sax (written in 1952), explaining that the common characteristic of both texts was the "true beautiful

[3] Ann Charters, Selected Letters note 1, 445. An excellent colour reproduction of this list, handwritten in pencil, can be found in Gewirtz, Beatific Soul 173. Interestingly, Gewirtz notes, "Significantly, when Kerouac was organising his Archive, he added to the manuscript the title 'Essentials of Modern Prose,' disdaining the word 'spontaneous.'" (Gewirtz, 174.)
[4] Jack Kerouac, "To Robert Giroux," late summer 1954, Selected Letters, 445. Emphasis in original. Kerouac must have enjoyed the irony of people obediently copying down his instructions on how to be spontaneous.
[5] Jack Kerouac, "To Arabelle Porter," 28 May 1955, Selected Letters, 487.
[6] Jack Kerouac, "To Alfred Kazin," 27 October 1954, Selected Letters, 450.

urgent breathless rhythm."[7] This relates to one of Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" where he notes: "no periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas-but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases.)"[8] Kerouac's emphasis on the breath also highlights the importance of orality in his work, and he writes that the text should be formed in "rhythms of rhetorical exhalation." He describes the breath as "a fist coming down on a table with each complete utterance, bang! (the space dash)"; "the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing."[9] The breath space therefore becomes an extremely powerful force in Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, and it is crucial that he is able to adequately portray this on the page. As Michael Davidson explains, the breath was of great importance in much Beat writing, and he cites both Kerouac's spontaneous prose and Ginsberg's mantric breathing as part of a tradition of writing that "articulates an ideal of immediacy based on the body and its expressive rendering through speech."[10] It is Ginsberg who articulates most clearly why the accurate portrayal of the breath is so crucial in enabling the reader to connect with the text and the experiences that the writer is attempting to portray, saying of 'Howl':

> The rhythmic units that I'd written down were basically breathing exercise forms which if anybody else repeated would catalyse them in the same *pranic* breathing

[7] Jack Kerouac, "To Alfred Kazin," 27 October 1954, Selected Letters, 451.
[8] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[9] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[10] Michael Davidson, "Technologies of Presence: Orality & The Tapevoice of Contemporary Poetics," Sound States: Innovative Poetics & Acoustical Technologies, ed. Adalaide Morris (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 98.

> psychological spasm that I was going through and so would presumably catalyse in them the same *affects* or emotions.[11]

The breath space is therefore essential in creating a powerful piece of work that will enable the reader to truly experience the emotions that are described within it through the physical act of breathing. Davidson points out that somewhat ironically, it was the typewriter which enabled writers to mark out breath spaces accurately within their texts because of its capacity to produce precise spacings, and as he explains:

> The notation of such physiological functions was made possible by a machine. The typewriter could provide the poet with the same 'stave and the bar' as the musician: 'It is the advantage of the typewriter,' [Charles] Olson writes, 'that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends.'[12]

Marshall McLuhan, similarly, believed that the typewriter encouraged writers to "recover spoken, dramatic stress in poetry" by laying out the words on the page precisely.[13] There is a question here though as to how successful these techniques are when applied to prose as opposed to poetry or oral performance, and as Daniel Belgrad argues, "Performances … make possible the communication of more meaning than can be transmitted through print. The capacity of the oral poem to 'make sense' includes prosodic effects like timbre, pitch, rhythm, inflection, even gesture."[14] However, Kerouac's view in "Essentials" is clear, and that is that the printed word is powerful enough that if the writer

[11] Allen Ginsberg, qtd in Belgrad, Culture of Spontaneity 203-04.
[12] Davidson, "Technologies of Presence," 98.
[13] McLuhan, Understanding Media 260.
[14] Belgrad, Culture of Spontaneity 220.

were to "satisfy [him]self first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by same laws operating in his own human mind."[15]

The importance of the dash is again highlighted in Kerouac's correspondence around the time that The Subterraneans was being prepared for publication. The first version of the text was written in three days in October 1953, and the manuscript was typed up in 1957, before finally being published in 1958.[16] The text was significantly edited by the publishers, and on receiving the proofs, Kerouac proceeded to express his displeasure:

> I cant [sic] possibly go on as a responsible prose artist and also as a believer in the impulses of my own heart and in the beauty of pure phrases that I separate by dashes when 'I draw a breath,' each of which pours out to the tune of the whole story its own rhythmic yawp of expostulation, & riddle them with commas, cut them in half, in threes, in fours, ruining the swing, making what was reasonably wordy prose even more wordy and unnaturally awkward (because castrated). In fact the manuscript of Subterraneans, I see by the Photostats, is so (already) riddled and buckshot with commas and marks I cant see how you can restore the original out of it.[17]

Again here Kerouac points to the punctuation as being vital to maintaining the integrity and most importantly the sound and flow of his text. In a letter to Sterling Lord he is

[15] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[16] Kerouac had to prepare the proofs for publication and wrote: "Dear Don, I've just finished five exhausting nights correcting the galleys of THE SUBTERRANEANS restoring the original freeflowing prose according to the original manuscript which I had here." Jack Kerouac, "To Donald Allen," 11 November 1957, Selected Letters 1957 – 1969, 83.
[17] Jack Kerouac, "To Donald Allen," 19 March 1957, Selected Letters 1957 – 1969, 15.

particularly concerned with the replacement and removal of his dashes from the manuscript, and wants to:

> Make this clear, that my prose is a series of rhythmic expostulations of speech visually separated for the convenience of the reader's eyes by dashes, by vigorous definite dashes, which can be seen coming as you read, so that some of my lines which get their temporary relief from commas can run far beyond the limits of one page-width (which is where my poetry becomes free of line-restrictions and is still prose thereby) and can run into three-page sentences if need be but are *definitely released by the dash.*[18]

As this extract shows, for Kerouac the dash was crucial as part of his spontaneous prose method, affecting both the sound and the look of the text on the page, and providing him with a tool that he felt effectively released him from the constraints of the page layout.

In 1962, almost a decade after Kerouac wrote The Subterraneans, he went on to theorise the breath space even further, in an unpublished typescript entitled "HISTORY OF THE BREATH AS A SEPARATOR OF STATEMENTS IN SPONTANEOUS WRITING." Here he again compares the use of marked breathing spaces in his work to that of jazz: "To the jazzman breath-measure is the natural suspiration of a simple story-line musical or otherwise, the stress of telling, of drawing thy breath in pain to tell the story."[19] To Kerouac, this is analogous to literary composition, and it is therefore just as important to get the breath spaces correct in writing. A long breath allows you to tell more than a short breath, and as you only have one opportunity to tell your story, it is

[18] Jack Kerouac, "To Sterling Lord," 4 March 1957, Selected Letters 1957 – 1969 11. Emphasis in original.
[19] Part of the typescript is reproduced in Gewirtz, Beatific Soul 177.

crucial to get these pauses right: "it has to be observed right on the dot in the fire ordeal of time passing by once and forever or hold your tongue."[20]

Kerouac's description of the edited manuscript as "castrated" again highlights the relationship between writer and text and the notion that for Kerouac this writing quite literally constitutes part of his body. This relates to the physical effort involved in the production of this writing, and Kerouac explains to an interviewer that "'Writing The Subs in three nights was really a fantastic athletic feat as well as mental, you shoulda seen me after I was done. . . . I was pale as a sheet and had lost fifteen pounds and looked strange in the mirror.'"[21] Just as with On The Road, this text came about as a result of Kerouac's experimentation with pushing the human body to its physical and emotional limits, imbuing the text with a particular sense of energy and immediacy.[22] The fact that he lost weight during the process gives the impression that he has actually written out a piece of himself, as does his description of himself as "pale as a sheet" like a blank piece of paper. He "looked strange" to himself because he had essentially lost part of what made him recognisable by putting it down on paper.

As with On The Road, in The Subterraneans Kerouac not only highlights the physical effort of writing, but also connects the processes of driving and writing through a sense of determination and forward movement: "with the same grit that made him write the half million words of his novel [he] bends to it and pushes the car through the Peninsula night and on into the dawn."[23] The notion of continual forward movement is highlighted here, as the car moves constantly forward in the same way as the production

[20] Gewirtz, Beatific Soul 176.
[21] Kerouac, interview, The Paris Review Interviews 126.
[22] Within the text itself, the body is closely linked to writing, with the recollection of Mardou and her sisters "writing on one another's backs" as children. Kerouac, The Subterraneans 59.
[23] Kerouac, The Subterraneans, 84.

of the manuscript. In addition to the sense of continual advancement as a key feature of the writing process, Kerouac also claimed that "Not a word of this book was changed after I had finished writing it in three sessions from dusk to dawn at the typewriter like a long letter to a friend."[24] Again we see here the emphasis on the epistolary nature of the text, and in this context, Kerouac's assertion that he did not revise the manuscript makes complete sense – letters are not generally drafted several times over, but instead function essentially as one side of a conversation, just as if one was speaking to another person, where utterances would not be subject to revision – something is said once and the conversation moves ever forwards. This was to become a central facet of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, and he listed in "Essentials" the importance of "no revisions (except obvious rational mistakes, such as names or calculated insertions in act of not writing but inserting)." This suggests that he might add things later, but would see them as part of an entirely different process, not part of the act of composition proper. Moreover, the narrative of The Subterraneans takes the issue of revision as one of its themes, demonstrating Kerouac's strong feelings on the subject and relating it back to his preference for immediacy in prose.

According to Ann Douglas, "The Subterraneans was written within days of the break with Alene Lee – precisely in order to evade as far as humanly possible the tempting powers of reinterpretation that distance provides; but [Kerouac], too, knew that it is well-nigh impossible to tell a story without putting oneself in charge."[25] In The Subterraneans Kerouac explores all of these issues. Taking issue with Tim Hunt's view, I

[24] Ann Charters, Selected Letters 1957 – 1969 note 35, 120. Letters show that in preparation for publication, the publishers severely cut the manuscript as well as editing it, and Kerouac took issue with this, calling it a "horrible castration job" and demanding that the text be restored. Jack Kerouac, "To Sterling Lord," 4 March 1957, Selected Letters 1957 – 1969 11.
[25] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xvi-xvii.

would argue that is a highly self-conscious piece of work, foregrounding as it does the processes of writing and communication, and using the deconstruction of love letters between Mardou Fox and Leo Percepied as a central focus precisely in order to draw the reader's attention to the issues of reinterpretation and of speaking for others.[26] On the surface, the narrative appears to be a confessional piece, written by the narrator, Percepied, to the reader. This is also, though, a love story involving two people, so the narrator also becomes the conduit for the voice of his lover Fox. A further level of complexity is added to this as the narrator speaks for Fox not just by way of narrating her speech or reporting his memories of her, but also through more purposeful acts such as eventually taking apart her letters. Given the importance of the epistolary to Kerouac's writing practice, this is a highly significant act which demonstrates the letter's oscillation between "the literary and the biographical, the public and the private."[27] Throughout the text, Percepied grapples with the awareness that it is very difficult to fairly portray someone else, remarking upon how difficult it is "to make a real confession and show what happened when you're such an egomaniac all you can do is take off on big paragraphs about minor details about yourself and the big soul details about others go sitting and waiting around."[28]

Percepied constantly defines himself within the text as 'a writer' and it is evident that this sense of identity is vitally important to him. There are two occasions in the text

[26] The name Percepied has been described as "a pun on 'pierced foot,' which has variously been interpreted as a Christ image, a reference to Saint Sebastian, and a sly acknowledgement by Kerouac of his Achilles' heel, that is, his dysfunctional relationships with women." (Michael J. Dittman, Jack Kerouac: A Biography (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004) 56.) It also has connotations of perception. Richard Ellis points out that Dr Percepied is a minor character in Proust's A la Recherche Du Temps Perdu. (Ellis, Liar! Liar! 154.) Tim Hunt's view is that The Subterraneans does not show "the extreme self-consciousness about the nature of language and the imagination as Visions of Cody." Hunt, Crooked Road 252.
[27] Harris, "Cold War Correspondents," 175.
[28] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 15.

in particular where this is most noticeable. The first is upon receiving a letter from Fox. Through her writing style, Percepied judges that she is finally identifying him as an author and this pleases him as it reflects his own perceptions of himself. On reading the line "Forgive the conjunctions and double infinitives and the not said" in Fox's letter, he reveals that he is "impressed and I think, she too there, for the first time self-conscious of writing to an author."[29] This pleases him immensely and highlights his need for validation from others of the way that he defines himself. Again a little later he lies in bed with Fox, musing on "my little Mardou whom I love, who'd never read my unpublished works but only the first novel, which has guts but has a dreary prose to it when all's said and done and so now holding her and spent with sex I dream of the day she'll read great works by me and admire me."[30] Here Percepied admits his own desperate need to produce better work and to be "admired" as a writer above anything else.

Both of these episodes highlight the fact that for Percepied, to be a successful writer is to have an audience, and it is this that he craves. He does not simply write for himself. This is reflected in his recognition of the reader in the text: "you must admit now I'm sticking to the facts"; "Bear with me all lover readers who've suffered pangs."[31] At these points in the writing, Percepied demonstrates an awareness and anticipation of the reader's reaction to what he is saying – he does not succeed in creating a two-way dialogue, but there is an impression that this is what he is trying to achieve. Whilst there is a sense within the text that Percepied is "hypothesizing the reader's responses as extensions and alternatives to his own" as Douglas claims, there is not really enough evidence to support her further assertion that "he feels his audience out there

[29] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 61.
[30] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 72.
[31] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 14, 49.

transforming and modifying what he writes."[32] Although the text demonstrates an awareness of the reader, there is no sense that this awareness really alters what he is saying to any great degree – the text is highly confessional and there is a need for him to tell everything, no matter who is listening.

Percepied's confessional prose style is very open, and he is aware that his confession should not be a means of portraying himself in the best light, but rather an attempt to document what really happened or was said, no matter how foolish it makes him look or how self-conscious he feels: "O the pain of telling these secrets which are so necessary to tell, or why write or live."[33] Again this is related to Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, and his view that "the best writing is always the most painful personal wrung-out tossed from cradle warm protective mind-tap from yourself the song of yourself."[34] Percepied must lay bare fears about himself and about his relationships with others, and indeed in the process of this he also exposes some of Fox's deepest secrets. Percepied's transcription and editing of Fox's letter is one of the most interesting parts of The Subterraneans, as it draws attention to Kerouac's own spontaneous writing method. As Ann Douglas points out:

> As he transcribes the letter … Leo keeps interrupting Mardou's letter with his own lengthy riffs on it; he finds it impossible to let her have the spotlight. Yet Kerouac/Leo is aware of what he's doing. … What follows is a radically altered, much shorter version of Mardou's letter – just the kind of censoring and editing, of course, that Kerouac crusaded against.[35]

[32] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xv.
[33] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 26.
[34] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.
[35] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xxi.

Percepied's grandiose conception of himself as "a writer" means that his tendency is to impose his own authorial view. Fox is therefore not allowed to speak for herself and her words are not permitted to stand alone. Rather, Percepied goes through Fox's letter, presenting a few lines of her text at a time which are interspersed with his own explanation and analysis as he fleshes out her sparse prose, providing background information and more detail for the reader to fully understand her letter. Percepied also appraises Fox's letter as though it were a piece of prose for publication – he comments on one section that it is "said indeed with a nice rhythm, too, so I remember admiring her intelligence even then."[36] She, too, it appears realises that he will judge her letter, asking him to "forgive the conjunctions and double infinitives and the not said."[37] Percepied's main criticism of Fox's letter is that he feels that there is "not enough detail, the details are the life of it I insist, say everything on your mind, don't hold it back, don't analyze or anything as you go along, say it out."[38] Again this statement is very similar to one of Kerouac's "Essentials" where he states the importance of "allowing subconscious to admit in own uninhibited interesting necessary and so 'modern' language what conscious art would censor, and write excitedly, swiftly, with writing-or-typing-cramps."[39] His act is one of opening out her letter to add some of these details that he thinks are missing. It is significant that he also goes on to describe a letter of his own that he writes to her, again giving the reader a confession of his intentions and explaining particular lines more fully. He also reveals his own insecurity that his letter was received as:

[36] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 60.
[37] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 61.
[38] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 60.
[39] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.

> twaddle that Mardou must have glanced at with one eye – the letter, which was supposed to match the warmth of hers, her cuddly-in-October masterpiece, beginning with the inane-if-at-all confession: 'The last time I wrote a love note it turned out to be boloney' (referring to an earlier in the year half-romance with Arlene Wohlsetter.)[40]

In some ways it seems as though for Percepied this process is not one of editing in order to deny the voice, whether his own or someone else's, but perhaps should be understood rather as a process of expanding or adding to the text to give a fuller account of their relationship.[41]

Percepied pays particular attention to sections of Fox's letter that have been edited by her. When he comes across a piece of the letter that Fox has rewritten, Percepied notes that "that whole complicated phrase further complicated by the fact it is presented in originally written form under the marks and additions of a rewrite, which is not as interesting to me, naturally."[42] Again here Percepied's opinion on rewriting mirrors the tenets of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, where he advises that writers should not "afterthink except for poetic or P. S. reasons. Never afterthink to 'improve' or defray impressions."[43] The final section of Fox's letter is the most closely analysed:

> '*Write to me anything Please Stay Well Your Freind* [misspelled] *And my love And Oh* [over some kind of hiddenforever erasures] [and many X's for of course kisses] *And Love for You* MARDOU

[40] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 78.
[41] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 78.
[42] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 60.
[43] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.

[underlined]'

and weirdest, most strange, central of all – ringed by itself, the word, PLEASE – her lastplea neither one of us knowing – Answering this letter myself with a dull boloney bullshit rising out of my anger with the incident of the pushcart.

(And tonight this letter is my last hope.)[44]

The layout of Fox's handwritten text becomes hugely significant to Percepied as he catalogues the underlinings, the crossings-out and the misspellings, the ringed and capitalised 'PLEASE'. It is as though he feels that some kind of deeper meaning could be communicated through these things, that perhaps he is missing something. Her erasures suggest to him that he cannot know exactly what she was thinking, but the other rhetorical devices that she uses in an attempt to convey meaning also cause him to consider that there is something "strange" about her letter, perhaps some secret that is codified within these capitalisations and so on that he needs to uncover. Percepied can't make her words say what he wants them to, therefore he attempts to unearth meaning through these last few ink marks.

When Percepied does choose to edit and censor Fox's letter, it is in a final and deliberate attempt to "[pay] her back for what she done to me."[45] Percepied sends Fox an edited version of her own letter back to her, selecting her words carefully and turning them back upon her precisely in order to hurt her. Of course Percepied's letter contains none of the misspellings or erasures – it is a clean copy, with the very lack of any kind of errors serving to highlight its calculated and controlled nature against Fox's original

[44] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 62.
[45] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 95.

heartfelt writing, as the intimate becomes the impersonal, although it is not specified in the text whether his letter is typewritten or handwritten. The Subterraneans therefore paradoxically operates as a spontaneous performance, which actually incorporates a calculated and controlled piece of writing in the form of Percepied's letter, which is overwriting Fox's original, more spontaneous letter. This should give us pause if we think of spontaneous prose in terms simply of the immediate recording of stream of consciousness impressions, as it is clear that Kerouac's approach here can encompass a good deal of calculation and structured composition within his process, just as a jazz musician can construct a complicated structure within an improvisation.

Just as we find in Kerouac's earlier work, in The Subterraneans there is also an emphasis on speech and language as well as a focus on the written word. At one stage, Percepied points out "I am a Canuck, I could not speak English till I was 5 or 6, at 16 I spoke with a halting accent."[46] Later on, Percepied has a vision of his mother, who appears to him and speaks in French.[47] Percepied's bilingualism brings with it particular difficulties, and these are exposed in one of his attempts to express his feelings for Fox: "I love her but this song is . . . broken – but in French now . . . in French I can sing her on and on . . ."[48] The English language is not adequate for him to express his deepest feelings, and the ellipses here represent the omission of French from the text – places where further descriptions of Fox should be, and are in Percepied's thoughts, but which cannot be adequately transcribed. Sounds of speech are also carefully noted, so for example, Fox's accent is described as "part Beach, part I. Magnin model, part Berkeley, part Negro highclass, something, a mixture of *langue* and style of talking and use of

[46] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 15.
[47] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 97.
[48] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 54. Kerouac's ellipses.

words I'd never heard before."[49] Percepied goes on to describe "the new bop generation way of speaking, you don't say *I,* you say 'ahy' or 'Oy' and long ways, like oft or erst-while 'effeminate' way of speaking so when you hear it in men at first it has a disagreeable sound and when you hear it in women it's charming but much too strange."[50] These new sounds within speech are specifically related to bop, and small, carefully observed aural details like these are important in a work that privileges sound, whether it be speech or music.[51]

The power of sound, particularly jazz, and its "capacity to communicate with the body through pure prosody" is foregrounded in the following passage from The Subterraneans:

> She stood in drowsy sun suddenly listening to bop as if for the first time as it poured out, the intention of the musicians and of the horns and instruments suddenly a mystical unity expressing itself in waves like sinister and again electricity but screaming with palpable aliveness the direct *word* from the vibration, the interchanges of statement, the levels of waving intimation, the smile in sound, the same living insinuation in the way her sister'd arranged those wires wriggled entangled and fraught with intention, innocent looking but actually behind the mask of casual life completely by agreement the mawkish mouth almost sneering snakes of electricity purposely placed she'd been seeing all day and hearing in the music and now saw in the wires.[52]

[49] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 18.
[50] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 18.
[51] Regina Weinreich analyses a passage from The Subterraneans in terms of jazz, looking particularly at the ways in which images are spun out and then returned to. Weinreich, Spontaneous Poetics 133-40.
[52] Belgrad, The Culture of Spontaneity 213. Kerouac, The Subterraneans 40-41.

The music that Fox has heard earlier in the day becomes a flow of sound within her consciousness, and the various individual parts of the musical composition come together in "mystic unity," making the music powerful and alive to her. Fox feels that the music is actually able to tell her something, as it transmits not just musical sounds but also "word," and she views this as sinister. These notions of communication and of consciousness become metaphorically entangled with the twisted wires that she can see, "the complicated wiring her eldest sister had done to connect the TV and the radio to the kitchen plug."[53] The snaking wires become threatening and also seem to be alive. Indeed they could be alive because they have electricity – a force – flowing through them, just as she experiences the force of music flowing through her. This sense that both the music and the wires are so powerful and "fraught with intention" causes Fox to ask, "'what are you trying to do actually electrocute me?'"[54] Fox here creates a complex set of relationships between seemingly entirely separate thoughts and objects. Jeffrey Sconce points out that these kinds of connections become possible as electric communications "have often evoked a series of interrelated metaphors of 'flow,' suggesting analogies between electricity, consciousness, and information that enable fantastic forms of electronic transmutation, substitution, and exchange."[55] But the idea of 'flow'' in electricity is combined with the sense of immediacy, of being 'connected' across space in a way that eliminates the sequence of time.

Ben Giamo describes the prose style of The Subterraneans as being "as if Kerouac has gone electric, for the spontaneous prose in The Subterraneans seems like the charged

[53] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 40.
[54] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 41.
[55] Jeffrey Sconce, Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000) 7.

currents of contagious excitement powered by the mind's many-leveled free associations."[56] The text moves freely from one thought to the next, following the connections that the mind makes rather than being constrained by any more formal structure. As Giamo recognises, this imbues the writing with a particular sense of energy and excitement – it is not always possible to know what will come next, and the pace of writing and its constant flow enables him to compare it to an electrical current. As electricity exists between things, it is spatial, existing across a system rather than being linear or temporal. There are many images of electricity within the text, and these are often related to the characters experiencing some kind of transcendental connection: "a great electrical current of real understanding passed between us and I could feel the other levels of the infinite number of them of every intonation in his speech and mine and the world of meaning in every *word*."[57] This imagery of an electrical current to describe an intimate and immediate connection has similarities with nineteenth century Romantic literature wherein as Paul Gilmore points out, "the electric … seems to refer to some intensified level of consciousness connected to the insights of poetic genius. And such a connotation seems, at best, to locate the electric in some ideal sphere, a product of consciousness, imagination, or affective sympathy detached from the material world."[58] It is this possibility of being connected to everything that can be a positive experience, but one that also has a more negative potential in the sense that it allows for a totalising viewpoint, and Percepied must deal with this throughout the text, as must Kerouac throughout his work: the question of how to "tell a story without putting oneself in

[56] Ben Giamo, Kerouac, The Word and The Way: Prose Artist as Spiritual Quester (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000) 70.
[57] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 37.
[58] Paul Gilmore, "Romantic Electricity, or the Materiality of Aesthetics," American Literature 76:3 (2004) 473.

charge."[59] It is this that Kerouac goes on to look at in much more detail in Visions of Cody.

[59] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xvi.

4. "Do you feel through your shoes the machine?": Tape, Text and Body in Visions of Cody.

The history of audiotape can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, but it was not until the end of World War II that research had optimised the technology so that it was more affordable and available to the general consumer.[1] As John Shapcott explains, "The post-war American electronic consumer revolution heralded an explosion in the use of readily available recording equipment to represent a range of cultural production."[2] The tape recorder was promoted as yet another indispensable domestic technology, hence a 1957 advertisement for DuPont Mylar tape urges consumers to "Record this Christmas forever on tapes made with Mylar. This Christmas, when you record the kids' voices, family gatherings or those 'once in a lifetime' songfests, you'll want to make sure they last and last for years to come."[3] The accompanying illustrations show the audiotape being employed in a variety of ways, including to record carol singing, and there is also a depiction of a young girl sitting on Santa's knee whilst he holds a microphone between himself and the child to record the exchange. The advertisement focuses on the importance of recording

[1] Hayles, Posthuman 209-210.
[2] John Shapcott, "'I Didn't Punctuate It': Locating the Tape and Text of Jack Kerouac's Visions of Cody and Doctor Sax in a Culture of Spontaneous Improvisation," Journal of American Studies 30.2 (2002): 231.
[3] DuPont Mylar Advertisement, 11 November 2003 <http://www.phantomprod.com/vinAd57DuPontMylar.jpg>.

significant family moments to build up a history, and this, along with the suggestion of the possibility of listening to these tapes in "years to come" would be a particularly positive advertising message in a Cold War climate of nuclear fear.

Running in parallel to the advertising of audiotape for benign domestic purposes in the postwar period was the promotion of its potentially more sinister applications as a surveillance technology. Indeed, an advertisement for the Geloso portable tape recorder in 1957 helps to situate the new technology within the culture of cold war surveillance:

> Compact in size to permit many uses here-be-fore not possible with a recorder of such moderate cost. Perfect for lawyers, doctors, private eyes, newspaper men, court reporters – anyone requiring a unit so well suited for interviews, dictation, detection and the like.[4]

The inclusion of 'private eyes' and 'detection' alongside other areas of professional activity in this advertisement demonstrates the extent to which these activities were regarded as part of everyday life. In relation to the use of tape for surveillance activities, Michael Davidson identifies the importance of audiotape as a powerful means of control, recognising that "With the advent of the Cold War … the tape recorder, in the hands of the new postwar surveillance services, could now invade the private space of the individual, gathering information during a period of unprecedented suspicion and secrecy."[5] Davidson contrasts this use of tape in order to covertly obtain voices with the earlier uses of tape which he identifies specifically as involving the dissemination of a singular voice. He traces the significance of

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[4] Phil Van Praag, Evolution of the Audio Recorder: The 'Vintage' Years late '40s – early '70s (Waukesha: E.C. Designs Inc, 1997) 99. Fig. 2.27b. This work also contains an extract from the Webster Chicago Model 80 Wire Recorder operating manual entitled "Uses and Applications" which details the variety of domestic uses that the manufacturers had identified for the technology. (Praag, Evolution 69-70. Fig. 2.12a, 2.12b.)

[5] Davidson, "Technologies of Presence," 101.

magnetic tape technology back to its use as a tool for Nazi propaganda, pointing out that when combined with radio transmission, tape recording enabled Hitler's voice to "be heard simultaneously in every country within the Axis powers, thus achieving a global presence for a single speaker."[6] Indeed, Marshall McLuhan goes so far as to suggest that it was the nature and potency of the aural medium in particular that was central to both Hitler's rise to power and the rapid domination of McCarthy on the premise that "TV is a cool medium. It rejects hot figures and hot issues and people from the hot press media. … Had TV occurred on a large scale during Hitler's reign he would have vanished quickly. Had TV come first there would have been no Hitler at all."[7] He argues that as opposed to the visual mode of television, "Radio affects people intimately, person-to-person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer-speaker and the listener. That is the immediate aspect of radio. A private experience."[8] Therefore the radio, and by extension the tape recorder, as media which privilege the oral and aural over the visual, give their audience a particular, personal experience of the voice which is extremely powerful and peculiarly internal as it allows the listener to become personally and immediately involved.

Whether being used to obtain voices through surveillance techniques, or to disseminate a singular voice, tape recording meant that the voice could now be detached from the body, replicated and transmitted, allowing the potential for new, highly effective forms of control. Katherine Hayles recognises the importance of tape in that it allowed for the "possibility that the voice can be taken out of the body and placed into a machine."[9] Michael Davidson has explored the ways in which audiotape

[6] Davidson, "Technologies of Presence," 101.
[7] McLuhan, Understanding Media 299.
[8] McLuhan, Understanding Media 299.
[9] Hayles, Posthuman 208.

has been used by writers as a means to recover or at least use 'authentic' speech, seeing the physical relation of speech to the body as one of the reasons many writers and artists, including Paul Blackburn, David Antin and Amiri Baraka began to experiment with tape recording:

> the virtues of orality become increasingly significant in a world where technology is capable of separating voice from speaker, conversation from community. Apprehension of this alienation animates the work of many writers during this period. But far from rejecting the tape recorder as an agent of reification, they embraced it as an accomplice in the recovery of more authentic speech. [10]

Davidson is pointing here to the paradoxical qualities and possibilities of the new media. On the one hand, unlike the old technologies of print, which created an inevitable separation and delay between the oral event and its representation in writing or print, these new forms offer an immediacy of representation. They preserve the voice and the speaking event. On the other hand this very ability can mask the fact that this is still reproduction and representation. He highlights the danger inherent in the possibility that voice and speaker could be separated in representations and recordings, losing the idea of the direct emanation of 'authentic' speech from the embodied subject. But it is worth remembering that these people are writers who are working within and out of a Romantic tradition, one in which a major trope is belatedness, and the recapture of the immediate lyric moment of song, out of which comes their writing. As with Kerouac the tape recorder rarely replaces writing, because, as writers, authenticity documented and repeated in that way is not their ultimate aim. Their appropriation of audiotape technology as a tool in the writing

[10] Davidson, "Technologies of Presence," 106, 103.

process can therefore be seen in contrast to its use as a form of surveillance, as a way of regaining control.

Both radio and tape feature heavily in Kerouac's Visions of Cody, and the possibility offered by these technologies for speech to become 'disembodied,' separated from the body, is something that Kerouac explores in a fascinating range of ways. The work was written in 1951-2 but remained unpublished until 1973. As Tim Hunt explains, "Visions of Cody was the fifth and final version of On The Road and the book that Kerouac maintained was his masterpiece even though it would not be published in its entirety until after his death."[11] The final product is a long and complex text linked through the basic narrative line of Kerouac's visit to Cody in San Francisco and Cody's inspiration for his writing. In this sense Cody is Kerouac's Muse and at times almost co-writer, and as the title suggests the idea is somehow to capture what Cody means to Kerouac. To this extent Cody – the vision of Cody – is the product of Kerouac' s imagination and his writing, but at the heart of the book, literally, are long transcripts of tape-recorded conversations between Kerouac and Cody. These are themselves part of the fiction, of course, to the extent that these people are Jack (Duluoz) and Cody, not Kerouac and Neal Cassady, but the tapes do seem to be closely based on actual tape experiments carried out by the two. In this chapter, I will refer to Jack Kerouac as author as 'Kerouac' as per the earlier chapters, and to his protagonist in Visions, Jack Duluoz, as 'Jack'.

In the early fifties, Neal Cassady wrote to Jack Kerouac, excited by his newly purchased tape recorder and explaining to Kerouac that if he were also to buy one it would be possible to:

[11] Hunt, Crooked Road xxxvii.

> simply record go to nearby postoffice and mail to ME a LETTER, better, 2 hours of our VOICES talking to each other. Save all labor of letters for writing (SO HORRIBLY HORRIBLY SHITPOT HARD FOR ME) until such time as have written, then maybe, I too, could reel off a 5000-page letter every day to you. … get it now? Buy an EKOTAPE tape recorder[.][12]

Cassady here suggests that being able to hear each other's voices rather than just reading each other's words would be a far easier method of communication than writing letters, though his reference to "our VOICES talking to each other" seems to imply not a long-distance exchange but a shared event. Nevertheless, the tape appears to him to offer potential as a more direct and possibly even more interactive form of communication. Cassady also suggests the tape as both aid to, and substitute for, writing: the tape will allow him and Kerouac to save their energy for 'real' writing, rather than wasting it on letters, thereby aiding the creative process of writing in one sense, whilst they will also be substituting tapes for composing letters to each other until such time as they have the capacity to "reel off a 5000-page letter every day." This desire to compose impossibly long letters for each other suggests the characteristic Beat poetics of intimacy and totality of communication in a wish to tell each other everything about their lives, as well as implying that audiotape could potentially convey far more information than the written word. These notions are echoed in Jack Duluoz's explanation in Visions as to why he wants a tape recorder:

> Last night in the West End Bar was mad, (I can't think fast enough) (*do* need a recorder, *will* buy one at once when the *Adams* [a ship] hits New York next March then I could keep the most complete record in the world which in itself could be divided into twenty massive and pretty interesting volumes of tapes

[12] Neal Cassady, letter to Jack Kerouac, qtd in Carolyn Cassady, Off the Road 127-8.

> describing activities everywhere and excitements and thoughts of mad valuable me and it would really have a shape but a crazy big shape yet just as logical as a novel by Proust because I *do* keep harkening back though I might be nervous on the mike and even tell too much)[.][13]

Jack's statement here implies that tape might help him to "think fast enough," but it seems more as if he is referring to its ability to help him reproduce at speed what he is thinking. There is a sense that as a writer he is unable to note down everything that is happening around him in order to create a complete record of his experiences. The tape thus also works in this respect as a helpful medium to carry out the objectives stated in Kerouac's "Belief and Technique," in terms of "[t]elling the true story of the world" as the more detail that can be captured, the more complete and therefore honest the resulting account becomes.[14] Presumably Jack's hope is that his use of the audiotape technology could provide a comprehensive record of everything happening around him at any one time, allowing him to capture a greater degree of simultaneity and polyphony, to enable him to "Write for the world to read and see yr exact pictures of it."[15] His memory and writing are potentially limited in this respect as they are invariably related to a highly individualised experience, hence a tape recording may provide a more objective record of events, not focused through a single narrative perspective. There seems to be a duality in Jack's view of audiotape, in that here he appears to suggest using tape as a substitute for writing, whereas later on the taped conversations between him and Cody are used as an aid to writing as Jack types up the transcripts of their conversations. The tape works as an extended memory, widening his view of events by capturing Cody's visions as well as his own, and potentially enabling him to combine the two in order to present a more complete

[13]Kerouac, Visions 128-9.
[14] Kerouac, "Belief and Technique," 59.
[15] Kerouac, "Belief and Technique," 59.

written record. This reflects the larger tension between on the one hand writing as recording and representing and, on the other, writing as performing and creating. While seemingly attracted to tape recorders as a substitute for the former, it is as an aid to the latter form of writing which is most interesting to Kerouac, even if not to Cody, and which is most important in the creation of the final text.

Jack does recognise that his experiences are limited and identifies his body as the limiting factor, expressing his desire to be able to experience more than his body allows:

> Now events of this moment are *so mad* that of course I can't keep up but worse they're as though they were fond memories that from my peaceful hacienda or Proust-bed I was trying to recall in toto but couldn't because like the real world was so vast, so delugingly vast, I wish God had made me vaster myself – I wish I had ten personalities, one hundred golden brains, far more ports than are ports, more energy than the river, but I must struggle to live it all, and *on foot*, and in these little crepesole shoes, ALL of it, or give up completely.[16]

The notion of being constrained by the physical body is very much apparent here, and Jack's comment that he wishes "God had made me vaster myself" implies a transcendental desire to renounce the body as finite, and fuse with the world in order to experience it more fully. However, despite the enormity of his challenge, he feels that his only hope is to "struggle to live it all," and to experience as much as he can through his too-small body – in "these little crepesole shoes" – and employing audiotape appears to offer him the possibility of helping him to recall more of his own experience than he could otherwise manage with just one "golden brain." Indeed,

[16] Kerouac, Visions 129. Emphasis in original.

according to John Shapcott, "Kerouac envisaged the tape recorder as an extension of his writing body, enabling him to capture a spontaneous world that he could reinterpret in literary form at leisure."[17] However, it would appear that as the tape is able to record the voice, as well as having the capacity to capture multiple voices, it provides a sense of presence and immediacy in the way that the written word ultimately cannot. Moreover, as Jack realises, whilst the tape can act as an extension to his body it can only capture as much of the world as he is able to live, thus his emphasis on the need for as much embodied experience as possible: "I must struggle to live it all, and *on foot*, and in these little crepesole shoes, ALL of it." His body ultimately limits him and the tape cannot help him to overcome this, as although it can aid him in capturing his personal experience whilst simultaneously allowing him to record more of what is happening in the area around him, it cannot extend his body in terms of enabling him to have more experiences. Jack's hope, though, is that it can act to more fully capture those experiences that he has.

This may explain why Jack specifically envisions creating volumes of tapes, rather than transcripts: he does not intend to use the tapes as a writing aid to help him obtain a fuller record of events that would finally be typed up, but instead they would stand as a record in themselves, with the tape being used to directly record situations that could be presented without any further editing or revision. In this sense it appears that Jack regards the tape recorder as an invisible, unreworked means of recording things that happen too quickly or too densely to remember or write down. On the other hand, he also comments that he might "be nervous on the mike and even tell too much," suggesting that the tape can also potentially affect the event it records, and therefore becoming an element in composition. Moreover, his worry about "telling

[17] Shapcott "'I Didn't Punctuate It'," 232.

too much" implies that the work will eventually have an audience, and there is an almost Whitmanesque sense of egotism in Jack's belief that the "excitements and thoughts of mad valuable me" are worth recording for posterity. Although he does comment that he's "going to talk about these things with guys," and realises the need to "communicate to people instead of just appeasing my lone soul," he finally decides that "the main thing I suppose will be this lifelong monologue which is begun in my mind."[18] Thus whereas Cassady emphasises the importance of conversation and dialogue: "our VOICES talking to each other," Kerouac's protagonist is more concerned with recording the individual experience, and despite his apparent desire to capture as broad a view as possible of situations that he finds himself in, the tapes will, ultimately, be focused around an expansive but highly individual perspective.

Jack's emphasis on the individual experience, though, appears to be countered by the fact that Kerouac constructs Visions so that transcripts of recorded conversations between Jack and Cody become the focus of the text. One of the reasons that Jack wants a tape recorder is that he wishes to portray as wide a perspective of the individual experience as possible, and as Tim Hunt comments, this explains the paradox in the project, "The need to re-establish connection with the outside world and get beyond his own distorted sense of self and the reader's distorting sense of writing as a debased reality are all involved in Kerouac's decision in the third section of Visions of Cody to relate Duluoz's encounter with Cody through transcribed tape recordings."[19] According to Hunt, the tape in combination with the transcription process provides Kerouac with the potential to achieve an objective recording of situations and to remove all elements of mediation because:

[18] Kerouac, Visions 128, 138. This is in direct contrast to Burroughs' work, which is an attempt to escape from the inner monologue.
[19] Hunt, Crooked Road 212.

> The machine filters actual conversation first through the microphone and then through the typewriter. The microphone removes most traces of physical and temporal setting, everything but physical sound, and the typewriter reduces this record to its abstract equivalent in abstract characters. The effect of this processing is to merge the act of perception and expression by removing the intermediate stage of understanding and interpretation which may enrich but which also distorts.[20]

Hunt therefore regards these processes as essentially functioning to *remove* any aspects of authorial subjectivity and interpretation from the textual record of the conversations, thereby presenting them as an authentic account. This suggests a view of authenticity that involves a pruning and cleaning process, a stripping off of accretions in the name of objectivity, and this is certainly one use of the tape-recording as objective record or evidence, but of course Kerouac's ultimate aim is another sort of authenticity, one which needs to include not just the objective event but the penumbra of associations and memories that it is not possible to capture on tape. His prose style keeps stopping time in a way the simple temporal movement of the tape cannot. Kerouac was very interested in exploring the gap between reality and representation and in finding ways to close this gap in order to provide the reader with an unmediated experience as far as possible. Moreover, in terms of Kerouac's emphasis in "Essentials" on the need to capture that which is "honest, ('ludicrous'), spontaneous, 'confessional' interesting because not 'crafted',"[21] the tape recorder would appear to be an ideal medium, as it would allow him to capture voices in a seemingly objective and unedited form which could then be presented to the reader, thus meaning that the work was, as he intended, "[n]ot 'selectivity' of expression but

[20] Hunt, Crooked Road 212-3.
[21] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.

following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought."[22] In actual fact, though, the tape transcriptions in Visions provide nothing of the sort. Whilst they do capture extended conversations, they are in no way unmediated. Instead Kerouac sets up a complex and multilayered textual presentation of these conversations, as they are mediated in a variety of ways that bring issues of reality and representation, of fact and fiction, into sharp relief.

Over a hundred pages of Visions contain tape transcriptions of conversations. The majority of these conversations are between Cody Pomeray and Jack Duluoz, with the bulk of the transcripts contained in the section entitled 'Frisco: The Tape', although some portions of the transcript do appear at other points in the text, including an important section entitled 'Imitation of the Tape,' which begins with a detailed representation of Cody's style of speaking which in its extreme fracturedness does have the sense of a transcription. We therefore have the interesting phenomenon that because it is headed 'Imitation' we read it differently from the preceding sections – even though they are both within a fictional text. The rest of the 'Imitations' section then becomes more of a free-style improvisation, rather than an imitation. The transcripts are of recordings made over five consecutive nights, meaning that a variety of events are captured on tape. These include a party with Jack and his friends, and other evenings when they are together talking, drinking, smoking marijuana, and listening to music. Also captured are Jack and Cody reminiscing about events of several years previously; Jack recording himself composing on the typewriter with Cody commenting on the process and Jack reading aloud what he is writing; and a recording of Jack and Cody reading through the earlier transcripts (that are also presented in Visions) and discussing revisions: at one stage arguing over the validity

[22] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.

of the revision process. At several points, the nature of the tape as palimpsest is highlighted as a portion of old dialogue breaks through as the tape is being reused, thus rather than simply layering new speech and text on top of old, the old becomes part of the new, disrupting the chronology of the transcription.[23] The transcript ends with a transcription of a taped radio broadcast.[24] As so many different events are captured on tape, the presentation of the transcripts is useful to look at in itself as potential evidence of what Kerouac was attempting to do with the tapes.

The transcripts that appear in Visions are based on tape recordings that were actually made of conversations between Kerouac and Neal Cassady in the early fifties.[25] The edited transcripts in the text are fictionalised versions of these episodes, as Kerouac becomes Jack Duluoz and Cassady becomes Cody Pomeray. Kerouac presents the transcripts in chronological order, and sets out the transcript in the manner of a conventional script, with each speaker's name capitalised and italicised at the beginning of their lines. Punctuation marks such as dashes and ellipses are used in an effort to capture speech patterns and natural pauses. Nevertheless, unless there are explanatory editorial comments (as there are in some places in the text) it is generally impossible for the reader to ascertain detail such as the length of these pauses, and also whether the elision marks additionally show places where parts of speech have been omitted, either on purpose or because either the tape recorder or the person transcribing could not pick up the sound.

One of the major problems with Hunt's analysis of the use of tape in Visions is that although he does concede that the processes of taping and transcription act as

[23] Kerouac, Visions 239, 257.
[24] Kerouac, Visions 286.
[25] Cassady, Off the Road 169-70. Shapcott obtained a copy of one of the tapes made in 1952 by Kerouac and Cassady, and notes that it "serves as an aural appendix to the 'Frisco: The Tape' transcripts, retrieving layers of spontaneous everyday immediacy." Shapcott, "'I Didn't Punctuate It'," 233.

elements of filtration which inevitably manipulate the material to an extent, he does not regard these as particularly complex or potentially problematic layers of mediation, instead feeling that "Kerouac largely handles these matters straightforwardly … and his editorial comments are few and essentially parenthetical descriptions."[26] In fact, this is demonstrably not the case. The editor's parenthetical comments that are added to the transcript in many places are used to clarify parts of the transcript that are unclear, and also to add information to explain tone of voice, background noise etc. These comments are far from straightforward as Hunt would have it. In actuality they are often entirely subjective and sometimes so idiosyncratic as not to aid the reader's understanding at all, for example, "shriek imitation of Julian being shriekfiendish St Louis."[27] In another insertion, the comment "disposable" is placed immediately after one of Cody's lines, suggesting it is unimportant.[28] Moreover, as Richard Ellis points out, another of these editorial comments reads "a lie," again clearly demonstrating editorial interpretation and judgement of a statement, which calls into question the veracity of what has been captured on the tape as well as forcing the reader to decide whether to believe the speaker or the editor.[29]

The tension created by these editorial comments is evident in part of the text that records Jack and Cody discussing a section of an earlier transcript.[30] It becomes apparent that Jack is in the process of revising the earlier section of the transcript, as his editorial comments have been inserted from memory. The characters' discussion of the earlier transcripts particularly exemplifies the layering of the processes of mediation and representation that takes place in Visions, demonstrating that Kerouac's experiments are not as simple as we may be led to believe. At one point

[26] Hunt, Crooked Road 214.
[27] Kerouac, Visions 233
[28] Kerouac, Visions 163.
[29] Kerouac, Visions 254.
[30] Kerouac, Visions 163–80, discussing 154 onwards.

Cody with some frustration tells Jack that "you're the one who *wrote* it down, see, so I'm saying, you know, you know more about it than *I* do."[31] The process of transcription seems to be a way of clarifying and making permanent Cody's thoughts, but Cody does not feel comfortable that Jack is doing this. Moreover, Cody is here losing ownership of his speech as it now exists on tape for Jack to interpret and reinterpret. Significantly, Cody points out that the transcription is incorrect in places, for example, "bad order high" (as it appears on page 154) should say "bad order eyes" (page 164) indicating how easily speech can be misinterpreted. The editorial intervention in the transcripts also raises questions as to how far the individuals on the tape have control over their own speech, as it appears that once it is on tape, the editor has ultimate control over it and can choose to transcribe and present it as he wishes. According to Daniel Belgrad, "In the most successful improvisational art, the give-and-take of conversation functions as a model of democratic interaction."[32] As the tapes are used in order to record conversations, the dialogue that is presented has the potential to be democratic in Belgrad's terms. Shapcott, too, argues that "as a vision, not only of Cody but of sociality itself, the tapes suggest an intersubjective dynamic in which the individual speaker and the surrounding community empower each other."[33] However, as Belgrad goes on to note, "the novelistic form masks the power dynamics implicit in speaking for others. The authorial voice in the text inevitably creates predominantly one-sided 'conversations.' Kerouac was aware of this problem, and in Visions of Cody he grappled with it directly."[34] He believes that in Visions, Kerouac attempts to subjugate the authorial voice by "allowing the reader to compare

[31] Kerouac, Visions 180.
[32] Belgrad, Culture of Spontaneity 2.
[33] Shapcott "'I Didn't Punctuate It'," 236.
[34] Belgrad, Culture of Spontaneity 210.

Kerouac's memories to the taped versions."[35] What is evident from the text, though, is that Kerouac's project is actually far more complex than Belgrad recognises. The text presented in Visions is not simply presented as autobiographical memory and actual tape recording, but is fictionalised and presented as a novel. Moreover, in presenting the tape recordings as highly edited transcripts, the tapes cannot function as a direct contrast to memory or take precedence as a more objective, democratic or honest account of events as Belgrad seems to imply. In fact, by presenting the edited transcripts, Kerouac draws attention to the fact that these 'objective' recordings are highly mediated before going on to fictionalise them even further in an 'Imitation of the Tape' which uses material from the transcripts as the basis for a "Composition . . . by Jackie Duluoz" as the tapes in themselves become the basis for memory which is in turn expanded upon and fictionalised.[36] Belgrad therefore fails to explore the effect that the editorial comments in the transcripts have on altering the 'power dynamics' of dialogue to privilege the editor. Even Hunt, although of the opinion that the "editorial comments are few and essentially parenthetical descriptions" goes on to concede that "even this minimal apparatus reveals order and intention."[37] Shapcott believes that the process of transcription ultimately detracts from any sense of democracy in the dialogue presented in Visions, instead positing that:

> In presenting a complete transcript of the taped Cassady [Cody], Kerouac the writer offers process, a way of talking amplified by editorial insertion, that privileges the virtuoso verbal performer, Cody, over the technically proficient but limited role of the transcriber.[38]

[35] Belgrad, Culture of Spontaneity 210.
[36] Kerouac, Visions 287.
[37] Hunt, Crooked Road 214.
[38] Shapcott, "'I Didn't Punctuate It'," 239-40.

Although Shapcott's comment is accurate in drawing attention to the imbalance of voices in Visions, the act of transcription does, finally, privilege the editor rather than focusing attention on Cody. It is the editor's perspective that dominates throughout, particularly through the parenthetical notes and comments, and Cody himself expresses his frustration that he seems to be losing ownership of his speech because of the process of transcription: "you know more about it than *I* do."[39]

The editorial insertions into the transcript rely heavily on the editor's memory of the situation, and this is the reason Jack and Cody argue over the parenthetical comments as they often recall situations differently. Belgrad is, therefore, correct to identify memory as a key issue in the text. It becomes apparent that memory is one of Jack's and Cody's major concerns. Early in the transcript, Cody articulates what they are attempting to do in their conversations:

> *CODY*. Used to not feel a couple of years ago hardly worth it to complete the sentence and then it got so try as I might I couldn't and it developed into something that way, see, so now in place of that I just complete the thought whatever I've learned, you know, like I see it complete whatever thought comes, see, instead of trying to make myself hurry back to where I should be here, and also . . . and only indications that lead me to go on this way, like you're looking at me to say that, only you didn't say anything, but you looked at me and so that I go on talking *about* these things, thinking about things, and memory, 'cause we're both concerned about, ah, memory, and just relax like Proust and everything.[40]

This quotation is as close as Jack and Cody get to articulating what they are trying to achieve with their tape recordings. The references to Proust throughout the text

[39] Kerouac, Visions 180.
[40] Kerouac, Visions 179.

suggest that their project is, like Proust, to explore the interplay between reality and representation, rather than an attempt to close the gap. The passage also illustrates that Jack and Cody are concerned with memory and are endeavouring to construct an accurate record(ing) of past events by discussing them, which allows them to compare their memories. One of the ways in which they attempt to capture as many memories as possible is by training themselves to think and speak in a certain way – to complete sentences and not think too carefully about what they are saying, in an attempt to overcome the process of self-editing of their speech. This method of speaking is very similar to Kerouac's writing techniques that he sets down in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." Here he advocates a technique that enables the artist to "sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind" thus obtaining an "undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words."[41] This method encourages following the processes of the unconscious mind, so that the writing becomes uninhibited, and the writer does not limit the production of the text, instead "allowing subconscious to admit in own uninhibited interesting necessary and so 'modern' language what conscious art would censor."[42] In following this method, Cody has learnt over time to "complete the sentence" and to talk more freely in an attempt to access the "flow that already exists intact in mind." There is a certain romantic ideal behind their project as the two are questing to recover memory which they believe already exists as a unified whole, and they need to find methods of retrieving it by removing aspects of mediation such as the conscious mind, and indeed this attempt is entirely consistent with Kerouac's own writing experiments.

One of the ways they believe they will be able to access this "complete sentence" is to attempt to overcome the process of self-editing their speech and to talk

[41] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57-58.
[42] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.

freely, but although Cody can now do this to an extent, he explains that he still finds the process extremely difficult:

> I talk on about that as the mind and remembers and thinks and that's why it's difficult for, to keep, ah, a balance, you know, that's, but it's not really a concern because you can get hungup if you don't know when sharply to cut the knife, see, and switch back to something, you know, or something, because it becomes a hangup or just meaningless talk, you know what I'm sayin, see, so that that's hard, you know, as I continue, see, because really I don't *like* this![43]

Cody recognises the need to maintain equilibrium between coherent, connected speech and allowing himself to go off on a tangent. The danger though is that once he strays from his train of thought he often finds that he cannot return to his original point without making a conscious decision to do so, and it is this conscious process that they are trying to move away from. Thus the attempt to maintain a spontaneous flow of speech in order to access the complete memory that they believe exists in an unmediated form is difficult as they are constantly trying to overcome their conscious thought processes. Moreover, as Cody points out, even if he does manage to do this there is another danger in that his speech may become 'meaningless' as he is no longer thinking about it at all. In fact, Cody questions the value of talking constantly without "stopping to think" on several occasions, for example:

I told this story before but I mean, it's what I'm talking about when you tell the same thing over then you just, ah, say the words as they come to your mind that you've already thought about before and so there's nothin – you're not pleased by it, no one

[43] Kerouac, Visions 179.

else is, but the fact is, there's no, ah, spontaneity or anything, there's no, ah, pleasure, you see, because you're – you're just rehashing old subjects, see?[44]

This is significant as it exemplifies the complexity of achieving an "undisturbed flow from the mind." Cody is unhappy with their attempt to get to the point where they just "say the words" without thinking about them, because he feels that it devalues these memories as they are no longer pleasing either to himself or to anyone else. Earlier in the text he makes a similar point that through the process of talking, taping and reviewing, the memories become "like any little thing you say," in other words that by continually discussing them they lose the resonance and emotional weight that went with their transience and elusiveness.[45] Moreover, Cody's dissatisfaction with the process ties in with Kerouac's emphasis in 'Essentials' on the need for complete honesty in order to achieve immediacy in writing and connect directly with the reader through "telepathic shock and meaning-excitement" as "the best writing is always the most painful personal."[46] By repeatedly discussing the same memories, Cody feels that the conversations lose some of this immediacy. As he points out, there is also a danger in that "the second or third or fourth time you tell about it or say anything like that why it comes out different and it becomes more and more modified."[47] In this sense, the process of recalling something from memory for the first time then becomes a memory in itself, which affects subsequent recollections, and there is a possibility that the original memory will be lost, as each retelling affects it. Thus their project ironically creates additional layers of mediation rather than removing them.

Jack and Cody's project is also complicated by the use of the tape technology. The tape recorder is not an invisible presence. Instead the speakers are highly aware

[44] Kerouac, Visions 270. This notion of "just saying the words" relates these experiments to the routine form in Burroughs' work that I explore in later chapters.
[45] Kerouac, Visions 178.
[46] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.
[47] Kerouac, Visions 178.

of it (presumably in part because of its physical intrusiveness), and it consequently affects their patterns of thought and speech, in contrast to Shapcott's claim in relation to the surviving tape that he discusses, that "Kerouac skilfully uses the tape-recorder as a tool to elicit free-flowing discourse from Neal Cassady."[48] Consciousness of being recorded is clearly demonstrated in the following dialogue:

> *JACK*. You sure this is the summer of 'forty-five?
>
> *CODY*. Well, now I've really got to think. See the reason I don't stop to think is because I'm aware of the machine, so I can't stop to think –
>
> *JACK*. No, I know – fuck the machine, man![49]

Their awareness of the tape recorder here impacts upon Cody's train of thought, and is another difficulty for them to attempt to overcome. Moreover, this excerpt highlights the tension inherent in the aim of their tape experiments in that whilst they are trying to retrieve the "flow that exists already intact in mind" they also believe it to be necessary to get minor details right in order to produce a completely accurate record of the events they are reminiscing about. The two processes, though, appear to be incompatible, and the machine evidently puts the speakers under extra pressure. Indeed, in a Paris Review Interview in 1968, Kerouac was ultimately critical of his use of the tape transcriptions:

> I haven't used this method [of transcribing taped conversations] since [Visions]; it really doesn't come out right, well, with Neal and with myself, when all written down with all the *ahs* and the *oks* and the *ahums* and the fearful fact that the damn thing is turning and you're *forced* not to waste electricity or tape.[50]

[48] Shapcott, "'I Didn't Punctuate It'," 241.
[49] Kerouac, Visions 229.
[50] Kerouac, interview, The Paris Review Interviews 109-10.

Here Kerouac notes how an awareness of the limitations of the technology affected the speakers as they felt "*forced* not to waste electricity or tape." This is interesting in invoking an economy of scarcity and limits which is at odds with the economy of excess and abundance implicit in the free flow of consciousness and memory captured in free association and improvisation. The suggestion here is that he believes this ultimately dominated the transcript as the speakers felt obliged to say something of value, thus making the exchanges more concentrated and adding a certain urgency to them.

The audiotape technology itself becomes part of, and at times dominates, the conversation at several points in the transcript, particularly as on occasion the speakers become highly aware of the distinct vibration it makes as it runs: "Do you feel through your shoes the machine?"[51] The sound of the machine also prompts the following exchange:

> *JACK*. … What's that?
>
> *CODY*. (*whispering*) That's the machine
>
> *JACK*. Yeah . . . yeah (both listen)
>
> *CODY*. Really is you know! If you turn it on –
>
> *JACK*. It bugs me, you know? . . .[52]

The fact that Cody feels the need to whisper, whilst it allows the machine to be heard more clearly, also demonstrates that he recognises the power of the machine to hear and record everything he says, and that he feels under surveillance. It also reveals the fact that he humanises the recorder to an extent, as by whispering he acts as though somebody else is listening in to their conversation. This is also evident in a section of the transcript where he suggests they take a break from recording to give both

[51] Kerouac, Visions 256.
[52] Kerouac, Visions 218.

themselves and the "matcheen, machine a chance to rest."[53] At other times, editorial notes detail that the "machine stops discussion" and "MACHINE BEGINS NEW CONVERSATION," implying that it is the technology itself rather than the speakers that has control over the dialogue.[54] One consequence of the technology still being fairly expensive at this time is that the audiotapes were reused, with new conversations being taped over old. This makes for some interesting pieces in the transcript where fragments of old recordings break through into the new, sometimes at the beginning of a new reel, others at points where the tape is stopped and then restarted for some reason.[55] These temporal shifts foreground the technology, as the speakers have had to either pause the tape or change the reel, and then test to ensure the recorder is working before resuming their conversation: "Now see it's working, see? Look, see, whoop, there, see – ."[56] These processes obviously interrupt the flow of the conversation and when the tape resumes, not only have the speakers usually changed the subject, but the audiotape also generally picks up half way through a sentence, again disrupting attempts to capture an undisturbed flow of speech and memory and making the process of tape recording highly conspicuous as a form of mediation.

Some further limitations of the tape are also evident in the transcript, particularly as the need for editorial comments further demonstrates the tape's incapacity to capture and adequately portray everything that is happening, despite this being a key reason for using it. So for example, although tape recording offers the possibility for a simultaneous multilayering of voices, the limitations of the technology in the fifties mean that in practice this was not necessarily the case. It is

[53] Kerouac, Visions 238.
[54] Kerouac, Visions 238, 259.
[55] For example Kerouac, Visions 238, 239, 257.
[56] Kerouac, Visions 239.

unclear from the transcript whether the microphone had to be passed from speaker to speaker, but the transcript does demonstrate that the tape cannot usually clearly pick up conversations between more than a couple of people, (although evidently it does manage to pick up Jack's speech when he is "drunk, lying on the floor with mike in ear").[57] Some attempts are made in the transcript to give the impression of voices talking over one another, or other background noise and action, mainly through editor's notes, although these have limited success. At some stages the transcript becomes fragmented with only a few words transcribed as "everybody talks and laughs" making it impossible to discern any individual voices on the tape.[58] The editorial comments demonstrate the non-comprehensive nature of both the tape recording and the transcript in capturing everything that is being said, for instance: "blurred tape"; "Jimmy laughs and says something inaudible"; "As Cody talks far in the background saying: I saw . . ." where the elision marks denote that Cody's speech has not been recorded; the comment "incoherent" placed between ellipses, again denoting that speech is missing; and "Evelyn murmurs" repeated eight times over the course of two pages as none of his asides are picked up by the machine.[59]

Ellipses often appear in the transcript either to denote pauses or if parts of the conversation are either not recorded or cannot be transcribed, demonstrating the limitations not only of the machine, but also of the transcript. There are also parts of the transcript where the technology has to be explained, either because it has failed or because the tape has been stopped for whatever reason, thus disrupting the conversation: "[Cody] resuming tape, he's shut it off while Jack pissed again on porch"; "tape runs, blank, five seconds, then when it comes on again Cody is

[57] Kerouac, Visions 257.
[58] Kerouac, Visions 204.
[59] Kerouac, Visions 170, 191, 190, 262, 283-4.

saying[.]"[60] At some of these junctures, the editor's comments then detail what happened in the interim, presumably from memory, for example: "tape goes blank for four minutes while they go on talking, about fame, not wanting to be destroyed, status, career, control, both of them extremely sad and close."[61] The editorial comments in the transcripts therefore add another layer of memory and thus of mediation to the original audio recordings.

So far I have been talking of 'the editor' as someone using the recordings and supplementing their gaps or absences, as if his sole object was to produce an objective account, as an ethnographer would, but of course we are dealing with a section of a novel, so it is also relevant to see the 'editing' as creative performance, and even to see the small additions not as corrections or emendations but as stylistic devices to create a greater sense of immediacy created by suggesting a sense of loss and the precariousness of the capture of the moment that the protagonists admire in Proust. In other words the tension between recording/improvising and creating is present at a dazzling number of overlapping levels. The tape-recorder creates a more accurate record of an event and a conversation than partial memory or extempore note taking – but the transcription, as Kerouac uses it is not neutral. He turns it into an occasion for dramatic re-creation of the event, through his supposedly impersonal editorial interventions, thus creating another dynamic momentum, and in the other sections of the novel he re-peoples the scene of the encounters with the ghosts and memories that the tape may have stripped away. At the most fundamental level the terms of discussion here seem to be allied to the immediacy of the oral/aural versus the mediacy of print, but we have always to remember that Kerouac is a writer, writing

[60] Kerouac, Visions 238, 197.
[61] Kerouac, Visions 190

about the transcript, and in doing so playing with the idea of a non-mediated primacy of experience as part of his compositional practices and themes.

A good example of the interplay of the mediated and immediate is in the characters' discussions of aspects of physical behaviour. The tape may have recorded tone of voice, for instance, but other outward signs of emotion such as facial expressions have to be explained in the transcript, including Cody's "grimace"; and a point where "Evelyn shudders."[62] Furthermore, Cody and Jack discuss over several pages Jack's description of Cody's expression as a "demurely downward look," exploring what this look actually meant and why Jack has chosen to describe it in such a way.[63] In his capacity as transcriber, Jack must attempt to portray these expressions in just a few words, but his short descriptions are not always adequate, hence Cody's comment to Jack that "I can talk there for twenty minutes about the reaction that made me give the demure downward look."[64] The transcript provides a method of mediating between the body and the voice by providing the space to connect the two with textual description. The emphasis placed on the speakers' bodies in the transcript's editorial comments indicates the importance of the body as a site of authentic experience, and may also help to explain the aim of using the tape. The stress that Jack places on contextualising the conversation through editorial remarks suggests that the tape is not being used merely to capture Jack and Cody's reminiscences, but also in an effort to record the entire process of recall, as though the memories that they articulate cannot exist independently of their present situation and circumstances. It also implies that the tape is not being utilised in an attempt to detach the memories from their place and time of articulation: to put them on to tape in order to 'disembody' them, so that they exist in some sort of liminal space,

[62] Kerouac, Visions 258, 268.
[63] Kerouac, Visions 155-164.
[64] Kerouac, Visions 170.

unaffected by the speakers' present time. Rather the use of audiotape *combined* with the transcript contextualises memory as far as possible. Indeed, it is when Cody feels that his memories have become dissociated from any real feeling through their continual repetition that he becomes so dissatisfied with their project: the words no longer have any impact or connection to the body of the speaker and become just "meaningless talk."

Gerald Nicosia identifies the connection between Jack and Cody as a central feature of their conversations in Visions, and in his critical biography of Kerouac he presents a radical and highly significant reading of the transcription section of Visions:

> The tapes introduce an intricate dovetailing of Cody's consciousness with Jack's. Telling each other their stories, the two main characters pool their perceptions and insights. Since they can now draw upon the same joint stock of knowledge and wisdom, they effectively become one mind.
>
> The transcriptions stand as a series of mirrors turned toward one another, and the mind of Jack and Cody lies somewhere among them.[65]

Thus Nicosia believes that the act of conversation actually functions to connect Jack and Cody, and it is this splicing of two (or more) subjects which, as I shall discuss, is precisely what Burroughs experiments with in his tapes. Moreover, just as Burroughs extends his experiments with tape splicing to create bodily connections between the participants, Nicosia argues that in the penultimate section of 'Imitation,' Kerouac similarly "examines all the ways that he and Neal love each other, including the sexual attraction between them. Like husband and wife, Jack and Cody become 'one flesh' and freely exchange roles." Nicosia's understanding that through conversation

[65] Nicosia, Memory Babe 371-2.

Jack and Cody are able to create a physical connection between them is particularly interesting and he cites the following passage in support of his reading of the tape sections in Visions:

> *JACK*. It was the same way when we had that dream about driving up the hill in the whiteness and you fell out of the car –
>
> *CODY*. We had a dream?
>
> *JACK*. Oh pardon my hard-on, I had a dream
>
> *CODY*. Know full well that I'll never succumb to your advances
>
> *JACK*. It was only your manly built [sic], your beautiful eyes that attracted me so fair, on the cobblestones there
>
> *CODY*. Don't think you can hang around here and make passes at ME
>
> *JACK*. Tut, tut, nary a thought; I told the judge I was a confidence man[.][66]

Although there is a clear indication here that there is a mental connection between Jack and Cody, Nicosia's extrapolation that they also become "one flesh" is somewhat tenuous, apparently resting on the idea of 'marriage'. However, later sections of the text do support his reading of Jack's desire to merge physically with Cody, such as Jack's recollection of one point on their road trip when the two of them had an extended conversation in the back seat of a car. Jack describes how "The excitement between us was so immense and extraordinary" and goes on to recall their conversation, particularly its physical effects on him, in detail:

> The Scythes [the subject of their conversation] made me sweat, I was damp. Cody kept yelling 'Yes!' as I blew my own great chorus on the subject clutching anxiously at his T-shirt as if that tattered rag could hold him to hear

[66] Nicosia, Memory Babe 376; Kerouac, Visions 365.

> words. He rocked back and forth with his yeses. 'I hear every one of your words!' I talked faster and faster, he had me hypnotized like a mad dream; I kept recalling my life. It was so far; I rolled my eyes at the roof to draw breath, just like the kickin tenor in Little Harlem had hauled off to blow with a wild thinking look at ceiling cracks, boom, the IT …
>
> I hung on his every return word as if I was going to die right on it and it's the last I'm to hear: frenzy.[67]

The sexual nature of this exchange is emphasised by the pulling of clothes and the frenzied physical energy that the dialogue stimulates, with the two men rocking backwards and forwards; the frequent affirmative exclamations, and the final release into the 'IT'. This energy is placed in direct contrast to Jack's evident immense jealousy and disgust in the paragraph immediately following when he sees Cody having sex with another man, an act which he recalls variously as "sick"; "monstrous" and even "murder" whilst he describes himself as "castrated" through the act of watching these "slambanging big sodomies."[68] Jack's despair at having been betrayed by Cody in this way is highlighted in the subsequent scene, which connotes passages in Burroughs' Naked Lunch, as Jack imagines Cody sentencing him to death by hanging.[69] Jack's violently negative reaction to Cody's becoming 'one flesh' with another man, and his subsequent portrayal of himself as castrated, demonstrates not only that he places great importance on his relationship with Cody, but also that he does indeed regard their relationship as a physical and metaphysical connection as Nicosia argues.

The use of audiotape in Visions of Cody is complex. Although the use of tape would appear to provide an ideal method of capturing conversation, this is

[67] Kerouac, Visions 415- 416.
[68] Kerouac, Visions 416.
[69] Tim Hunt notes that Naked Lunch was in part modelled on Visions. (Hunt, Crooked Road 252.)

complicated by several factors, including the effect the presence of the tape recorder has on the speakers, and the process of transcription. Jack and Cody's aim is to accurately record and stimulate their memories of past events by talking about them – thus the 'reality' that emerges through their conversations is already only a recreation of past events. Thus there are two aims. One is to record accurately their conversation. The second is to use the awareness that what they say would not be lost and that they were performing for the machine, almost like an audience, to trigger a more free-flowing conversation. They are developing a spontaneous method of speaking in order to "sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind,"[70] which would allow them to create a complete record of their memories, whilst maintaining spontaneity in order to achieve immediacy. However, this process is complicated as well as facilitated by the use of tape. The speakers are highly aware of the presence of the tape recorder and this in turn often causes them to become more conscious of their own thought processes when it is precisely this consciousness that they are trying to move away from.

The process of transcription further complicates their aim to achieve both immediacy and accuracy. The transcript does have one notable benefit over audiotape in that it allows for the connection between voice and body through textual description, highlighting the importance of the body as the site of authentic experience. However, it otherwise acts as a process of mediation, as the original speech is written down and placed within an organisational framework dominated by highly subjective editorial comments. Cody, in particular is frustrated with Jack's transcription, as the intrusive editing process appears to detract from their efforts to articulate an "undisturbed flow" of memories. Thus whilst there is no evidence that

[70] Kerouac, "Belief & Technique," 59.

portions of the tapes themselves are erased or otherwise revised or edited, the process of transcription is clearly an act of editing. Moreover, the transcription process detracts from individual speakers, as it appears to privilege the editor. This supports Michael Davidson's assertion that "the ostensible purpose of the transcripts is to provide an accurate record of Cody's speech, but the result, curiously enough, is a metadiscourse on the problem of representation."[71] Davidson seems to propose here that the metadiscourse that he has identified is an inadvertent result of Kerouac's experiments with tape. However, it becomes clear that throughout Visions, Kerouac explicitly constructs his work to be as complex as possible, continually setting up obstacles and complications in order to produce a text that is not spontaneous or immediate, but which very pointedly draws attention to itself as mediated and highly constructed. He employs tape recording not to capture immediacy, but rather as part of an endless loop of self-conscious authorial practice involving recall, speaking, recording, transcribing, editing and eventually re-voicing in performance. This is clearly demonstrated in the section of Visions entitled 'Imitation of the Tape'. Indeed, Davidson notes that this section "parodies many of the narrative techniques already developed"[72] and thus "serves as a kind of auto-critique."[73] The section begins with a stream of consciousness, which makes use of punctuation such as dashes and ellipses in much the same way as "Frisco: The Tape." The section also draws attention to the act of writing and the processes of composition, so for example at the end of a stream of consciousness:

> enough, let us sleep now, let us ascertain, in the morning, if there is a way of abstracting the interesting paragraphs of material in all this running

[71] Michael Davidson, The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics & Community at Mid-Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 74.
[72] Davidson, San Francisco Renaissance 73.
[73] Davidson, "Technologies of Presence," 103.

> consciousness stream that can be used as the progressing lightning chapters of a great essay about the wonders of the world as it continually flashes up in retrospect[.][74]

This foregrounds the notion of crafting spontaneous writing into something superior through the processes of selecting, revising and editing. Moreover, the narrator also draws attention to himself as a writer:

> I wonder what working people think of me when they hear my typewriter clacking in the middle of the night or what they think I'm up to when I take walks at 2 A.M. in outlying suburban neighborhoods – the truth is I haven't a single thing to wr – feel foolish [.][75]

The irony here is that although he says that he has nothing to "wr—" (which I understand to mean 'write') he is in the midst of a long stream of consciousness. The further irony is that to an extent, he doesn't actually *have* to write, as even when he uses a dash at the end of a word rather than completing it, the reader is still able to interpret and extract meaning. This passage also demonstrates the narrator's own self-consciousness and doubts about his writing. Moreover, Kerouac draws attention to the writing process throughout the text, and his awareness of the inadequacy of text may explain why he often gave readings of his work, as well as suggesting that the text should not in fact be regarded as an end product. One section of the tape transcriptions records Jack reading his writing aloud, and other parts of Visions play with the sounds of language: "The newspaper lengthens, but ever without true dimensions within the lyre, the gyre, the – oh – the – the – oh – well, grier. (*Laughter*)."[76] Passages such as this lend themselves to being read aloud in order to appreciate the playfulness of the language, although this is also made more difficult

[74] Kerouac, Visions 298.
[75] Kerouac, Visions 299.
[76] Kerouac, Visions 185-188, 288.

by the dashes which interrupt the flow of the text, complicating the relationship between text and voice still further.

One part of the last section of Visions demonstrates that Kerouac's texts are not to be regarded as finished or final, as it consists of a part of On The Road in a revised form. Given Kerouac's emphasis on "no revisions"[77] and Cody's comment earlier in Visions about the lack of spontaneity or pleasure in memories that have been replayed so many times, this appears to be a highly conscious inclusion.

Considering Kerouac's work as mediated and lacking finality provides a link to Burroughs, whose texts are constantly revised to the extent that different editions of his work are entirely re-written.[78] This continual revision stems from Burroughs' view of the word as "a weapon of illusion and control."[79] Thus although Kerouac believes, or at least *wants* to believe that to speak is to speak the truth, as Ihab Hassan comments, "Burroughs, who believes that to speak is to lie, attempts to evade mendacity through 'The Cut Up Method of Brion Gysin.'"[80] The following chapters explore the forms of communication used by Burroughs as part of his techniques of composition, as well as his representation of different modes of communication within his texts.

[77] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[78] Barry Miles, William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible (London: Virgin Books, 1993) 114.
[79] Robin Lyndenberg, "Sound Identity Fading Out," Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio & The Avant Garde, ed. Douglas Kahn, Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994) 410.
[80] Ihab Hassan, "The Literature of Silence," The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory & Culture (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 11.

5. Junky and Queer

Junky and Queer are two of Burroughs' formative texts, forming a key part of his development as a writer. Both texts are presented in a traditional narrative format, distinguishing them from Burroughs' later work where he develops a more experimental writing style that would eventually become the cut-up method. However even in these two early texts, Burroughs incorporates experiments with the form of the stylised performance of a 'routine' that he would go on to develop in Naked Lunch. In its simplest form the routine is a sketch or a verbal con trick as I shall discuss, and in Junky and Queer this prefigures Burroughs' later uses of this form in terms of the breakdown of the idea of a coherent or continuous self, with individual autonomy.[1] This chapter will examine some of the differences between Queer and Junky, in particular the development of a cybernetic dimension – that is to say an explicit interest in the two-way process of information transmission and reception – in Queer that is lacking in Junky.

David Porush's critical work The Soft Machine – the title is a deliberate reference to Burroughs – defines cybernetics as "an ultimate science of control over communication, seeking laws governing the flow of information in any system, whether mechanical or human or something in between, a model or metaphor."[2] This concept of both humans and machines as coded systems consequently seemed to suggest that:

> Human beings, like any other component or subsystem, must be localized in a system architecture whose basic modes of operation are probabilistic,

[1] Kerouac described Burroughs' routines as "big mad funny satirical daydreams he acts out in front of his friends." Jack Kerouac, "To William S. Burroughs," February 1958 Letters 1957-1969, 115.
[2] David Porush, The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction (London: Methuen, Inc. 1985) 21.

> statistical. Any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code can be constructed for processing signals in a common language.[3]

Cybernetics therefore looks for ways to ensure the correct communication of information by using certain rules in an attempt to eliminate any random elements from the communications process. Moreover, cybernetics also "refers to articulations of the body as a system of feedback loops and autonomous responses."[4] The feedback loop – passing information in an understandable form in order to gain an equally understandable response – is used to describe human communication. In one of its earliest formulations Norbert Wiener explained that "When I communicate with another person, I impart a message to him, and when he communicates back with me he returns a related message which contains information primarily accessible to him and not to me."[5] Cybernetics therefore encompasses a range of issues concerning understandings of both the body and other systems of communication and informational flows. Cybernetics offered insights into the flow of information not just in artificial systems of communication but by implication in all sorts of systems, including biological forms. This meant that the connections between body and machine went beyond surface similarity of functions and were more than just metaphorical. According to Oliver Harris, in "Conflating biology with technology, Burroughs' understanding of language as a viral force identifies him as one of the major imaginative investigators of cybernetic communication systems."[6] Clearly this gets most development in later work where Burroughs makes full use of the body/ machine overlaps, but even in the earlier work we can see the structure of feedback in

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[3] Haraway, Simians 163.
[4] Susanna Paasonen, "Thinking Through The Cybernetic Body: Popular Cybernetics and Feminism," 16 January 2004 <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue4/paasonen.html>.
[5] Wiener, Human Use of Human Beings 18.
[6] Harris, "Can You See a Virus?," 247.

operation Whilst there are cybernetic elements apparent within the thematics of both the texts, in Queer this is extended to the writing itself, as the text is a product of, and reproduces, a communicative circuit that is represented within it; namely the routine form that originates in Burroughs' letter writing. This chapter will explore the formal differences between the texts, a difference all the more dramatic given how closely the writing of these books overlapped chronologically.

In March 1950, Burroughs writes to tell Kerouac "I have been writing a novel about junk."[7] By January 1951 he has sent Kerouac a finished draft of the novel, although after this he goes on to make various alterations.[8] The manuscript was then revised during Spring 1951 and Spring 1952 and the final forty pages were not added until July 1952.[9] These final pages originally formed part of the manuscript of Queer, and Burroughs altered them to fit with Junky, although he "did not think too much of the last section."[10] Originally, Burroughs conceived part of the work that eventually became Queer as an additional section to Junky: "The Mexican section of Junk is not finished yet, and it is giving me a bad time. It involves sex, and that is the most difficult subject to write on."[11] By March 1952, Burroughs explains to Kerouac that he is working on "a queer novel using the same straight narrative method as I used in Junk; it is in fact a sequel or part II to Junk."[12] It is evident that Burroughs conceived of the texts as bearing some kind of relationship to one another: "Junk is of course complete without this part I am writing, but the two sections do complement each other," but the fit between the two was always uneasy, with Queer being "neither

[7] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 10 March, 1950, Letters, 65.
[8] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 28 January 1951, Letters, 80.
[9] Oliver Harris, William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 2003) 68.
[10] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 6 October 1952, Letters, 138.
[11] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 May 1951, Letters, 83.
[12] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 26 March 1952, Letters, 107.

joined nor separate to Junk."[13] The overlap between these two texts highlighted by the eventual use of parts of the original Queer manuscript in Junky calls for a reading of both texts in relation to one another, whilst recognising their differences.

At first glance, the subject matter of each text does not indicate any obvious or logical connection between the two, but in fact Burroughs points out that "the connections between junk and sex are extensive."[14] This is demonstrated quite clearly in a scene at Lola's Bar that appears in both Junky and Queer.[15] Whereas in Queer the scene depicts Lee's pleasure at seeing his lover Allerton, in Junky the same scene is reprised, but this time describing Lee's excitement at seeing his pusher. This is described as follows: "I felt a touch of the old excitement like meeting someone you used to go to bed with and suddenly the excitement is there again and you both know that you are going to go to bed again."[16] Thus it would appear that in Queer, Allerton is substituted for junk and in both scenes Lee's pleasure highlights the power of desire. The relationship between junk and desire is also made clear in Burroughs' correspondence. In a 1952 letter to Kerouac, Burroughs writes "with Marker away I got another habit."[17] This time the habit replacing his lover is junk, suggesting that junk and desire are interchangeable. Later, in 1954, Burroughs again writes to Kerouac, this time describing his desire for Ginsberg, and letters as a fix: "I did not think I was hooked on [Allen] like this. The withdrawal symptoms are worse than the Marker habit. One letter would fix me. So make it your business, if you are a real friend, to see that he writes me a fix."[18] Burroughs suggests here that both junk and desire are related as forms of control, with both exerting a great deal of power over

[13] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 April, 1952, Letters 111; William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters 119.
[14] William Burroughs, "To Lucien Carr," 5 March 1951, Letters, 81.
[15] William Burroughs, Queer (London: Picador, 1986) 35. Burroughs, Junky 138-9.
[16] Burroughs, Junky 140.
[17] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 13 April 1952, Letters, 109.
[18] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 22 April 1954, Letters, 205.

him, but the desire can be satisfied with a letter – a connection. It is interesting that Burroughs applies the junk structure of supply and demand (i.e. a sort of economy) to all situations, and there is also a question as to whether junk or desire is the 'original' controlling force or whether they are both manifestations of something else.[19] It is almost as if it is the structure of desire that interests Burroughs most. The desire itself is reduced to the structure of supply and demand for which he can use junk as a universal metaphor.

Just as with Kerouac's work, particularly On The Road, letters play an important role in the development of Burroughs' texts. However, Oliver Harris notes that Ginsberg's assertion that Junky was conceived through an exchange of letters between the two writers – a claim that has shaped much of the criticism of Junky – is erroneous.[20] The evidence of Burroughs' correspondence demonstrates that the work was almost completed by the time Burroughs first mentioned it in a letter, not to Ginsberg but to Jack Kerouac in 1950.[21] In fact, Ginsberg's and Burroughs' letters surrounding Junky function more in terms of an economic relationship once the manuscript has been completed – Burroughs quite literally uses Ginsberg to push Junk onto the publishers for him, and uses drug-related terms to describe Ginsberg's role: "If you all can peddle [the manuscript] anywhere I can use the $."[22] Similarly, "I hope you will accept an agent's fee if you score."[23] Burroughs also writes to Ginsberg to indicate edits that he makes to the manuscript, but he does not discuss the content with him particularly, other than to note that he is removing much of the

[19] Burroughs writes in the Prologue to Junky that "you become a narcotics addict because you do not have strong motivations in any other direction. Junk wins by default." xxvii. However Will Self takes issue with this in his Introduction to the text, asserting that this is "a deceptively thin, Pandora's portfolio of an idea that entirely begs the question: for what kind of person could drug addiction represent a 'strong motivation'? (Will Self, Introduction, Junky, by William Burroughs (London: Penguin, 2002) xx.)
[20] Harris, Secret of Fascination 68-9.
[21] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 10 March, 1950, Letters, 65.
[22] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 20 December 1951, Letters, 97.
[23] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 20 March 1952, Letters, 105.

theory to "cut down to straight narrative."[24] Where letters appear in the text of Junky itself, they serve to expose the writer. When private correspondence becomes public, it betrays the writer, and Lee finds himself in trouble with the police who find evidence within a letter which they can use to convict him on a criminal charge. Reflecting Burroughs' correspondence with Ginsberg at the time, this fictional letter is also portrayed as being concerned with economic exchange, although in this case with the price of weed.[25] That Burroughs' correspondence with Ginsberg during this period is impersonal and most concerned with economics reflects the stripped down, hermetic quality of the world portrayed in Junky as I shall discuss.

Whereas Burroughs does not use the epistolary form to develop Junky, letters are far more central to Queer. As Burroughs explains to Ginsberg "This is, in some ways, a more difficult job than Junk and a great deal harder for me to evaluate. I would like your opinion before the publisher sees it."[26] It is also clear from Burroughs' letters that Ginsberg has more involvement in the development of the manuscript as Burroughs sends extracts to him on several occasions. Here immediately the textual production of Queer is set up as part of a communicative circuit between the two writers, and the correspondence between them becomes far more personal over the period that Queer was being written. Kerouac was also involved in the development of the text, proposing the title Queer for it (although in fact one of Burroughs' letters to Kerouac had already inadvertently suggested the title – "this is a queer novel").[27]

Whilst Oliver Harris poses the question as to why the letter is not specifically represented in Queer, epistolary practice is in fact briefly alluded to at the beginning

[24] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 March 1952, Letters, 103.
[25] Burroughs, Junky 83.
[26] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 April 1952, Letters, 111.
[27] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," April 1952, Letters, 113. William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 26 March 1952, Letters, 107.

of the novel "Someone was writing a letter at the next table. If he had overheard the conversation, he gave no sign."[28] A shadowy, unnamed figure writing a letter who appears only fleetingly might simply be dismissed, but given the sparse nature of the prose and the ways in which the text of Queer is so firmly enmeshed within a system of epistolary practice, this figure suddenly takes on significance. Moreover, as the figure is notably absent in a very similar scene in Junky, it would seem that the figure is placed quite intentionally within the text.[29] In Queer, this person writing letters is deliberately introduced at the beginning of the narrative and is situated parallel to Lee, who is having a brief and apparently fairly meaningless conversation about an acquaintance's stolen typewriter over a drink. Why should it matter if this person were to overhear the conversation, and if he had done so, what sign might he have been expected to give? There is a sense that this character may have become involved in the narrative if he had overheard. Given the links between the text and Burroughs' correspondence, Lee's conversation can here be refigured as communication that has the potential to become a letter, and the person at the next table therefore has the capacity to respond to Lee's communication with "a sign" in the form of a letter. However, as this figure was seemingly paying no attention to what was happening next to him, the moment passes and he recedes, echoing Burroughs' own personal experience with unanswered correspondence, as I shall discuss. Moreover, as we do not know to whom this figure is writing, this may also point to something more sinister - a wider surveillance - and the danger that he poses is that of being in a position to record and expose parts of Lee's conversation that make reference to queer identity. The process of communication through letter writing and the potential for it

[28] Harris, Secret of Fascination, 142. Burroughs, Queer 30.
[29] Burroughs, Junky 138-39.

to be used to define identity is, then, presented as running almost imperceptibly in parallel to the main text of Queer.

Burroughs uses his correspondence to develop the form of Queer, in particular the routine form that appears in the text. The routine form is in fact a major facet of both Junky and Queer, seemingly providing an immediate, obvious and significant connection between the texts. That being said however, the routines in Junky are only ever described, none are ever actually directly performed by the narrator in the text as they are so overwhelmingly in Queer, where the routines appear in Murphy's words, as "aggressive, mocking, and often derisive set-pieces whose purpose is to amuse, to entrance and ultimately to seduce."[30] This distinction affirms a basic formal difference that in turn reflects on the thematic differences of the texts. The success of the routine form is dependent upon there being both a performer and a listener – in cybernetic terms a sender and a receiver, but there is no sense of this kind of set-up in Junky. Rather, the world presented in Junky is impersonal, and indeed Lee is told as he enters the Lexington correctional facility that "'the procedure here is more or less impersonal.'"[31] Perhaps the best example of this disconnection between people in Junky is a strangely disjointed 'conversation' that takes place within the correctional facility between recovering drug addicts. The shot of heroin that each patient receives periodically as part of their cure makes them feel temporarily "sociable" but this is shown to be nothing more than an effect of the drug: "after a while the shot began to wear off. Conversation slackened."[32] Moreover, the passage forms a brief series of interwoven monologues rather than a conversation as each speaker simply continues to talk about whatever is on his mind, paying little attention to what is being said by

[30] Timothy Murphy, Wising Up The Marks: The Amodern William Burroughs, (London: University of California Press, 1997) 62.
[31] Burroughs, Junky 61.
[32] Burroughs, Junky 63.

others around him.[33] In Queer on the other hand, the thematics of the text are very much concerned with the relationship between the two parties involved in the performance of a routine: the performer and the receiver though this is a truncated form of human exchange. The performance is instrumental, designed to create a specific effect on the listener in order to gain something from him, rather than the more ideal image of communication in which dialogue (also by a process of feedback) modifies the views and demands of both sides.

This difference is reflected in Burroughs' choice of narrative viewpoint for each piece. Whilst Junky is written in first person, Queer is written in third person. This issue appears regularly as a topic in Burroughs' correspondence from late March to April 1952, as he justifies his decision to write in the third person. He writes to Ginsberg that this has to do with the fact that he is writing about himself, so the third person allows him to gain some authorial distance from descriptions of himself that he would "feel silly" writing in first person.[34] At one stage, it was planned for the two texts to be published together and Burroughs again writes to Ginsberg to address the issues of shift in person and explain his reasoning behind his choices:

> Personally I think the shift to third person is indicated and adds greatly to the interest. Look at it like this: on junk you are concerned primarily with self, so first person is best instrument; but off the junk you are concerned with relationships and 1st person is not adequate to say what I have to say. Why the Hell can't you shift persons in the middle of a book? So it hasn't been done,

[33] Burroughs, Junky 62-63. It is interesting to look at the layout of the text on the page in this section as it prefigures Burroughs' later work with cut-up. One line may contain only a short phrase, and Burroughs here also makes use of repetition as the phrases "cook it up and shoot it," followed by "on the nod" appear twice on the same page.
[34] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 April 1952, Letters, 111.

> well let's do it. Anyway I am going to present it third person. If they want to change it, all right, but I think the change would entail considerable loss.[35]

Interestingly, although Burroughs here implies that the use of first person limits his perspective and he needs a wider viewpoint in Queer, as Timothy Murphy points out, the third person voice in Queer is in fact "almost always limited to Lee's perspective."[36] Therefore the "considerable loss" that would result from shifting the narrative perspective would most seriously affect the portrayal of Lee. So in shifting from a form that privileges relationships to that which privileges the self, paradoxically the implication here is that there would be a "loss" of Lee in doing so. This foregrounds the importance of communications with others in defining the 'self' as Lee is more fully defined within this structure. Perhaps more specifically, though, where Burroughs has effectively formulated himself into two personas – author and character – he would be forced into losing one of these identities.

The use of correspondence to develop the routines that appear in Queer enmeshes the construction of the text itself within a cybernetic system of communication which functions in terms of a feedback loop. In his letters of the period, Burroughs uses the routine form in an attempt to make contact with and demonstrate his love for Adelbert Lewis Marker and to receive feedback from him as an audience, but his efforts are in vain. Burroughs expresses the importance of having a reciprocal audience and his evident hurt and frustration at Marker's silence in a letter to Ginsberg:

> I have written five or six letters to [Marker] with fantasies and routines in my best vein but he doesn't answer … I told him I didn't expect him to answer all my letters, I just wrote because it was as near as I could come to contact with

[35] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 26 April 1952, Letters, 122.
[36] Murphy, Wising Up The Marks 58.

> him like I was talking to him and I hoped at least he would be amused by the letters because they were funny, but he didn't answer that letter. I also sent him a book for his birthday, and I sent him clippings from newspapers and magazines I think might interest him. No answer.[37]

Burroughs uses the routine specifically in order to help him deal with certain situations where he may not feel comfortable directly expressing his feelings, as he explains in a later letter to Kerouac after a breakdown in communications with Ginsberg: "I am in urgent need of routine receivers. Whenever I encounter the impasse of unrequited affection my only recourse is in routines."[38] As I shall discuss, this imbalance of communication is reflected in the text of Queer in the relationship between Lee and Allerton.

The glossary of Junky defines the routine as "To give someone a story, to persuade, or con someone."[39] In Junky, the routine takes many different formats, relating both to the world of the addict and also to queer identity, and there are several key ways in which the routine functions can be identified. Junk itself is described as forcing a person into a specific routine (in the conventional sense of a pattern): "Every day we would meet in my apartment after breakfast to plan the day's junk program. One of us would have to hit the croaker"; "I stopped drinking, stopped going out at night, and fell into a routine schedule: a cap of junk three times a day, and the time in between to be filled somehow."[40] In Junky, the addict is presented as ceding control to heroin which dictates his daily schedule: "Junkies run on junk time and junk metabolism. They are subject to junk climate. They are warmed and chilled by junk.

[37] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 4 June 1952, Letters, 129.
[38] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 22 April 1954, Letters, 204.
[39] Burroughs, Junky 157.
[40] Burroughs, Junky 23, 75.

The kick of junk is living under junk conditions."[41] In this sense, the routine is a fixed pattern – in this case quite literally a 'habit'. The other sense of the routine is creative – it adopts a set pattern but does something more with it, as addicts also regularly employ routines in their attempts to obtain prescriptions from Doctors in order to get a fix. Indeed, this is an activity which pervades the text: "Roy had an operation scar on his stomach that he used to support his gallstone routine"; "I got a codeine script from an old doctor by putting down a story about migraine headaches"; "'I tell the croaker I've got an aged mother and she uses this prescription for piles.'"[42] The routine here serves as a method of conning authority figures, but it eventually loses its power through overuse. In addition, when talking about his time spent in psychoanalysis, Lee notes that his Analyst "finally abandoned analytic objectivity and put me down as an 'out-and-out con.' I was more pleased with the results than he was."[43] Thus the idea of the routine as a con trick begins here in Junky.

The routine form in Junky can also mean an act, or performance of a certain identity. So for example, when Lee is sent to see a Psychiatrist: "I had made him for a faker when he walked in the room – obviously he was putting down a self-assured routine for himself and the others – but I had expected a deeper and tougher front."[44] The routine as performance or act is also underscored at the point where Lee's lawyer suggests that he could pretend to be Southern in order to make his case in court: "I could see myself coming on like plain folks in a phony Southern accent. I gave up trying to be one of the boys twenty years ago. I told him this sort of act wasn't my line at all, and he never mentioned the idea again."[45] The routine is also used to describe certain, often meaningless, conversational patterns, such as "When I met

[41] Burroughs, Junky 97.
[42] Burroughs, Junky 20, 25, 62.
[43] Burroughs, Junky xxvi.
[44] Burroughs, Junky 99.
[45] Burroughs, Junky 104.

[Chris] the next day in Bickford's, he immediately began to give me the let-me-warn-you-about-Nick routine"; "I took a shot with him, and the what-happened-to-so-and-so routine set in."[46] In this sense the routine is a way of communicating with someone on a very surface level in a scripted manner, in order to appear friendly or sociable, without actually giving much information about oneself. The routine also signifies the habitual, performed character of identity, and in a related sense functions as a kind of identity shield.

In Queer, the routine form enables Lee to transmit information from himself to Allerton. The content is not always that important, and as Burroughs explains to Ginsberg "The Oil-Man and Slave Trader routines are not intended as inverted parody sketches à la Perelman, but as a *means* to make contact with Allerton and to interest him. The Slave Trader routine came to me like dictated."[47] As Timothy Murphy recognises, "Initially, Lee employs these routines merely to amuse Allerton and keep his attention, but soon Lee is using them to do things that would otherwise be quite difficult, like revealing his 'queerness' to Allerton."[48] The routine also provides a way for Lee to cope with potentially difficult social situations by setting up a particular dynamic, whereby he positions himself as the performer and others as audience. Lee's routines are in one sense attractive and interesting to Allerton as "Lee had conversational routines that Allerton had never heard."[49] Allerton is nevertheless unsure as to why Lee wishes to spend so much time with him and "decided finally that Lee valued him as an audience."[50] In this respect, Lee's use of routines does not have the desired effect, as his aim is to attract Allerton as a sexual partner, not merely as an audience. Lee's aim is to create a normalised relationship

[46] Burroughs, Junky 50, 148.
[47] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 23 May 1952, Letters, 126.
[48] Burroughs, Queer 59.
[49] Burroughs, Queer 41.
[50] Burroughs, Queer 41.

with Allerton on the basis of these highly constructed interactions but it appears that through the routines, Lee has constructed a subject position for Allerton rather too effectively. Allerton adopts the safe and passive position of audience, rather than the interactive role of partner that Lee actually desires of him. Lee essentially uses the routine to keep conning himself into believing that he has a chance with Allerton.

There is a close relationship between the routine form in Queer and the problematics of queer identity. The ambiguity and slippage inherent in sexual identity is first raised as an issue towards the end of Junky where Lee notes "I have frequently been misled to believe a young man was queer after observing his indifference to women, and found out subsequently he was not at all homosexual, but simply disinterested in the whole subject."[51] Equally, in a letter to Ginsberg discussing sexual identity, Burroughs asks "For the Cris sake do you actually think that laying a woman makes someone heter?"[52] In Queer, these difficulties become an issue in Lee's attempts to communicate his queerness to Allerton. At first "It did not occur to [Allerton] that Lee was queer, as he associated queerness with at least some degree of overt effeminacy."[53] Oliver Harris identifies the problematics of the queer subject position as part of a wider theme of the disruption of traditional binary oppositions within the text. He explains that:

> As a term, 'queer' readily takes on meaning through a well-ordered set of oppositions: unnatural/natural; counterfeit/genuine; spurious/honest; inexplicable/understandable. In Queer, these binaries lose their normative and hierarchic reassurance. Hence the text's initial preoccupation with 'borderline' sexual identity, and the repeated disputes as to who is or is not

[51] Burroughs, Junky 147. Allerton's conception of queerness is precisely the kind of representation that Burroughs constantly distances himself from in his letters.
[52] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," May 1951, Letters, 88.
[53] Burroughs, Queer 41.

> queer . . . It should take one to know one, but, since there is no agreement amongst queers, there is no way to draw the borderlines of straight identity either.[54]

So just as Allerton does not identify Lee as queer, Lee decides that "Allerton was not queer enough to make a reciprocal relation possible."[55] In addition, whilst Lee does not want to identify himself as queer because of its association with effeminacy, at the same time he cannot identify as straight, as he needs to fulfil his sexual desires. This leads to continual confusion and slippage along the boundary between queer and straight, and as Jamie Russell argues, forces Lee into a constantly unstable subject position: "Caught between his own masculine identifications and his awareness that he is being forced into the role of the 'painted, simpering' fag, Lee is torn between his view of himself and the stereotype that society demands he play out."[56]

The use of a routine therefore allows Lee to distance himself from these unacceptable subject positions, and offers him a space in which to broach the subject of his homosexuality with Allerton. Lee feels "uncomfortable in dramatic 'something-I-have-to-tell-you' routines and he knew, from unnerving experience, the difficulties of a casual come-on: 'I'm queer, you know, by the way'."[57] He must then find another way in which to broach the subject of his homosexuality, and he at first does so indirectly: "'So Dumé told you about my, uh, proclivities?'"[58] Lee is only able to continue this discussion, by recourse to a melodramatic routine :

> I shall never forget the unspeakable horror that froze the lymph in my glands … when the baneful word seared reeling through my brain: **I was a homosexual.** I thought of the painted, simpering females I had seen in a

[54] Harris, "Can You See A Virus?," 253.
[55] Burroughs, Queer 66.
[56] Jamie Russell, Queer Burroughs (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 21.
[57] Burroughs, Queer 47.
[58] Burroughs, Queer 50.

Baltimore night club. Could it be possible that I was one of those subhuman things?[59]

The routine allows Lee to discuss his sexuality, and it here functions as a pastiche: a way of gaining some discursive distance from effeminate languages of homosexuality. As Fredric Jameson points out, though, pastiche holds out little guarantee of the availability of any other, less problematic, subject position. Pastiche is "devoid of ... any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists."[60] Lee's parodic adoption of this subject position – even if it holds out the promise of forging identities that refuse distinctions between the healthy and the unhealthy, the normal and the abnormal – is fraught and risky. Indeed, as Russell argues the routine itself is an unstable form and "Its schizophrenic oscillation between opposed registers (real/fictional, comic/terrifying, masculine/feminine) threatens to overwhelm the teller, turning him into a mere ventriloquist's dummy."[61]

There is a danger that in taking up the routine there is eventually no other subject position available to the performer as an alternative. This is clearly demonstrated by a routine in Queer which is not pre-rehearsed but is a spontaneous monologue over which Lee does not feel that he has any control: "Lee paused. The routine was coming to him like dictation. He did not know what he was going to say next, but he suspected the monologue was about to get dirty."[62] Lee's lack of control here suggests that he has become solely a channel for information and as Harris describes, "Lee remains a speaker only in the sense of a piece of amplifying sound

[59] Burroughs, Queer 50. Bold in original.
[60] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," The Jameson Reader, ed. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 202.
[61] Russell, Queer Burroughs 22.
[62] Burroughs, Queer 70.

equipment, a transmitter of received messages."[63] In considering the routine as a cybernetic system, the process has here become entirely one-way as Lee does not receive any feedback from others. Lee's body is also being used to transmit messages that do not emanate from it, and as such he has become part of a system of control. The question remains as to where or from what the routine actually emanates from, and it is this that Burroughs goes on to explore in his later texts, where characters seem to become only the temporary embodiments of routines.

Whilst the problematics of verbal communication are not foregrounded in Junky to as great an extent as in Queer, both texts do explore non-verbal communication. This is highlighted by a sentence towards the end of Junky that is reproduced almost verbatim in Queer, where Lee mentions, "What I look for in any relationship is contact on the nonverbal level of intuition and feeling, that is, telepathic contact."[64] In Queer, Lee also places emphasis on non-verbal communication in an effort to make some kind of contact with Allerton. "In any relation of love or friendship Lee attempted to establish contact on the non-verbal level of intuition, a silent exchange of thought and feeling."[65] This echoes Burroughs' sentiments in one of his letters to Ginsberg: "I see you really understand what I attempt to say. Writing must always remain an *attempt*. The Thing itself, the process on sub-verbal level always eludes the writer."[66] In Lee's case, however, most of his "silent exchanges" by way of physical actions simply make him look foolish: "Lee tried to achieve a greeting at once friendly and casual, designed to show interest without pushing their short acquaintance. The effect was ghastly."[67] The text charts Lee's continual failure to make this kind of connection with Allerton, and in this case,

[63] Harris, "Can You See A Virus?," 265.
[64] Burroughs, Junky 152; Burroughs, Queer 64.
[65] Burroughs, Queer 64.
[66] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 23 May 1952, Letters, 126.
[67] Burroughs, Queer 34.

"[Allerton] decided to remove himself from contact with Lee before the man did something even more distasteful. The effect was like a broken connection."[68]

Lee actively pursues Allerton, telling him that "'the difficulty is to convince someone else he is really a part of you, so what the hell? Us parts ought to work together. Reet?'"[69] Later on his desire for Allerton becomes so strong that he goes so far as to ask "'Wouldn't it be booful if we should juth run together in one gweat big blob.' He said in baby talk."[70] In these remarkable statements, Lee attempts to express his desire for Allerton by suggesting not just a conventional partnership, but that the two of them should somehow physically merge with each other to form a single organism. What is flippant and juvenile here becomes made literal in Burroughs' later work.[71] Lee is incapable of intelligently expressing his desire for Allerton and so resorts to baby talk, as though this is some kind of romantic attempt to woo Allerton. Instead Lee comes across once again as ridiculous, embarrassing and repellent.[72]

Whilst the routine marks the most obvious link between the text of Queer and Burroughs' letters, it is also significant that Burroughs' correspondence during the time that he was working on the manuscript is very much concerned with identity. Any sort of reciprocal affirmation of identity through two-way conversation seems impossible in the texts, which are full of broken connections, and loss of feedback loops, but in his letters Burroughs' identity very clearly becomes part of a communicative circuit he is at pains to maintain. Even so, he does not simply write to

[68] Burroughs, Queer 35.
[69] Burroughs, Queer 51.
[70] Burroughs, Queer 96.
[71] Indeed one of the virtues of science fiction is that it cuts through ideas of what is real and what is metaphor, and Burroughs explores this in some of his later work.
[72] It is also interesting to compare this to a later letter to Ginsberg where Burroughs writes, "Degenerate spectacle: I just hit a vein (not easy these days. I don't got many veins left). So I kissed the vein, calling it 'my sweet little needle sucker,' and talked baby talk to it." William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 26 February 1956, Letters, 312.

seek affirmation of his identity, but in fact writes to Kerouac and Ginsberg asking them to think of a suitable pseudonym for him "because Ma read Kerouac's book" and recognised him.[73]

Burroughs also asks Ginsberg to write his biographical details for him for publication. He questions whether the publishers want a biographical 'routine' from him, and provides a savagely funny piece for Ginsberg describing his writing practices. Burroughs is adamant: "I am a writer not a prestidigitator. I do not manipulate a typewriter with my feet nor do I write on a blackboard with the pus drips outta my prick. I sit down – preferably – at a typewriter or pad and pencil (I favor number 2 pencils in a plain yellow Venus. Is that the kind of biographical data they want?) and write one thing at one time."[74] However, this piece only serves to add to the slipperiness of his identity, as Burroughs also documents within it his penchant for cat torture and the fact that he "would rather write than fuck (what a shameless lie)."[75] He also lists a selection of jobs that he claims to have done, parenthesising with "(but not in the order named.)"[76] Just as in Kerouac's Visions of Cody where editorial comments are used in part of the text, Burroughs here uses parenthetical notes to create further ambiguity rather than to actually clarify his statements. Moreover, in delegating responsibility for this biographical piece, Burroughs offers Ginsberg an opportunity to literally write him into being, and gives him a "free hand" to do so: "Please, Sweetheart, write the fucking thing will you? PLUMMM."[77] Given Ginsberg's rejection of Burroughs as a sexual partner, it appears that Burroughs here

[73] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 5 April 1952, Letters, 111.
[74] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters, 120.
[75] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters, 119.
[76] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters, 119.
[77] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 14 April 1952, Letters, 117.

gives Ginsberg the opportunity to rewrite him – to "rebuild to your taste" in the same way that Lee suggests to Allerton that alterations can be made to a person in Queer.[78]

In asking for input from Kerouac and Ginsberg in formulating an identity for publication, Burroughs puts his identity at the heart of a system of feedback subject to manipulation and alteration by others, and it is this that forms one of the central themes of Queer. However, this feedback system inevitably places him in a position whereby his identity may be altered in a way that he doesn't find acceptable, and Burroughs writes to Kerouac criticising the way he represents him in one of his texts: "And let me tell you, young man, that I *did not* 'leave my sexuality back somewhere on the Opium road.' That phrase has rankled with me all these years. I must ask of you, if I am to appear in your current opus, that I appear properly equipped. With male facilities."[79] Whilst Burroughs does not object to Kerouac using his identity in his work per se, he is unhappy for Kerouac to portray him as emasculated, and he later repeats the "distinction between us strong, manly, noble types and the leaping, jumping, window dressing cocksucker" in a letter to Ginsberg.[80] Burroughs consistently refuses this emasculated subject position, explaining that "I don't mind being called queer … but I'll see him castrated before I'll be called a Fag."[81] In a later letter, he again feels the need to affirm his masculinity: "I tried – in a perfectly straightforward manly way – to get in his pants."[82] As always with Burroughs' though, the play of irony, so hard to pin down, makes even these apparent assertions or defences of an identity part of a comic performance. The same ambivalence

[78] "'I could think of a few changes I might make in you, doll.' He looked at Allerton and licked his lips. 'You'd be so much *nicer* after a few alterations. You're nice now, of course, but you do have those irritating little peculiarities. I mean, you won't do exactly what I want you to do all the time.'" (Burroughs, Queer 89.)
[79] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 26 March 1952, Letters, 107.
[80] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters, 119.
[81] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 22 April 1952, Letters, 119.
[82] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 26 April 1952, Letters, 122.

towards a stereotyped homosexual performance is found within the fiction, when in Queer Lee continually refuses the subject position of the "painted, simpering" fag.[83] As Russell points out:

> Embarking on a relationship with the straight but curious Allerton, Lee hopes to create a utopian traffic in masculinity, a narcissistic relationship in which each of the participants reflects the masculine status of the other. However, these hopes are quickly dashed; the effeminate paradigm of homosexual identity is too deeply ingrained within this community of expatriates.[84]

The power dynamics of the relationship are therefore quickly established, as it "becomes a fight for dominance in which the loser is forced into a position of effeminacy."[85] One of the inherent dangers in becoming part of a feedback system is that it is defined by the other as much as by yourself.

Burroughs plays continually with the revelation and concealment of his own identity, and returning to the issue of Burroughs' pseudonym we find that on one hand he asks to be "properly equipped," in order to *maintain* an acceptable (and specifically masculine) identity within Kerouac's work. At the same time though he writes to ask for a pseudonym that he can use within his own work which will enable him to adequately *conceal* his identity, although he adds "it is hard to get away from your name entirely."[86] Burroughs wants a name that links to his own real name, telling Ginsberg that he "would like something with more of an old Anglo-Saxon ring like my real middle name, Seward."[87] He looks for a name suitably close to his own, almost as though part of him does want to be recognised in some way.

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[83] Burroughs, Queer 50.
[84] Russell, Queer Burroughs 19-20.
[85] Russell, Queer Burroughs 20.
[86] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 26 March 1952, Letters, 108.
[87] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 23 May 1952, Letters, 127.

As we have seen with Kerouac, epistolary practice is key in helping him to find his own unique style that he develops within his prose works. Equally, at this stage in Burroughs' work, epistolary practice has become central not only as a means of developing his novels through exchange of letters and ideas and the development of new forms such as the routine, but also as a way of developing his own multiplicity of identities as part of a communicative circuit. In the next chapter we see how Burroughs uses correspondence and the routine to develop his writing style further, and, like Kerouac, he begins to experiment with new techniques in order to find a mode through which he can adequately express himself, as I discuss in what follows on Naked Lunch.

6. The Naked Lunch

The beginnings of Naked Lunch are well-documented in Burroughs' correspondence, and in letters to Kerouac and Ginsberg he writes more extensively about the process and progress of his work during this period than during the writing of either Junky or Queer. Writing Naked Lunch is evidently more problematic for Burroughs than the production of his earlier texts, and his first major difficulty is to find a new form that will allow him to express himself freely. Burroughs expresses his concern over this to Kerouac in August 1954, explaining, "I am having serious difficulties with my novel. I tell you the novel form is completely inadequate to express what I have to say. I don't know if I can find a form. I am very gloomy as to prospects of publication."[1] However, only a couple of months earlier, Burroughs had written to Ginsberg that he had "been thinking about routine as art form," and by that winter Burroughs has returned to this idea and is using the routine as the basis of his new form of writing. He reports that he has "written 1st chapter of a novel in which I will incorporate all my routines and scattered notes."[2]

In the same letter, he offers Ginsberg a description of the routine form, noting that "routines are completely spontaneous and proceed from whatever fragmentary knowledge you have. In fact a routine is by nature fragmentary, inaccurate."[3] It is these elements of fragmentation and spontaneity that enable Burroughs to produce a text that is

[1] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 18 August 1954, Letters, 227.
[2] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 24 June 1954, Letters, 216. William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 13 December 1954, Letters, 243.
[3] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 13 December 1954, Letters, 244.

radically different to his earlier work, both in terms of narrative structure and even the form of the text on the page. Over the course of the following months, Burroughs' correspondence documents the further development of the routine as he begins to work on extracting and refining material from some of his earlier letters. Burroughs also decides to "let the book write itself," and begins to accept that "the fragmentary quality of my work is *inherent* in the method and will resolve itself so far as necessary."[4] In this letter of January 1955, he also suggests to Ginsberg a radically new way of reading his letter: "Start anyplace you want. Start in the middle and read your way out. In short, start anywhere."[5] It is this format that Burroughs would eventually apply to Naked Lunch, leading to a tendency among critics to regard the text as "a total disarray," or even to dismiss it as "gibberish."[6]

Naked Lunch certainly marks a stylistic departure from Burroughs' earlier novels, as it is not written as a conventional linear narrative but rather uses a more radical form of composition in an attempt to create the effect of abolishing the usual orderings of space and time. The published text of Naked Lunch consists largely of dialogue and routines that are divided into headed sections, and the syntax is fractured with the use of dashes and ellipses. The layout of the text on the pages gives the impression of fragmentation, thus the form of the text in part reflects its provenance as material that Burroughs cut from letters and notes and then reordered. It is important to note, though, that the text of Naked Lunch is not simply a random assortment of fragments from his

[4] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 30 December 1954, Letters, 247. William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 6 January 1955, Letters, 251.
[5] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 6 January 1955, Letters, 251.
[6] Neil Oxenhandler, "Listening to Burroughs' Voice," Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow, 1975) 182. Jonathan Eburne, "Trafficking in the Void: Burroughs, Kerouac and the Consumption of Otherness," Modern Fiction Studies 43.1 (1997): 57.

correspondence.[7] Burroughs worked hard to extract and order his material and his letters demonstrate his efforts in this regard, as he sifted through large quantities of material, discarding much of it, and experimented with different formats for ordering it into a coherent text.[8] He describes the "horrible mess of long-hand notes to straighten out, plus all those letters to go through. A veritable labor of Hercules. … It is extremely painful trying to weld all this scattered material into some sort of coherent pattern."[9] As Harris notes, "Burroughs describes his formal problem as a *physical* agony, on a par with the pains of addiction."[10] It is notable too that Burroughs talks at this point of an ultimately "coherent pattern" as his aim, which seems somewhat at odds with the stress on fragmentation and provisionality that is so often associated with Burroughs' work. Burroughs describes the process of writing as physically painful on several occasions, in much the same way as Kerouac. For Kerouac, writing is painful because it is so personal that at times at becomes akin to amputating a part of himself: "Sometimes my effort at writing becomes so fluid and smooth that too much is torn out of me at once, and it hurts."[11] The writing exists as part of him, and putting it down on paper is a physical act which he describes here as a sometimes painful and almost violent process of removal from his body. In the same way, if we understand Burroughs' correspondence to be his corpus of writing, when Burroughs begins to put together Naked Lunch by dismembering

[7] Harris, Secret of Fascination 186-87, gives a detailed account of the text's genesis and the critical misreadings that surround it.
[8] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 21 October 1955, Letters, 288.
[9] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 10 October 1955, Letters, 287. Somewhat later in the process, Burroughs rejected Ginsberg's suggestion at using the material in the order that it was written, telling him "I think any attempt at chronological arrangement extremely ill-advised." William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg, 20 September 1957, Letters, 367.
[10] Harris, Secret of Fascination 211.
[11] Kerouac, Windblown World 29. It is interesting to compare this with Kerouac's striking image in On The Road of the ribbon of paper and the road that seems to be unfolding out of Dean Moriarty / spooling back in to him as he lies in the car: "When I closed my eyes all I could see was the road unwinding into me." (Kerouac, On The Road 234.)

letters, the process also becomes that of taking apart his body. Interestingly, one of the labours of Hercules was clearing out the Augean stables; a task which centres around the abjected products of the body, and Oliver Harris writes extensively on the subject of Burroughs' letters as waste writing, noting that "Through the economy of his epistolary exchange, Burroughs could dispossess himself of his material by presenting it as ejections that invite rejection."[12]

The relationship between the letters and the novel changes over time. At one stage, Burroughs writes of his plans to "alternate chapters of Letter and Journal Selections, with straight narrative chapters."[13] Indeed, early in the composition process, Burroughs writes to Ginsberg that "maybe the real novel is letters to you."[14] In this format, the novel *would* essentially have been letters to Ginsberg, as the material would have been clearly identified within its original epistolary context. However, the relationship between the epistolary and the novel becomes more complex than this as the format of the text evolves. The intended 'Letter and Journal Selections' chapters are dispensed with, and instead Burroughs takes routines that have previously appeared in his letters and divorces them from their original epistolary context, reframing them as part of his novel, rather than specifically identifying them as letters, as was his original intention.

Burroughs experiments with various writing techniques. His writing techniques, including cut-up all seem to be based on printed rather than handwritten text, and early in 1955 he tells Kerouac that he is "doing a lot of work, but none of it satisfies me. It was a disaster for me to lose my typewriter. I hate to work in long-hand. I have been attempting something similar to your sketch method. That is I write what I see and feel

[12] Harris, Secret of Fascination 231.
[13] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 21 October 1955, Letters, 288.
[14] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 24 June 1954, Letters, 217.

right now trying to arrive at some absolute, direct transmission of *fact* on all levels."[15] One of the key facets of Kerouac's sketching method is that the writer should "Begin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of image at *moment* of writing."[16] Kerouac specifically intended his method as a means of removing conscious control over composition from the writer, instead allowing the words to emanate freely in order to accurately represent the contents of the subconscious, and freeing the author's work from the limitations of self-editing that are imposed by the conscious mind. As Harris remarks, this can be compared with the "atrophied preface" section of Naked Lunch: "There is only one thing a writer can write about: *what is in front of his senses at the moment of writing* . . . I am a recording instrument. . . . I do not presume to impose 'story' 'plot' 'continuity.' . . . Insofar as I succeed in *Direct* recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function. . . . I am not an entertainer. . . ."[17] Although Burroughs does experiment with Kerouac's techniques, he sees a more sinister side to this in terms of the potential for the writer to find himself being controlled by his writing – moving into an area of the involuntary rather than voluntary, of control rather than liberation. Whereas Kerouac, drawing on a Romantic tradition, sees the loss of control as enabling another and more creative capacity, Burroughs finds something more inimical. This is especially clear when Burroughs attempts to write "something saleable" and therefore outside of the epistolary framework, and he finds that:

> It's almost like automatic writing produced by a hostile, independent entity who is saying in effect 'I will write what I please.' At the same time when I try to

[15] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac," 12 February 1955, Letters, 265.
[16] Kerouac, "Essentials," 58.
[17] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 200. Emphasis and ellipses in original.

> pressure myself into organizing production, to impose some form on material, or even to follow a line (like continuation of novel), the effort catapults me into a sort of madness where only the most extreme material is available to me.[18]

Without the framework of the letter, the routines become uncontrollable: "Parentheses pounce on me and tear me apart. I have no control over what I write, which is as it should be."[19] This lack of authorial control is reflected in Naked Lunch, where the narrator claims not to have any power over the material: "Gentle reader, I fain would spare you this, but my pen hath its will like the Ancient Mariner. Oh Christ what a scene is this! Can tongue or pen accommodate these scandals?"[20] Whilst Burroughs is at first frustrated with his apparent inability to produce "something saleable," he then seems to begin to accept that his work is moving towards extremes and finds himself "progressing towards compete lack of caution and restraint. Nothing must be allowed to dilute my routines."[21]

Several of the routines in Naked Lunch have previously appeared in Queer, often in completely different contexts, such as Lee's Chess Master Tetrazzini routine, which is reworked in Naked Lunch and told by Dr Benway.[22] Tetrazzini becomes a Doctor, and his chess performance a grotesque ballet played out in the operating theatre: "'Did any of you ever see Dr. Tetrazzini perform? I say perform advisedly because his operations were performances. He would start by throwing a scalpel across the room into the patient and then make his entrance like a ballet dancer.'"[23] The material is often recontextualised, so

[18] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 7 February 1955, Letters, 259.
[19] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 21 October 1955, Letters, 289.
[20] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 37.
[21] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," 23 October 1955, Letters, 294.
[22] Burroughs, Queer 69-70. Burroughs, Naked Lunch 56.
[23] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 56.

although it is still recognisable it is quite different. Mary McCarthy's description of what Burroughs is doing here is prescient, as she explains how "Burroughs' humor is particularly American, at once broad and sly. It is the humor of a comedian, a vaudeville performer ... The same jokes reappear, slightly refurbished, to suit the circumstances, the way a vaudeville performer used to change Yonkers to Renton when he was playing Seattle."[24] Burroughs' use of the tropes of vaudeville performance also accounts for many of the chaotic scenes which are portrayed throughout the text, and McCarthy argues that "The effect of pandemonium, all hell breaking loose, is one of Burroughs' favourites and an equivalent of the old vaudeville finale, with the acrobats, the jugglers, the magician, the hoofers, the lady-who-was-sawed-in-two, the piano-player, the comedians all pushing into the act."[25] In a sense, though, the effect of all hell breaking loose is something that Burroughs greatly fears, particularly in terms of the routine. Oliver Harris' interpretation of Burroughs' re-use of material demonstrates their power: "Burroughs' selective use of Queer's routines is a method of decontextualization, whose effect is to confirm the emergent autonomy of the routine, its capacity to be taken out of an intersubjective narrative context. The move therefore rids the routine of its unwanted autobiographical foundation, one that would have naturalized it as only a fantasy mode of personal expression."[26] The danger for Burroughs is that if his routines are not placed within the cybernetic feedback system of an exchange of letters, they begin to exert power over him: "I am strangled with routines, drowning in routines and nobody to

[24] Mary McCarthy, "Burroughs' Naked Lunch," William S. Burroughs at the Front: Critical Reception, 1959-1989, ed. Jennie Skerl and Robin Lydenberg (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991) 37.
[25] McCarthy, "Burroughs' Naked Lunch," 38.
[26] Harris, Secret of Fascination 189.

receive."[27] Burroughs explains the potentially remarkable power of the receiverless routine: "if there is no-one there to receive it, routine turns back on me … and tears me apart, grows more and more insane (literal growth like cancer) and impossible and fragmentary like berserk pin-ball machine and I am screaming: 'Stop it! Stop it!'"[28] As David Savran notes, "unless a routine is part of a concrete exchange, it becomes an instrument of self-destruction."[29] This may explain why Burroughs writes to Ginsberg twice in 1955 to suggest that they collaborate on the text. Collaboration would effectively force Ginsberg into providing Burroughs with the feedback that he so desperately craved and so would quash the power of the routines over Burroughs by giving him a receiver, preventing them from turning back onto him. Burroughs tells Ginsberg, "Writing now causes me an almost unbearable pain. This is connected with my need for you, which is probably not a sexual need at all, but something even more basic. I wonder if we could collaborate?"[30] Indeed, Burroughs' letters reveal an increasing desperation for Ginsberg to acknowledge him. At first he asks, "Why don't you write to me?" but later on his frustration is more apparent: "Are you receiving the material I send???"[31] There is also a noticeable and interesting shift here from Burroughs requesting feedback and collaboration as part of a two-way system of correspondence, to him later simply requiring a receiver for his work.

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[27] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 13 December 1954, Letters, 243.
[28] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 7 April 1954, Letters, 201.
[29] David Savran, Taking It Like A Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998) 86.
[30] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 10 October 1955, Letters, 286. See also William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 12 January 1955, Letters, 255. Burroughs writes that he feels "a great need for your help at this critical juncture. In fact I think we might even be able to collaborate on this novel."
[31] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 21 January 1955, Letters, 257. William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 10 November 1957, Letters, 376.

Sending and receiving become key tropes within the actual text of Naked Lunch, reflecting its compositional origins, and as Harris comments: "the power exercised through the epistolary medium by the sender against the receiver, and both conjured and exorcised through the letter-routine, is instantly recognisable as Burroughs' model for modern technologies of communication as methods of control."[32] There is a fundamental problem of control within any system of communication, and this is explored in Naked Lunch, specifically in terms of telepathic communication:

> A telepathic sender has to send all the time. He can never receive, because if he receives that means someone else has feelings of his own could louse up his continuity. [Sic] The sender has to send all the time, but he can't ever recharge himself by contact. Sooner or later he's got no feelings to send. You can't have feelings alone. Not alone like the sender is alone – and you dig there can only be one Sender at one place-time. … *You see control can never be a means to any practical end. . . . It can never be a means to anything but more control. . . . Like junk . . .*[33]

This passage highlights the need to establish some sort of two-way communication or dialogue, as control depends upon the power of a single force that only sends messages, thus denying the receiver any kind of opportunity for feedback to the sender. This establishment of singular roles automatically places one person in the dominant – sending – position, whereas this dominance could be overcome if both parties were able to undertake both functions. This potential for power through the one-way sending of messages is again demonstrated in the following passage:

[32] Harris, Secret of Fascination 202.
[33] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 148-49. Emphasis in original.

> [The pimp] was continually enlarging his theories . . . he would quiz a chick and threaten to walk out if she hadn't memorized every nuance of his latest assault on logic and the human image.
>
> 'Now, baby. I got it here to give. But if you won't receive it there's just nothing I can do.'[34]

The pimp here acts as the controller, attempting to brainwash his subject with his own messages. Interestingly, in this case, the prospect that a woman could refuse to receive these messages in fact places her in a more powerful position than the pimp, despite the fact that he himself tries to interpret this lack of receiving as a sign of weakness. These passages suggest that the potential for control in communications processes can be undermined by the establishment of feedback mechanisms: i.e. situations in which both parties have ways to make contact with each other so two-way communication becomes the norm.

It could be argued, therefore that communication and its restrictions is one of the main themes of Naked Lunch, but there is a danger in stressing the idea that dialogue will defeat tyranny and control that we make the book tamely liberal. The irony is that the book's power resides in the open and unreciprocated nature of the routines, and in its fragmentation, not in its closure or coherence – in other words in those aspects which Burroughs felt were destroying him. The overall climate is one of paranoia, which permeates the text, as you "never know who's listening in." Consequently any kind of communication or use of "symbol systems" becomes dangerous, and in viewing everything from a paranoid standpoint one can "fall asleep reading and the words take on code significance. . . . Obsessed with codes. . . . Man contracts a series of diseases which

[34] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 19.

spell out a code message."[35] In the original version of this extract in Burroughs' letters, he writes:

> I fall asleep reading something and the words change or take on a curious dream significance as if I was reading code. Obsessed with codes lately. Like a man contracts a series of illnesses which spell out a message. Or he gets message from subsidiary personality by farting in Morse code. (Needless to say, such obvious devices as automatic writing would never get by the Censor.)[36]

The body here becomes a potential alternative communications device when writing becomes too open to interception and subject to censorship. However, if the body is able to function as part of a cybernetic system of sending and receiving messages, this means that it is also open to control. Katherine Hayles analyses the ways in which Burroughs portrays the relationship between technology, the body and the written word in Naked Lunch, and argues that:

> The correspondence between human and textual bodies can be seen as early as William Burroughs's Naked Lunch, written in 1959, in the decade that saw the institutionalization of cybernetics and the construction of the first large-scale computer. The narrative metamorphizes nearly as often as bodies within it, suggesting by its cut-up method a corpus that is as artificial, heterogeneous, and cybernetic as they are.[37]

Hayles' reading of the body as cybernetic, that is to say as informational code, equates it with a text, as both can be understood as types of code open to reworking.

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[35] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 26, 61.
[36] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 26 February 1956, Letters, 311.
[37] Hayles, Posthuman 42.

In Naked Lunch, Burroughs explores the many ways in which the human subject can be reworked and controlled both mentally and physically, through the use of drugs, hypnosis, brainwashing and physical torture. These tactics are employed by Dr Benway, who is "a manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control."[38] His experiments on the limits of the body are based around cybernetic ideas of the body as part of a feedback loop, and once humans are essentially regarded as "thinking machines," this allows for the body to be controlled by systems which work by either reprogramming the brain, or conditioning the body to particular responses.[39] The concept of the body as a controllable machine is pushed to extremes in Naked Lunch, to the point where the possibility is raised that radio transmission could be used as a form of mind control, hence "'Shortly after birth a surgeon could install connections in the brain. A miniature radio receiver could be plugged in and the subject controlled from State-controlled transmitters.'" [40] It is envisioned that the radio brainwashing technique would gradually be developed, as "The biocontrol apparatus is a prototype of one-way telepathic control. The subject could be rendered susceptible to the transmitter by drugs or other processing without installing any apparatus."[41] In developing an understanding of the human as a programmable thinking machine, methods of control are able to move beyond the need to implant technology into the body, as the body is the technology and can be manipulated as such. Crucially, whilst

[38] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 23.
[39] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 23.
[40] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 148. This is very reminiscent of Kerouac in "cityCityCITY": "this was on the Brow Multivision set, just a little rubber disc adhering to the brow, turned on and off at the breast control; the sensation to a newcomer was of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling and thinking the sensation of the vision, which was being waved out of Master Center Love Multivision Studios." (Kerouac, "cityCityCITY," 191-92.) Kerouac's short story describes a state of total control, and much of the imagery is similar to that of Annexia in the 'Benway' section of Naked Lunch. (Burroughs, Naked Lunch 22, 25-6.)
[41] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 148.

the human must be able to receive the radio broadcasts, this technology closes down the feedback loop of communication as it only allows for receipt of messages, not transmission in return. As Scott Bukatman observes:

> Within the new mythology of William Burroughs, it is the nervous system of the forces of control that are extended, consequently co-opting and eroding the power of the individual. The media are extensions of the state at the expense of the power of the citizen. For most of the population, then, the new information technologies represent *in*trusions rather than *ex*trusions.[42]

Whilst new technologies offer the possibility that the body can be extended and connected, the danger is that in fact the integrity of the body is under threat from powerful outside forces.

As the boundaries of the body can now be breached, the stability and integrity of the body is at stake throughout the text. In Naked Lunch this is most clearly seen through the effects of drug addiction on the body. Once the body is regarded in cybernetic terms as a set of messages and feedback systems, the relationship between the textual and the corporeal is no longer simply metaphorical, but literal, as the body *is* a text, a set of coded information, and Burroughs' use of science fiction exemplifies this as the boundaries between body and machine also break down. As Robin Lydenberg delineates, the tendency to translate "the world of drug addiction into an allegory or symbol for other more abstract forms of addiction, oppression, and control" is ultimately an inadequate critical response to Naked Lunch that tends to close it down.[43] However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that addiction and its attendant forms of communication and control

[42] Bukatman, Terminal Identity 77.
[43] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 13.

permeate the text. The addiction metaphor also emphasises the notion of the body as a communications device as:

> The body knows what veins you can hit and conveys this knowledge in the spontaneous movements you make preparing to take a shot. . . . Sometimes the needle points like a dowser's wand. Sometimes I must wait for the message. But when it comes I always hit blood.[44]

Addiction, though, never creates adequate two-way communication as "The fact of addiction imposes contact," that is to say that the very nature of addiction means that it is a controlling force.

Drugs enable the addict to escape briefly "from the claims of the aging, cautious, nagging, frightened flesh," and this is a prospect that is first identified in Junky.[45] However, as soon as the drug wears off, the addict is once again controlled by the bodily desire for another kick. The corporeal desire for junk controls the addict, and the drugs "eventually replace the organism they feed – a hostile takeover in the style of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*."[46] As Robin Lydenberg explains, "The junky is for Burroughs the archetypal 'performer' trying to 'maintain human form' despite the monkey on his back. The human form he maintains, however, is a sham, an empty cellophane skin subject to collapse in a vacuum."[47] As we saw in the previous chapter, the routine form is bound up with addiction, and the performance of a routine is potentially dangerous as it may become the only subject position available. Lydenberg

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[44] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 60.
[45] Burroughs, Junky 152.
[46] Ann Douglas, "'Punching a Hole in the Big Lie': The Achievement of William S. Burroughs," Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation? ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin, 2001) 139.
[47] Robin Lydenberg, Word Cultures: Radical Theory & Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 40.

notes that in Naked Lunch in particular, "Burroughs reveals the potential danger and violence of all performance and imitation. … performance is never innocent in Naked Lunch; it eventually replaces life itself, the imitation absorbing and devouring the original."[48] This becomes one of Benway's control tactics in the text: "An agent is trained to deny his agent identity by asserting his cover story. So why not use psychic jiu-jitsu and go along with him? Suggest that his cover story is his identity and that he has no other."[49] Naked Lunch explores the effects of performance further than in Junky and Queer, as in the earlier work although the dangers posed by the routine are explored, the scenario of humans being attacked and left as only "empty cellophane skin" is not fully realised. By contrast, in Naked Lunch there are several instances in the text where the body is portrayed in this manner: "He stood there in a misshapen overcoat of flesh that turned from brown to green and then colorless in the morning light, fell off in globs onto the floor"; "He seemed actually to have gone away through an invisible door leaving his empty body sitting there at the desk"; "leave the empty body behind."[50] The empty body therefore has space inside it that can be inhabited by something else and there is always the danger that even though the body may appear to be intact, it is actually merely a shell inhabited by a parasite. The text also contains images of bodies having their insides violently "shlupped" out in preparation for takeover: "She bites away Johnny's lips and nose and sucks out his eyes with a pop"; "they flew apart with a shlupping sound."[51]

[48] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 40.
[49] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 26.
[50] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 64, 172, 11.
[51] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 88, 198.

The spaces thus left inside bodies in Naked Lunch can be compared with the spaces that Burroughs uses in the layout of the text, and these have been theorised by critics as either positive or negative, as I shall discuss in the next chapter in relation to Burroughs' later texts. Despite this tendency to read the spaces in binary terms, I shall argue that there is the possibility of reading the textual spaces as more open to interpretation at this stage. Hayles posits that body and text in Burroughs are intrinsically linked because of the ways in which they are both presented in mutated forms. Although Hayles misreads the text of Naked Lunch in assuming that it is a product of the cut-up method, she usefully argues that "the body of the text is produced precisely by … fissures, which are not so much ruptures as productive dialectics that bring the narrative as a syntactic and chronological sequence into being."[52] Hayles reads the breaks in the text as positive as they serve to create and strengthen it. Her reading partially corresponds with Robin Lydenberg's reading of the text as a "negative mosaic," a term she uses to describe the way in which "Burroughs juxtaposes scattered fragments, remnants, the detritus of the world."[53] Burroughs himself uses the idea of the mosaic in the text, describing for example a "mosaic of floating newspapers"; the "mosaic of sleepless nights and sudden food needs of the kicking addict nursing his baby flesh"; a "mosaic bar and soccer scores and bullfight posters"; "I try to focus on the words . . . they separate in meaningless mosaic."[54] Lydenberg's understanding of the work as a "negative mosaic" works as an inversion that emphasises the spaces in the text over the words themselves. She argues that this is Burroughs' attempt to "defy and exhaust

[52] Hayles, Posthuman 42.
[53] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 18.
[54] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 5, 9, 20, 63.

meaning, to starve out the language parasite and leave no symbolic residue."[55] Equally, though, Lydenberg's understanding points to the fact that Burroughs creates spaces in the text specifically in order to defy the "language parasite" hence aiding the emergence of meaning, so the gaps in the text become extremely positive.

In a similar fashion to Hayles, Lydenberg regards the gaps as Burroughs' way of holding the text together and of strengthening it, asserting that "Burroughs' radical text [Naked Lunch] is impervious to amputation because it is a non-hierarchical network, its parts are interchangeable and reversible."[56] So she is undermining a distinction between the organic and inorganic that Kerouac implicitly accepts. If bodies are systems controlled by viruses then the very characteristic which has been seen as superior to machines – their integratedness and indissolubility – the whole idea of organic form, in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – starts to be a liability, and the separable-non-organically linked qualities of machines start to be valuable. Lydenberg's statement here is comparable to Donna Haraway's description of the cyborg body, in that "any part can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed."[57] Haraway also argues that this potential for interfacing is where the cyborg's strength lies as it is able to encompass boundary disputes rather than allowing these to become points of weakness that subject it to fragmentation: her cyborgs are characterised by "permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" and I will be developing her ideas more fully in the next chapter.[58] Hence it is useful to understand the textual corpus of Naked Lunch in much the same way as a cyborg body, in that its

[55] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 18.
[56] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 43.
[57] Haraway, Simians 163.
[58] Haraway, Simians 154.

lack of 'order' in the traditional sense is where its strength lies, as it means that it is not subject to comprehensive 'organic' deconstruction. The fissures in the text thus whilst always threatening to allow for disintegration in fact become an integral part of its construction and conversely serve to hold the text together.

Burroughs himself does not always portray the breaks and spaces created in Naked Lunch as positive and powerful, but instead at times as dangerous fissures:

> there's always a space *between*, in popular songs and Grade B movies, giving away the basic American rottenness, spurting out like breaking boils, throwing out globs of that un-D.T. [undifferentiated tissue] to fall anywhere and grow into some degenerate cancerous life-form, reproducing a hideous random image.[59]

In this passage, any gaps that remain serve to expose the "basic American rottenness" that exists underneath the surface image. Spaces are often depicted in Naked Lunch as silences or broken communications: "A moment of static, dangling wires, broken connections . . . "; "More and more static at the Drug Store, mutterings of control like a telephone off the hook"; "The sailor spoke in his feeling voice that reassembles in your head, spelling out the words with cold fingers: 'Your connection is broken, kid.'"[60] As we see in Burroughs' letters, broken connections are to be feared, as without a receiver, routines turn their power back on to the sender and can destroy them. Equally, textual spaces can be dangerous: "Parentheses pounce on me and tear me apart."[61] Brackets cleave the text, creating space for extra words, but these gaps are enough to destroy the integrity of the body. Burroughs highlights the dangers of textual gaps in his next letter to Kerouac and Ginsberg: "But I have wandered off the point, out of contact, fallen into a

[59] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 121.
[60] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 196, 61, 182.
[61] William Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 21 October 1955, Letters, 289.

great gray gap between parentheses . . . sit back and look blankly at the letter."[62] It is in this letter of 1955 that Burroughs first extensively employs the ellipsis in his correspondence. Whereas a textual space is empty or neutral, an ellipsis is an omission of words needed to make up the construction of sense. There is therefore a question as to whether Burroughs' use of dots is designed to represent emptiness or something that is there but omitted. By way of comparison, in Kerouac, dashes and ellipses are most often used to capture the natural patterns of speech – breath spaces and natural pauses, so the physical presence of the body is always a positive thing in Kerouac. Also in Visions of Cody, they denote that there is something there, to fill the space, but that it is missing – cannot be heard, so it seems that in Kerouac, dots are used in two ways – to represent either space or omission. In Naked Lunch, Burroughs also appears to employ dots for several reasons. In one sentence, they are used in order to create a pause in order to emphasise what is being said: "Beginning to dig Arab kicks. It takes time. You must let them seep into you . . ."[63] The dots here represent the time needed to allow the body to absorb kicks – they purposely creates a gap to enable infiltration. Later, he again uses the device to create space, this time for an escape: "I am subject to float away like a balloon . . ."[64] At several points, dots are also used instead of a full-stop at the end of a sentence, denying closure. Perhaps tellingly, it is in this letter that Burroughs writes "Two weeks I am hung up on this selection chapter. Every time I try to terminate it, another routine pounces on me."[65] Given the dangers that Burroughs here associates with trying to finish

[62] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," 23 October 1955, Letters, 295.
[63] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," 23 October 1955, Letters, 295.
[64] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," 23 October 1955, Letters, 297.
[65] William Burroughs, "To Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," 23 October 1955, Letters, 298-99.

a section, the ellipsis offers a method of leaving his work unfinished, and in denying closure to the text, he also denies the routine the space that it requires to "pounce."

Similarly, it is possible to read some of the scenes in Naked Lunch as offering the possibility of escape from control, and this is specifically related to Burroughs' use of the ellipsis. This is demonstrated particularly well in one scene where the addict's routine begins to break down, and along with it his body:

> Bill Gains putting down the paregoric con on a Chinese druggist.
>
> 'I've got these racing dogs . . . pedigree greyhounds. . . . All sick with the dysentery . . . tropical climate . . . the shits . . . you sabe shit? . . . *My Whippets Are Dying* . . .' He screamed. . . . His eyes lit up with blue fire. . . . The flame went out . . . smell of burning metal. . . . 'Administer with an eye dropper. . . . Wouldn't you? . . . Menstral cramps . . . my wife . . . Kotex . . . Aged mother . . . Piles . . . raw . . . bleeding . . .' He nodded out against the counter. . . . the druggist took a tooth-pick out of his mouth and looked at the end of it and shook his head.[66]

Again the uncertain status of the spaces in the text is foregrounded, as textual gaps represent not only the breakdown of the routine form, but also – since the routine has ultimately become the only position available to the addict – the correspondent breakdown of the body. Indeed this breakdown of the corporeal is also reflected within the text itself, hence "His eyes lit up with blue fire. . . . the flame went out . . . smell of burning metal," suggesting internal disintegration. The scene continues with similar images of the body, describing two addicts "[flying] apart with a shlupping sound" and a

[66] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 198.

"Desperate skeleton grin."[67] These spaces can be read as offering the potential for escape from the control of both the routine and that imposed by the addicted body, as the two both begin to break down, or alternatively as a disintegration that leaves nothing else as body and routine both ultimately disappear.

The breakdown of the addict's verbal routine suggests a move from speech towards silence, extending Burroughs' earlier explorations of the problematics of verbal and non-verbal communication in Junky and Queer. As speech and performance are central within Naked Lunch, this suggests that Lydenberg is incorrect in her belief that "Burroughs always looks to the silent spaces between things, the gaps through which clear vision may be glimpsed."[68] Although Burroughs evidently creates spaces in the text deliberately, there is a question as to whether these can simply be regarded as silences that offer a positive empty space which allows room for something else to be seen, as Lydenberg contends, or indeed whether they should be read as negative spaces, as points where there is something missing, where the text is lacking in some way, and I explore this further in the next chapter. It seems that in Burroughs' writing there are only ever ellipses, as all spaces imply words that will fill them, even if he might wish for a cleansing silence. Given the multiple ways in which Burroughs uses textual breaks and spaces in his letters, it would appear that he is still exploring their positive and negative possibilities at this stage, hence the chaotic and often dystopian vision offered in Naked Lunch, and critics' correspondingly contrasting readings. Interestingly, the spaces that appear in the text of Naked Lunch are not only aural, but at times are also visual, for

[67] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 198.
[68] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 43.

example: "Motel . . . Motel . . . Motel . . . broken neon arabesque . . ."[69] The spaces here represent the flickering on and off of a neon sign, thus the space is not empty, as the sign is still there, but the ellipses here effectively function as *visual* absences or gaps

At one point in Naked Lunch, Burroughs links a cacophony of noise to the form of the text itself, suggesting that it is by no means a silent work:

> This book spill [sic] off the page in all directions, kaleidoscope of vistas, medley of tunes and street noises, farts and riot yipes and the slamming steel shutters of commerce, screams of pain and pathos and screams plain pathic, copulating cats and outraged squawk of the displaced bull head, prophetic mutterings of brujo in nutmeg trances, snapping necks and screaming mandrakes, sigh of orgasm, heroin silent as dawn in the thirsty cells, Radio Cairo screaming like a berserk tobacco auction, and flutes of Ramadan fanning the sick junky like a gentle lush worker in the grey subway dawn feeling with delicate fingers for the green folding crackle.[70]

This catalogue of sounds constitutes the "Revelation and Prophecy of what I can pick up without FM on my 1920 crystal set with antennae of jissom."[71] The jissom antennae here serves to link the biological to the technological and hence to notions of the cyborg and the strength that it achieves through encompassing divisions.[72] However, despite this, it is notable in this scene that the noises from different stations are run together in one continuous sound, rather than there being any space or static in between, demonstrating

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[69] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 204. It is interesting to compare Burroughs' portrayal of a neon sign to Kerouac's. Kerouac does something similar in Visions, where he describes neon lights in a window and describes the reflections and the lights switching on and off. Kerouac, Visions 32-34.
[70] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 207-08.
[71] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 208.
[72] There is also a link here with Burroughs' interest in the orgone accumulator. Indeed, Kahn notes that "Not only is the world and the future technologically conducted through semen as protoplasmic emulsion, ejaculation itself within Burroughs' own experience links junk and Reichean energy." Douglas Kahn, "Two Sounds of the Virus: William Burroughs's Pure Meat Method," Noise, Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts, Douglas Kahn. (London: MIT Press, 2001) 309.

that Burroughs is still exploring the possibilities of sound rather than silence at this stage. Furthermore, the reader is advised that "Naked Lunch demands Silence from The Reader. Otherwise he is taking his own pulse. . . ."[73] This again highlights the importance of the sound of the text, as it is only the reader's silence that will enable it to be heard clearly, but even then there is no guarantee that the reader will hear the intended message.

In the paranoid, technological dystopia of Naked Lunch, even total silence is not always enough to protect "atomic secrets" as both mind and body can still transmit messages in a host of ways, without any need for sound or speech. Conversely, verbal communication also brings with it a variety of problems. Not only is it potentially dangerous as it can be picked up by "alien microphones" and all manner of other surveillance techniques, but there is a danger that it will not be correctly interpreted by its intended receiver. Although Naked Lunch appears to be a departure in both style and content from Junky and Queer, it is in fact part of a logical development of these themes, since these themes of technology, communication and control are all explored in Burroughs' earlier work. There are important thematic similarities within the three texts, as Burroughs explores many ideas from his earlier texts and radically develops their implications in Naked Lunch. Hence Timothy Murphy overstates his case in claiming that "nothing in the early texts prepares the reader for the barrage of mass-media control technology that fills many of the pages of Naked Lunch."[74] However, it is also important to recognise the formal and stylistic dis-continuities between the texts, as these represent a development in Burroughs' writing style, especially in terms of his use of

[73] Burroughs, Naked Lunch 203.
[74] Murphy, Wising Up The Marks 89.

correspondence in the creation of the work. Moreover, his use of textual breaks and spaces in particular will become a key facet of The Nova Trilogy.

7. Cut-ups

In October 1959, after the Paris publication of Naked Lunch, William Burroughs writes to Allen Ginsberg to tell him that he has a "new method of writing and do not want to publish anything that has not been inspected and processed. I can not explain this method to you until you have necessary training. So once again and most urgently (believe me there is not much time), I tell you: 'Find a Scientology Auditor and have yourself run.'"[1] This new writing technique is that of the cut-up, and I shall return to its relationship to Scientology later in the chapter. This letter marks a clear shift in Burroughs' relationship with Ginsberg: whereas the cybernetics of epistolary exchange had enabled Burroughs to produce some of his earlier work using Ginsberg as a receiver, this model is no longer sufficient and thus neither is the routine form that Burroughs employed extensively throughout his earlier texts. Rather than being a catalyst, Ginsberg is now required to undergo the "necessary training" before he is deemed suitable even to look at Burroughs' new work. This chapter examines the cut-up technique to see what this new mode of composition entails, and what it implies about Burroughs' view of the processes of human creativity – specifically what can it mean to be creative in a context of social, linguistic and even social control – and it will move from an examination of the technique itself through smaller experimental pieces to its application on the larger canvas of the Nova Trilogy.

The cut-up technique marks a progression from Naked Lunch, allowing Burroughs to expand on his experimentation with the form of the text, particularly in terms of his use of breaks, spaces and punctuation in the typographic layout. As

[1] Burroughs, Letter to Allen Ginsberg, October 29, 1959. Letters, 434

Robin Lydenberg comments, "what struck both Gysin and Burroughs about the cut-up method was the possibility of using this technique to make the writer's medium tangible – to make the word an object detached from its context, its author, its signifying function."[2] The history and methodology of cut-up has been well documented: in Burroughs' words "the simplest way is to take a page, cut it down the middle and across the middle and then rearrange the four sections."[3] This gives new word combinations, and also new words. From this, smaller cut-ups can be made, and as Timothy Murphy explains "one can even cut individual words apart and recombine them to form new words."[4] The smaller the fragments, the less of the original overall sense of the text is likely to remain. There are several other practices that Burroughs used in order to manipulate text, including the fold-in technique. The main difference between the two methods is that whereas a cut-up uses a single printed page, the fold-in technique uses two different two sheets of print, which are cut in half and the text is then read across, using half of one text and half of another. Another version of the cut-up method is described by Anthony Enns as three-column cut-ups that are presented as "a series of unrelated texts in parallel columns" like the layout of a newspaper.[5] Enns also mentions the grid system as another form of textual manipulation employed by Burroughs, this time dividing texts into a series of boxes.[6] Burroughs describes work produced using these methods as a form of "montage," providing him with a distinctly new method of furthering his earlier attempts at

[2] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 44.
[3] William S. Burroughs, "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin," (written 1959) 28 Sept. 2005 <http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html>. See also Eric Mottram, William Burroughs: The Algebra of Need (New York: Intrepid Press, 1971) 37-40; Murphy, Wising Up the Marks 104-105; Lydenberg, Word Cultures 44-55. Odier, The Job 29.
[4] Murphy, Wising Up The Marks, 104.
[5] Anthony Enns, "Burroughs's Writing Machines," Retaking the Universe: William S. Burroughs in the Age of Globalization, ed. Davis Schneiderman and Philip Walsh (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 106. See for example "Who Is The Third That Walks Beside You" in William Burroughs, The Burroughs File, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1984)50-52.
[6] Anthony Enns, "Burroughs's Writing Machines," 108-09.

resisting the traditional novelistic form (involving straight narrative sequences and the development of character) in Naked Lunch.[7]

Any printed material, not just that written by him for the purpose, can be used in a cut-up and according to Murphy, these methods "can produce jarring juxtaposition if the texts deal with disparate subjects."[8] Burroughs' use of many different texts in his experiments meant that he "came to think about his typewriter cut-ups as a collaboration 'on an unprecedented scale' with an indefinite number of writers, both living and dead."[9] Whereas Burroughs' epistolary practice created a feedback loop between himself and one or two other artists, the cut-up method allowed for 'collaborations' reaching through space and time, enabling him to connect with the past, and potentially with many voices at once. By ceding the control of the individual composer or creator this method does bring the possibility of other voices, and we might see a parallel with the way that Kerouac's technologies bring with them the ghosts of voices from the past – though in Burroughs the stray voices are much more disembodied, and with a different relation to the human body as ultimate locus of meaning and value, as will be shown. Whereas in Kerouac there is always a human presence or memory inhabiting the voice the disconnected phrases in Burroughs seem to evoke only fragments of a consciousness, so that the effect is of the language being haunted by beings who are only perceptible in these phrases – as if we are mediums picking up fragments on our antennae.

[7] Larry McCaffery, Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Writers (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 51. See also Odier, The Job, 30, where Burroughs describes his work as montage.
[8] Murphy, Wising Up The Marks 104.
[9] Darren Wershler-Henry, The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005) 114.

The first of Burroughs' cut-up texts to be published was Minutes to Go (1960). Burroughs writes of the genesis of this piece in his article "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin," explaining how:

> In the summer of 1959 Brion Gysin painter and writer cut newspaper articles into sections and rearranged the sections at random. Minutes to Go resulted from this initial cut-up experiment. Minutes to Go contains unedited unchanged cut ups emerging as quite coherent and meaningful prose.[10]

Whilst this was the first use of this technique, the most well known of Burroughs' cut-up texts form the Nova trilogy, consisting of The Soft Machine (1961; 1966; 1968), The Ticket That Exploded (1962; 1967) and Nova Express (1964).[11] During this period, Burroughs also produced hundreds of short cut-ups that were published in magazines, and a collection of these cut-ups published as The Burroughs File provides some excellent examples of the work that Burroughs was doing between 1962 and 1969 whilst also working on the Nova trilogy. According to Oliver Harris, these shorter texts, including Minutes to Go have been critically overlooked for a variety of reasons, but they reveal some of Burroughs' most radical experimentation that does not appear in his novels owing to publishing constraints.[12] Whereas Minutes to Go consists of unedited cut-ups, Burroughs employs the cut-up in a more selective way in the Nova trilogy, and these texts are radical in the sense that they constitute

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[10] William S. Burroughs, "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin," 10 Feb. 2008 <http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html>.

[11] Harris, Secret of Fascination, 244. The dates listed above mark the different published versions of the text. A 1968 edition of The Ticket That Exploded was published without further alterations from the 1967 text. (James Grauerholz, "The Cut-Ups," Word Virus: The William Burroughs Reader, ed. James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg, (London: Flamingo, 1999) 180.) Given that Burroughs' method implicitly works against the privileging of one version as any more original or 'ur-text' than any other I have chosen to analyse the third editions of The Soft Machine (London: Caldar & Boyars Ltd., 1968) and The Ticket That Exploded (London: Caldar & Boyars Ltd., 1968); and a 1968 edition of Nova Express (London: Panther, 1968). As the text is unchanged from the 1964 edition, in this chapter Nova Express is therefore the earliest text, followed by Ticket and then Soft Machine.

[12] Oliver Harris, "Cutting Up Politics," Retaking the Universe: William S. Burroughs in the Age of Globalization, ed. Davis Schneiderman and Philip Walsh (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 176-179. Also see Oliver Harris, "'Burroughs is a poet too, really': the Poetics of Minutes to Go," Edinburgh Review 114, ed. Sam Ladkin and Robin Purves, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Review, 2004) 24-36.

Burroughs' attempt to work with his new techniques within the novel format.[13] This chapter analyses the Nova trilogy as well as some of the shorter cut-ups contained in The Burroughs File, concentrating particularly on Burroughs' use of punctuation and typographical layout, since it is by looking closely at the 'cuts' and gaps, and how he fills them that we may be able to see most clearly what is at stake in the cut-up procedures. My analysis considers how the creation of spaces in the texts may be regarded either as a positive attempt to obtain freedom, or if we accept a more negative view of human capacities, the production of an emptiness or void which in turn may be subject to dangerous invasion or infiltration.

Burroughs describes in The Job the various ways in which he uses the cut-up process: "I may take a page, cut it up, and get a whole new idea for straight narrative, and not use any of the cut-up material at all, or I may use a sentence or two out of the actual cut-up."[14] The arrangement of the cut-ups is controlled by the author, and as Timothy Murphy points out, the process of cut-up still requires the writer's input "in the selection of original texts and in the choice of and arrangement of the cut-ups that are generated."[15] In terms of looking at precisely why Burroughs chose to experiment with the cut-up method, this authorial control does seem at odds with a technique that claims to "introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors."[16] Crucially though, it is the act of cutting more than the subsequent rearrangement of the resulting pieces that is of most importance:

Take any poet or writer you fancy. Here, say, or poems you have read over many times. The words have lost meaning and life through years of repetition. Now

[13] As Oliver Harris notes, given the proliferation of Burroughs' shorter texts that were published during this period "the three novels may even be seen as *aberrations*, extraordinary exceptions to the cut-up project rather than its necessary fulfilment." Harris, "Cutting Up Politics," 178.
[14] Odier, The Job 29.
[15] Murphy, Wising Up The Marks 104.
[16] William S. Burroughs, "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin," <http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html>.

take the poem and type out selected passages. Fill a page with excerpts. Now cut the page. You have a new poem.[17]

Here Burroughs claims that the act of cutting is in itself sufficient to return meaning and life to words. While the unconventional style of Naked Lunch has been heavily criticised for the apparent lack of the narrative values of coherence or character coherence, there has been a corresponding critical tendency to disregard Burroughs' cut-up texts as either "frivolous distractions," or as "opaque, obfuscated or unintelligible," with even Kerouac denouncing the cut-up method as "just an old Dada trick."[18] However, Burroughs is at pains to point out that "when you make cut-ups you do not get simply random juxtapositions of words."[19] The cut-ups do not deny the value of textual coherence, but rather allow it to emerge in different ways, and the creation of a cut in a section of text and the juxtaposition of the resulting pieces can be used in several ways. It can be employed as a way of discovering "new idea[s]" which then come under authorial control, or it can be used as a means of ceding that control and allowing the automatic and inevitable play of meanings created by the juxtaposition to take place, incorporating the sentences created by the cut-up within the text. Burroughs has clearly stated that the cut-up process is "not unconscious at all, it's a very definite operation … It's quite conscious, there's nothing of automatic writing or unconscious procedure involved here."[20] (In this respect, therefore Kerouac's comparison with Dada is misconceived.) Equally, he admits that "[o]ne tries not to impose story plot or continuity artificially, but you do

[17] Burroughs, "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin," <http://www.ubu.com/papers/burroughs_gysin.html>.
[18] Tony Tanner, qtd in Cary Nelson, "The End of the Body: Radical Space in Burroughs," William Burroughs at the Front: Critical Reception, 1959-1989, ed. Jennie Skerl and Robin Lydenberg (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991) 211; Michael Skau, "The Central Verbal System: The Prose of William S. Burroughs," Style 15.4 (1981): 408; Jack Kerouac, qtd in Belgrad, The Culture of Spontaneity 254.
[19] Odier, The Job 28
[20] Odier, The Job 29.

have to compose the materials, you can't just dump down a jumble of notes and thoughts and considerations and expect people to read it."[21]

"The Conspiracy" is one of Burroughs' short experimental pieces that was first published in 1960.[22] The layout of the text echoes parts of Naked Lunch, most notably in terms of Burroughs' use of ellipses. The piece is split into three parts, with a more conventional first section, where the initial narrative itself is quite coherent as there is no real sense of disconnection or odd juxtapositions. Following this there are two short pieces entitled "The Cut" and "The Danish Operation." These final two sections appear to be cut-ups of the same piece of text, and the juxtaposition of the two pieces shows the possible results from the cut-up techniques where the cut-up pieces are arranged by the author, as if providing a demonstration to the reader of the possibilities opened by the cut-up. These two pieces are set out on the page in a conventional manner, there is no unusual punctuation or spacing, and the texts themselves consist of short, coherent sentences. As Burroughs' work goes, this marks the far less radical end of the spectrum, and also demonstrates that Burroughs maintains a degree of editorial control as he selects precisely which pieces of the cut-up to use for each permutation that is presented.

This early cut-up contrasts sharply with the "Unfinished Cigarette," a piece published in 1963, which is much more clearly a cut-up text. Whilst there are some odd juxtapositions in the text, and Burroughs makes use of repetition, the narrative is still fairly coherent and the reader does not have to work hard to understand what is happening. It is the layout of the text on the page that makes it so immediately different to "The Conspiracy" as Burroughs employs the dash extensively, as well as using capitalisation - for example: "He was in a long tunnel of old photos stretching

[21] Odier, The Job 48.
[22] Burroughs, "The Conspiracy," The Burroughs File 39 – 43.

back to his childhood—back—back—'STOP.'"[23] In addition to this, Burroughs also uses short sentences in the form of commands: "Watch the needle. Keep silence."[24] This use of punctuation lends a sense of urgency to the text. The punctuation does not, though, act as a way of marking actual cuts in the text, and this is demonstrated by the final two pages of the work, where particular words and images are consistently repeated but always in slightly different ways. So for example: "abandoned long ago—I don't get out—wind hand trailing coat on a bench" becomes "twisted coat on a bench between worlds" in its next permutation, and then "abandoned coat on a bench."[25]

Burroughs also uses the technique of phrase repetition in his novels as we see in Naked Lunch, and he considerably extends his experiments in the Nova trilogy. According to Michael Skau, "Burroughs' cut-up phrases and patterns at times approach a tyrannical control of their own."[26] Skau uses the example of the phrase "all kinds of masturbation and self-abuse," which is usually followed in the texts of the Nova trilogy by the phrase "young boys need it special." Skau asserts that the author uses phrase repetition to exert control over the reader as they become conditioned to expect that the two phrases will appear together.[27] His technique means that the "reader has become conditioned to expect the model sequence" so it appears that the author is able to gain control of the reader.[28] Indeed, this is equally true of numerous phrases that appear throughout the trilogy, such as "No glot. Clom Fliday"[29] and "Word falling – Photo falling – Time falling – Break through in Grey

[23] Burroughs, "Unfinished Cigarette," The Burroughs File 29.
[24] Burroughs, "Unfinished Cigarette," The Burroughs File 29.
[25] Burroughs, "Unfinished Cigarette," The Burroughs File 32.
[26] Skau, "The Central Verbal System," 407.
[27] Skau, "The Central Verbal System," 407. See for example Burroughs, The Soft Machine 51, 91. Burroughs Ticket 3.
[28] Skau, "The Central Verbal System," 407.
[29] For example, Burroughs, The Soft Machine 32, 85, 97. Also Burroughs, Nova Express 71, 156.

Room."[30] The reader begins to expect that these words and phrases will appear in the text in a particular pattern or order. As the texts begin to fold in on themselves, words and phrases are continually repeated as they go through a variety of cut-up permutations, and, as Skau argues, this means that the reader begins to make associations with particular word or phrases. Burroughs' use of certain phrases does seem to be quite deliberately aimed at invoking particular associations. For example, the motif of rose wallpaper appears on a number of occasions in all three texts of the Nova trilogy. In The Soft Machine "Rose wall paper clung to the plaster in patches"; in Ticket "A room with rose wallpaper had been partitioned off from the loft like a stage set"; "ears rose shadows on with rose wallpaper" and in Nova Express, the motif appears several times in different contexts: "Summer light on rose wallpaper"; "sex words on rose wallpaper" and "as a child in a room with rose wallpaper looking at something I couldn't see."[31] The recurrence of this motif serves to connect all the texts of the trilogy, and also has possible echoes of a scene in Junky where: "One morning in April I woke up a little sick. I lay there looking at the shadows on the white plaster ceiling. I remembered a long time ago when I lay in bed beside my mother, watching lights from the street move across the ceiling and down the walls."[32] Although this passage from Junky does not specifically mention "rose wallpaper" it has the same kind of nostalgic connotations as the passage from Nova Express which recalls childhood, and the reappearance of key words such as "lights," "plaster" and "walls" also connects this passage from Junky with the other excerpts, meaning that these words become synonymous with nostalgia in Burroughs' works. The conditioned response that this repetition engenders is also significant in cybernetic

[30] Burroughs, Ticket 104, 110; also see Burroughs, Nova Express 57, 62; Burroughs, The Soft Machine 140.
[31] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 135, Burroughs, Ticket 116, Burroughs Ticket 114, Burroughs, Nova Express 31, 140, 31.
[32] Burroughs, Junky 125.

terms, as particular words essentially programme the reader into predicting what comes next, based on pattern recognition. Whilst Skau regards Burroughs' use of repetition as a method of gaining control over the reader, it could equally be argued that Burroughs' use of repetition is concerned to *expose* rather than impose control, making visible to the reader the ways in which habits of association can be manipulated.

The notion that words can begin to trigger particular and powerful associations is one of the tenets of Scientology, and the manipulation of physical and emotional responses using Scientological principles is depicted in Nova Express:

> The Scientologists believe sir that words recorded during a period of unconsciousness . . . (anesthesia, drunkenness, sleep, childhood amnesia for trauma) . . . *store* pain and that this pain store can be plugged in with key words represented as alternative mathematical formulae indicating number of exposures to the key words and reaction index, the whole battery feeding back from electronic computers . . . They call these words recorded during unconsciousness *engrams* sir … since the controllers have the engram tapes sir any childhood trauma can be plugged in at any time'" [33]

These beliefs form the basis of Dianetics – a theory of mental health that was put forward in the late-forties by L. Ron Hubbard and upon which his Scientology movement was built.[34] The aim of Dianetics is "to uncover and remove these engrams [harmful memories], to bring the unconscious back to consciousness where the pernicious influence of these stored memories can be worked through and quickly eradicated."[35] Once the engrams have been discovered, they are erased in a therapeutic process based around the continual repetition of words that have negative

[33] Burroughs, Nova Express 148 – 152, 149.
[34] Russell, Queer Burroughs 71.
[35] Russell, Queer Burroughs 70.

associations until they no longer affect the person, thus allowing the subject to effectively erase negative memories – to be reprogrammed.[36] These practices are based around an understanding of the word as an incredibly powerful controlling force, as the subject can easily be manipulated through the use of key words that cause mental and physical distress.[37] In this sense, the body is presented as like a machine as it can be programmed to give specific responses and reprogrammed through Dianetics. Indeed, in The Ticket That Exploded, engram tapes are used specifically to "'Program empty body'."[38]

Given Burroughs' interest in Scientology (he joined the Scientologists briefly in 1967) and the powerful effect of particular words on the subject, it is interesting to look at how far he controls the dissemination of meaning throughout his texts.[39] This can be explored by looking at his editing process, specifically by comparing parts of the texts that are re-edited and reproduced in later books in the trilogy. So for example the section entitled "Uranian Willy" in the 1964 edition of Nova Express reappears under the same title in the 1968 edition of The Soft Machine. The first noticeable difference between the texts is that the Nova Express version contains more of a framework in order to establish the events that are taking place: "He was not out of The Security Compound by a long way but he had rubbed off the word hackles and sounded the alarm to shattered male forces of the earth."[40] In The Soft Machine, by contrast, the reader is plunged straight into the action, searching for

[36] The sense of meaninglessness that comes through continual repetition that Cody finds so difficult to deal with in Visions is precisely what the tenets of Scientology advocate as signifying positive freedom from the word.
[37] Burroughs also explores the possibilities of cut-up tapes having a physical effect on the body in his later work Electronic Revolution: "To what extent can physical illness be induced by scrambled illness tape?" (William S. Burroughs, Electronic Revolution 1970-71 (London: Henri Chopin, 1971) 16.)
[38] Burroughs, Ticket 21.
[39] According to Jamie Russell, "Although he remained a firm supporter of Dianetic techniques, in particular the E-meter [a lie-detector machine used to identify engrams], Burroughs cut his ties with the church in the summer of 1968 and was summarily placed in a 'Condition of Treason' after writing disparaging articles about Hubbard and the movement." (Russell, Queer Burroughs 72.)
[40] Burroughs, Nova Express 55.

connections or key words to work out what is going on, as no comparable background information is given. The text of this section in Nova Express is also more obviously laid out in terms of conventional narrative form, whereas in The Soft Machine, Burroughs uses dashes rather than commas or full stops, and again this forces readers to try to work out the connections between phrases for themselves. So for example, a section of Nova Express reads "[t]he Reality Film giving and buckling like a bulk-head under pressure and the pressure gauge went up and up. The needle was edging to NOVA. Minutes to go. Burnt metal smell of interplanetary war in the raw noon streets swept by screaming glass blizzards of enemy flak."[41] In The Soft Machine this same section of text has been edited to read: "the Reality Film giving and buckling like a bulk head under pressure – burnt metal smell of inter-planetary war in the raw noon streets swept by screaming glass blizzards of enemy flak."[42] Information which clarifies the narrative has been removed from this later edit, and the use of dashes keeps the phrases connected, lending a fluidity and rapidity to the text, whereas Burroughs' earlier use of full stops provides definite breaks, aiding the establishment of clearer, more sequential or cumulative meaning. Whilst these examples suggest that Burroughs' rewrites mark an attempt to move further away from traditional narrative forms through later edits, this is not in fact entirely clear-cut, as Burroughs varied his practice over time. Oliver Harris argues that whether Burroughs appears to be moving away from straight narrative or not is not necessarily the central issue. Rather, Burroughs' "revisions were, in a sense, entirely consistent with his cut-up methods. In forming new arrangements of the same material while introducing

[41] Burroughs, Nova Express 55-6.
[42] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 142.

alterations, they violated the norms of a text's defined limits and stable identity, so participating in his 'Operation Rewrite.'"[43]

Burroughs' use of punctuation in his texts should not be overlooked, because as we have seen, it can significantly alter not only the appearance but also the flow and therefore meaning of the text. Lydenberg posits that the reason Burroughs chooses to use certain sorts of punctuation (specifically, a range of marks such as hyphens and ellipses which do not indicate a precise syntactical relation) in the spaces between words is precisely in order to draw attention to the space: "To adopt this new way of thinking, then, is to be attentive to the hole or cut or *click* between texts."[44] This reading is consolidated by Burroughs' statement in The Job that "At the point where one flow stops there is a split-second hiatus. The new way of thinking grows in this hiatus between thoughts."[45] According to Lydenberg, in connecting fragments of text with punctuation in the cut-ups, Burroughs creates "breathing spaces in the cut-up text by blasting holes in the continuity. In the written cut-ups, these holes are indicated by dashes, ellipses, slashes, or blank spaces."[46] This is amply demonstrated by looking at another of Burroughs' early cut-up pieces, "Distant Hand Lifted."[47] The text was published in 1964, i.e. in the same year as the edition of Nova Express that this chapter considers. However, even the most cursory glance at the text shows it to be far more experimental in terms of its use of typography than Nova Express. The text uses multiple question marks and colons at several points. It also makes substantial use of the stroke mark, and unlike some of Burroughs' other cut-ups, here, as Burroughs explains, "where the shift from one text to another is made / marks the

[43] Harris, "Cut-up Closure," 256.
[44] Lydenberg, "Sound Identity," 427.
[45] Odier, The Job 91.
[46] Lydenberg, "Sound Identity," 426-27.
[47] Burroughs, "Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 34-38.

spot."[48] The text therefore looks quite fragmented as all cuts are physically represented within it. The cuts in the text are quite varied – sometimes there are cuts between single words, whereas at other times they separate almost complete sentences. The text describes the methods used within it, and explains that the cut up and fold in are "used as a decoding operation."[49] At some points in the text, the pieces split up with strokes make perfect sense when they are read consecutively, but at other times they do not. Sometimes if every other cut is read, meaning begins to emerge, for example: "writer writes in present time / drifting / messages / on a windy street / to scan out your message as it were."[50] If "drifting" and "on a windy street" are removed, we are left with the following: "writer writes in present time messages to scan out your message as it were." The cuts therefore seem to give the reader options to construct meaning.

The fact that Burroughs rarely uses an actual visual space in the text to denote these "breathing spaces," instead choosing to punctuate them, is significant.[51] By punctuating the space rather than leaving it blank, Burroughs does create a visual pause in the text but he also often appears to be making connections and closing gaps between words and phrases, and this is especially true of his use of the dash. So for example:

> Could give no other information than wind walking in a rubbish heap to the sky – solid shadow turned off the white film of noon heat – Exploded deep in the alley tortured metal Oz – Look anywhere, Dead hand – Phosphorescent

[48] Burroughs, "Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 34.
[49] Burroughs, "Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 34.
[50] Burroughs, "Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 34.
[51] There is only one section of text in Nova Express which is broken up with large areas of blank space. (Burroughs, Nova Express 57.) Burroughs also uses blank space in the "Invisible Generation" section of The Ticket That Exploded. (Burroughs, Ticket 205-217.)

> bones – Cold spring afterbirth of the hospital – Twinges of amputation – Bread knife in the heart paid taxi boys –[52]

The dashes between the phrases here do not act to break up the images but rather serve to connect them. They seem to insist on a connection that they give us no directive, syntactic help in making, so although the text portrays dismembered and fragmented pieces of bodies, the dashes form a link between the images establishing that when all the body parts are viewed together as a grotesque catalogue, they comprise a rubbish heap. A comparable use of punctuation may also be found later in Nova Express, where Burroughs this time uses ellipses rather than dashes:

> seals on North Beach . . . the lights flashing . . . Clark St. . . . The Priest against a black sky . . . rocks gathered just *here* on this beach . . . Ali *there*, hand lifted . . . dim jerky far away street . . . ash on the water . . . last hands . . . last human voices . . . last rites for Sky Pilot Hector Clark . . .[53]

Although the ellipses seem to function in a similar way to the dashes, ultimately connecting the separate pieces, the visual effect of them on the page is to fragment the text to a greater extent, perhaps suggesting the recall of memories, with individual fragments being evoked to gradually piece together an entire scene. Here Burroughs gives the reader just enough detail to be able to understand the collected fragments as representing a funeral at sea.

As these examples demonstrate, Burroughs experimented widely with punctuation and layout, and it is interesting to compare his shift from the use of the full stop to the dash with Kerouac's call for the use of the dash as a stronger punctuation mark:

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[52] Burroughs, Nova Express 70-1.
[53] Burroughs, Nova Express 102.

> No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas-but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases)—'measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech'—'divisions of the sounds we hear'-'time and how to note it down.' (William Carlos Williams).[54]

For Kerouac, the dash acts as a powerful visual indication of the breath space as well as denoting a specific amount of time, as it marks a pause of a certain length. Lydenberg's description of the spaces in Burroughs' texts as "breathing spaces" is therefore helpful. This reading of Burroughs' punctuated spaces also suggests that they are not entirely soundless, but rather contain the sound of the breath, and Lydenberg discusses several of Burroughs' tape experiments where the noise of breathing is clearly audible.[55] Nevertheless this sense of a unified human presence is at odds with Burroughs' larger intentions, and the scenario of his short cut-up pieces and novels, in which the materiality of language is prior, and consciousness is a sort of product or epiphenomenon of it.

Although the sound of the breath is not represented in the same way in the text of Nova Express, Burroughs' use of Morse code within the text very clearly demonstrates that punctuated space is not silent, as in Morse code sounds can be represented by punctuation: dashes represent long bleeps, and clicks represent short tones.[56] Indeed, Burroughs' use of dashes in his texts is often almost representative of Morse code, in that the language between the dashes is very much that of telegraphese in terms of short phrases and commands: "Operation completed—planet out of

[54] Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.
[55] Lydenberg, "Sound Identity," 424-25.
[56] See, for example, Burroughs, Nova Express 59-60.

danger—proceed with the indicated alterations."[57] Again it is one of Burroughs' shorter pieces that provides an excellent example of the representation of message transmission, and "*A distant hand lifted* consists of walkie-talkie messages between remote posts of interplanetary war."[58] Walkie-talkies are most suited to transmitting short bursts of information or commands and there are usually words that mark the end of the transmission e.g. 'over' which essentially act as a kind of audible cut in the transmission. Within the text itself, this is instead punctuated with a stroke mark. Between these marks, at various points in the work the transmissions are only single, superfluous words, such as "the," and "uh," and towards the end of the final paragraph the word "cough" is cut in several times.[59] At these points, the focus is on the individual sounds that are being transmitted, rather than any particular message, so these transmissions essentially act as sound spaces within the text. There are other points in Burroughs' work where the reader's attention is drawn to sound spaces, for example in Nova Express: "Crackling shortwave static – Bleeeeeeeeeeeeeep – Sound of thinking metal – ."[60] Just as with the textual spaces, these aural spaces are not silent, but rather filled with white noise – that is something which fills space with messageless sound – meaning that there is no room left for any other kind of noise which may encourage the dissemination of uncontrolled meanings. Burroughs' use of punctuation can therefore perhaps best be understood in the same way as the sound spaces in his work: as a form of white noise. It is the materiality of sound – the vibration of airwaves – rather than the semantic coding of sound in language that becomes a powerful tool in Burroughs' cut-ups, as the breath or sound vibration becomes more important than what is being said. Moreover, as Lydenberg posits,

[57] Burroughs, Ticket 62.
[58] Burroughs, "A Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 34.
[59] Burroughs, "A Distant Hand Lifted," The Burroughs File 36, 38.
[60] Burroughs, Nova Express 32.

readers of the Nova trilogy are also required to "proceed without any such expectations, giving in to the hypnotic incantatory rhythms of the cut-up, the pleasures offered by language without meaning or syntax."[61] Lydenberg's reading, then, seems to suggest that the cut ups themselves are ultimately a form of white noise.

James A. Connor explains the mechanics of white noise with particular reference to radio transmission. He defines white noise as being "close to pure chaos, that is sometimes quiet enough to be ignored, sometimes loud enough to drown out everything else. While frequency shifts fade signals in and out, without the proper filters, the radio frequency hiss would be a nearly constant irritation."[62] As Connor recognises, white noise is ever-present, only tuned out through filtering processes. White noise therefore cannot be regarded as empty space, and in fact, it is so-called because like white light, it contains all frequencies.[63] So white noise is not an absence of sound, but rather the product of the merging of *all* possible sound frequencies. White noise is thus not a dangerous space, as it does not leave gaps that can be infiltrated by other sources. This notion of creating space but not leaving it empty is also evident in computer-communications, where as Anthony Wilden points out, the signifier for 'nothing' is represented not by a physically empty space, but by the figure zero, explaining that "[t]he space is a boundary, but not an absence."[64] In terms of Burroughs' own experimentation, by cutting static into his own work via his use of punctuated spaces and sound spaces, he appears to be employing this as a

[61] Lydenberg, "Sound Identity," 427.
[62] James A. Connor, "Radio Free Joyce: *Wake* Language and the Experience of Radio," Sound States: Innovative Poetics & Acoustical Technologies, ed. Adalaide Morris (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 20.
[63] Derek P. Royal, "White Noise" 5 Dec. 2004 <http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/droyal/white_noise.htm>.
[64] Anthony Wilden, System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972) 162, 178-9, 188.

strategy for denying textual coherence – in effect he provides a practical demonstration of how this resistance strategy functions and should be used.[65] As David Porush explains, the cut-up method "clearly appeals to cybernetic notions of resisting the rise of totalitarian order and its concomitant control through deliberate randomization, the introduction of noise or entropy."[66]

The issues of control that surround the cut-up method are not explored only through Burroughs' own authorial practice, but also thematically within the narrative of the Nova trilogy. The fundamental premise and scenario of the Nova trilogy is that "The scanning pattern we accept as 'reality' has been imposed by the controlling power on this planet, a planet primarily oriented towards total control."[67] This power is imposed in a variety of ways, and is often portrayed as a "Reality Film."[68] The characters employ cut-up methods as a powerful method of undermining this control, as they are literally able to cut through the reality film in order to expose it as a control system. The power of the cut-up is also demonstrated elsewhere in the Nova trilogy, so for example in the narrative of The Soft Machine, the technique is used as a weapon with which to destroy the power of Mayan Priests. This is achieved by making recordings of the society, before cutting them up and disordering them:

> I had recordings of all agricultural operations. Cutting and burning brush etc – I now correlated the recordings of burning brush with the image track of this operation, and shuffled the time so that the order to burn came late and a year's crop was lost – Famine weakening control lines, I cut radio static into

[65] Douglas Kahn recounts that Burroughs experimented with spaces filled with white noise, at one point having three untuned radios in his room. Douglas Kahn, "Three Receivers," The Drama Review, 40.3 (1996) 86.
[66] Porush, The Soft Machine 103.
[67] Burroughs, Nova Express 50.
[68] Burroughs, Nova Express 55.

the control music and festival recordings together with sound and image track of rebellion.[69]

This technique is successful because "the priests *were* nothing but word and image, an old film rolling on and on with dead actors – Priests and temple guards went up in silver smoke as I blasted my way into the control room and burned the codices."[70] The Nova trilogy therefore narrates the ways in which cut-ups can be used as a powerful tool to alter the environment and as a method of undermining controlling forces. By "cut[ting] the control lines of word and image laid down" by forces such as Mayan Priests or the Nova mob, 'reality' is exposed as an all-pervasive image that has been imposed by these forces. One of the implications of exposing 'reality' as merely an image, though, is that it suggests that ultimately "[t]here is no true or real 'reality'."[71] Within the diegesis of the Nova trilogy, there is no original state of truth that can be returned to, instead there is only ever a "Rewrite Room" where alterations can be made, but there does not appear to be any reality beyond this; there is no final escape from the sound and image track that has been imposed.[72]

The texts do, though, offer ideas of guerrilla tactics that may be employed in the attempt to escape from this control. Just as in Burroughs' own practice, white noise becomes a powerful resistance strategy, and is employed in the Nova trilogy as a way of undermining totalitarian systems: "I cut radio static into the control music."[73] Other tactics involve shifting location, changing strategy and operating in the realm of dreams as well as experimenting with alternative methods of communication in order to evade language: "like color flashes – a Morse code of color flashes – or odors or music or tactile sensations – Anything can represent words and letters and association

[69] William S. Burroughs, The Soft Machine 74.
[70] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 75.
[71] Burroughs, Nova Express 50.
[72] Burroughs, Ticket 54.
[73] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 74.

blocks – Go on try it and see what happens."[74] Communication in itself is not a negative concept, but it is the relationship between communication and control that is crucial, and it is this that Burroughs portrays potential modes of refiguring within the narratives of the Nova trilogy, as well as exploring within his own experimental textual practices such as cut-up.

The narratives of The Nova trilogy allow Burroughs to imagine the radical potential offered by the cut up, not simply applied to printed material, but also in terms of experimentation with film and audiotape. In The Ticket That Exploded, in a scene very different in its implications from the joint tape experiments described by Kerouac in Visions, two of the characters experiment with tape recording, cutting and splicing the tape so that their voices alternate with each other, and the result is described as follows:

> The sound was scarcely recognizable as human voices . . a cadence of vibration . . Bill felt a rush of vertigo as if the sofa was spinning away into space. Blue light filled the darkening room. Bill was breathing a soft electric silence that sent blood pulsing to his crotch . . the two boys [sic] naked bodies washed in blue twilight shivered and twitched in spasms . . He was spiralling up towards the ceiling …
>
> sad train whistles cross a distant sky . . wild geese . . boy there waving to the train …
>
> Standing there in the dark room the boy said: 'I've come a long way.'[75]

The boys' taped voices here become "vibration" or a kind of white noise, as their words can no longer be understood. Thus the sound rather than its meaning becomes key, and it is this vibration which enables them to free themselves from their place in

[74] Burroughs, Ticket 145.
[75] Burroughs, Ticket 187.

space and time. Bill is depicted "spinning away into space" and the "sad train whistles" imply nostalgia and a move back into the past. Interestingly, the sound of breathing is depicted as "a soft electric silence." Using the cut-up to create white noise therefore offers the possibility of transcendence within the narrative of Ticket, as it frees the subject from the controlling power of the word.

This is important because not only does the word trap the subject into control systems of speech and writing, it also imprisons it within the body, as described in the opening section of Nova Express:

> What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit? I will tell you: '*the word*.' Alien Word '*the*.' '*The*' *word* of Alien Enemy imprisons '*thee*' in Time. In Body. In Shit. Prisoner, come out. The great skies are open.[76]

Because "Word *is* flesh," in order to free oneself from control by the word, one must also obtain freedom from the body, as the phrase "Prisoner, come out" implies.[77] Indeed, this interrelationship between word and body is explored throughout the Nova trilogy, as "'Word and Image write the message that is you on colorless sheets determine all flesh.'"[78] Flesh is nothing but formless matter until it is inscribed, and there are several instances in the texts where undifferentiated tissue is used to mould body parts, clearly underscoring this notion and highlighting the interrelationship between word and body.[79] Moreover, in the Nova trilogy the word is often described as the 'other half' of the human body, hence this symbiosis between word and flesh means that any attempt to destroy the word may consequently also lead to the end of the body.[80]

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[76] Burroughs, Nova Express 10.
[77] Burroughs, Nova Express 69.
[78] Burroughs, Nova Express 29.
[79] For example, "'[I] mould myself a handsome lowering idiot face and powerful torso.'" (Burroughs, The Soft Machine 52.)
[80] Burroughs, Nova Express 70; Burroughs, Ticket 49, 50, 52.

Criticism of Burroughs' work often centres around the fact that once the word and body are eradicated, there is nothing left, only silence. So, as Gregory Stephenson notes for example:

> Beyond the cut-up, beyond language and image, is silence, which Burroughs describes as 'the most desirable state' because it leads to 'non-body experience.' In Burroughs' view man must move from speech to silence, from image to awareness, from body identity to disembodied self, from time to space.[81]

This raises some important questions about Burroughs' conception of the subject, as the implication of these ideas is that with the end of the word and the body would also come the end of the subject and thus of consciousness. However, within the Nova trilogy, Burroughs does not point to the end of the subject, but rather to a different conception of it. In The Soft Machine, for example, citizens are implored to "'Come out of the time word 'the' forever. Come out of the body word 'thee' forever. There is nothing to fear. There is no thing in space. There is no word to fear. There is no word in space.' … 'Come out of your stupid body you nameless assholes!!'"[82] There is no intimation here that the end of the body constitutes the end of the subject.

In fact, as Hayles recognises, "Burroughs turns the tables on those who advocate disembodiment. Instead of discourse dematerializing the body, in Ticket the body materializes discourse."[83] Discourse therefore does not destroy the body by literally writing it out, rather the body provides a place to write in the words: "'These colorless sheets are what flesh is made from – Becomes flesh when it has color and writing – That is Word and Image write the message that is you on colorless sheets

[81] Gregory Stephenson, The Daybreak Boys: Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990) 65.
[82] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 149.
[83] Hayles, Posthuman 194.

determine all flesh.'"[84] Indeed, as David Savran explains, "Rather than being stable and unified, the self is a volume of fleshly transparencies on which are written the contradictory words, images, and narratives that produce the 'message that is you,' the optical (and textual) illusion called the subject."[85] Burroughs' point is that we can keep the transparencies, but that we need to get rid of the message. However, once the message is removed, there is no need for the medium.

For Burroughs then, the human body is neither a stable concept, nor a given. Kerouac's vision of the body, and by implication the text, as an organic, unified whole is in stark contrast to Burroughs' understanding of the body as a corrupted technology. Burroughs describes the corporeal as a "soft machine," which in Nova Express is "the human body under constant siege from a vast hungry host of parasites with many names but one nature being hungry and one intention to eat."[86] Burroughs discusses his view of the body in The Job:

> Even on a scientific level we're very near being able to make all sorts of alterations in the human body. They are now able to replace the parts, like on an old car when it runs down. The next thing, of course, will be transplanting of brains. We presume that the ego, what we call the ego, the I, or the You, is located somewhere in the midbrain, so it's not very long before we can transfer an ego from one body to another. Rich men will be able to buy up young bodies. Many of the passages in my work, that were purely fanciful at the time, are now quite within the range of possibility.[87]

This idea of the body as subject to alteration and replacement is commensurate with Donna Haraway's description of the cyborg body, in that "any part can be interfaced

[84] Burroughs, Nova Express 29.
[85] Savran, Taking It Like A Man 85.
[86] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 170.
[87] Odier, The Job 113.

with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed."[88] Such a procedure is fictionalised in The Soft Machine: "It was time now for 'the transfer operation' – 'I' was to be moved into the body of this young Mayan."[89] The operation is successful and "I came back in other flesh the look out different, thoughts and memories of the young Mayan drifting through my brain – ."[90] Therefore it is important to recognise that although Burroughs explores the possibility of the end of the body within his fiction, this is not to say that he also advocates the disappearance of the subject. Rather, he imagines ways in which the subject can begin to experience the world differently, without needing to rely on the body.

Burroughs utilises depictions of sensory withdrawal as a means of exploring the value that people place on the confines of the body in both Nova Express and The Ticket That Exploded. In Nova Express for instance, he describes the process where "the subject floats in water at blood temperature sound and light withdrawn – loss of body outline, awareness and location of the limbs occurs quickly, giving rise to panic in many American subjects."[91] Whilst many people fear the loss of clear body boundaries, Burroughs suggests that the subject needs to be able to look beyond the confines of the body in order to escape from the controlling power of the word. Donna Haraway's cyborg exists as a construct that is able to encompass boundary disputes and is characterised by "permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[92] Burroughs' separation of subject and body, though, does not achieve this level of partiality, and as Lee in Nova Express discovers, "Certainly being without a body conveyed no release from fear" because "'We are still quite definite

[88] Haraway, Simians 163.
[89] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 67.
[90] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 69.
[91] Burroughs, Nova Express 135. A very similar section appears in Burroughs, Ticket 83.
[92] Haraway, Simians 154.

and vulnerable organisms'."[93] Rather than having a body, Lee now exists as some kind of transparent "projected images" but there is still a definite separation between individuals so there is no sense of connection with others in the cybernetic sense that could engender a feeling of security.[94] Nevertheless, freedom from the body does release Lee from the word, and "He passed a screen through and wiped out all thought and word from the past – He was conversing with his survivors in color flashes and projected concepts."[95]

Burroughs places great emphasis on the problematics of the relationship between the word and the body in his work. In Ticket, the body is central to the tape experiments depicted within the narrative, as the notion of an original, unified self is dispensed with: "in the beginning there was no Iam."[96] The bodies in Ticket are grotesques; they are cut up, reworked and spliced together in the same way that both text and tape can be cut up. Thus in Ticket, the narrator finds himself in a condition where another person's "voice has been spliced in 24 times per second with the sound of my breathing and the beating of my heart so that my body is convinced that my breathing and my heart will stop if his voice stops."[97] This splicing works as a kind of inversion of the idea that the individual might cease to exist if their own inner monologue ceases. Here, the voice of one affects the existence of the other.[98] Moreover, the agent is not only constituted by an inner monologue, but also by the sounds of the living body. Thus the inner monologue and the sounds of the body are

[93] Burroughs, Nova Express 85.
[94] Burroughs, Nova Express 84-5.
[95] Burroughs, Nova Express 85.
[96] Burroughs, Ticket 202. Whereas in Kerouac's work the body often appears as an interruption, for example Dean's thumb in On The Road, in Burroughs it is the main focus of the text.
[97] Burroughs, Ticket 3.
[98] Moreover, this passage can be read in terms of drawing attention to the fact that if the inner monologue of the reader, i.e. the reading, stops, the character in the book may cease to exist. This metafictional reading is supported by a passage several pages later: "I am reading a science fiction book called *The Ticket That Exploded*. The story is close enough to what is going on here so now and again I make myself believe this ward room is just a scene in an old book far away". (Burroughs, Ticket 5-6.)

here spliced together, blurring the distinction between the two. This confusion makes it appear as though the narrator and the individual he is spliced with are now trapped together, each unable to exist without the other. In Burroughs' work this kind of symbiosis is portrayed as grotesque and is used as an example of the power of the word virus which must be overcome whereas in Visions this is precisely the kind of connection that Jack and Cody are trying to achieve.

The concept of splicing is important in Burroughs' work as it provides a method of disrupting both traditional word associations and body boundaries. In keeping with the marketing of audiotape as a powerful surveillance device in the fifties, by the following decade, Burroughs suggests that covert recordings can be used subversively: "you need a philips compact cassette recorder handy machine for street recording and playback you can carry it under your coat for recording looks like a transistor radio for playback."[99] The rapid advances in technology made this kind of surveillance possible, as compact and portable recorders became more widely available, replacing the unwieldy machines such as the Ekotape used by Kerouac a decade or so earlier. In Ticket, the narrator advocates exploiting tape technology by making secret recordings of others, and then using these recordings in combination with others to:

> splice yourself in with your favourite pop singers splice yourself in with newscasters prime ministers presidents
>
> why stop there
>
> why stop anywhere
>
> everybody splice himself in with everybody else[.][100]

[99] Burroughs, Ticket 208.
[100] Burroughs, Ticket 211-212.

This is a potentially exciting prospect, giving the individual the opportunity to combine their words and their voices with those of people in positions of power and to create an integrated circuit of communications where everybody is "splice[d] … in with everybody else[.]"[101] Russell employs a negative reading of this notion of splicing, viewing the loss of agency through combining two selves as the creation of "simply a 'blank,' a person who doesn't exist."[102] Hayles on the other hand explains the potentially positive effect that can be achieved through these splices: "Recording one's body sounds and splicing them into someone else's can free one from the illusion that body sounds cannot exist apart from the interior monologue."[103] Moreover, Russell's understanding of a person as 'blank' once they have rid themselves of their symbiotic relationship with the word seems to be an inversion of the Scientological view of a person as a 'clear,' but rather than no longer existing as Russell would have it, they are in fact able to experience a new sense of freedom. Hence the word virus can potentially be eradicated by using tape to loosen its connection to the body.

Although Burroughs seems to be moving away from traditional narrative forms with his cut-ups, it does not appear that he regards the total destruction of word and body as finally necessary in his own practice, as opposed to the world he creates *within* his work. In fact, even within the Nova trilogy he offers the possibility of the two being able to exist separately from one another, as long as the word no longer has control of the body:

You are convinced by association that your body sounds will stop if sub-vocal speech stops and so it happens. Death is the final separation of the sound and image tracks. However, once you have broken the chains of association linking sub-vocal

[101] Burroughs, Ticket, 211.
[102] Russell, Queer Burroughs 78.
[103] Hayles, Posthuman 215.

speech with body sounds shutting off sub-vocal speech need not entail shutting off body sounds and consequent physical death.[104]

Hence the separation of word and body need not mean the end of the physical body, but this is dependent on the maintenance of space between the word and the corporeal, which can be created through cut-up. Burroughs also suggests this idea in The Job:

> A silence frequency of infra sound was developed that vibrates the words loose from the body and this device was used in the last stages of training a slow resonance that grows in the neck and spinal column and reaches deep into the internal organs vibrating the whole body shaking the words loose visible as a haze. At this point many students feel as if a parasitic being has been shaken loose from the body to dissolve reluctantly into air. After the baptism of silence the student moves with ease in the soundless medium but words are at his disposition when he needs them to be used with absolute precision.[105]

So both body and word can still exist, but silence is the key factor in maintaining separation between them. Hence the power of silence here frees the body from the parasitic invasion of the word, although unlike the radical destruction of the body as portrayed in Nova Express, the subject is still able to exist. As long as a suitable space can be maintained between word and body, so that the word no longer has control of the corpus, it would appear to be possible that neither has to disappear entirely. White noise is the perfect type of space to create between the two because the word is unable to infiltrate it.

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[104] Burroughs, Ticket 160.
[105] Odier, The Job 223.

Beyond the dystopian vision of his fiction, in which both body and mind are controlled and invaded by alien forces, this is a glimpse of something much more positive. Tony Tanner describes the vision outlined by Burroughs above as allowing the subject to "'leave the old verbal garbage behind' (i.e. be freed from implanted, alien patterns of perception and conception) and receive 'the baptism of silence'. He will then see things as they really are. This represents a modern formulation of an old American dream."[106] Thus paradoxically, the creation of space between the word and body serves as a means of attaining immediacy – of 'seeing things as they really are'. This is in complete contrast to Kerouac's method of attaining the same kind of immediacy. Unlike Burroughs, Kerouac attempts to intertwine the word and the body so that they are inseparable, in the hope that the word will consequently succeed in expressing and transmitting the actual experience of the author, rather than needing to escape from the constrictions of all language. Burroughs' cut-ups on the other hand create spaces in the text to allow for glimpses of reality through the prerecordings.

In Lydenberg's view, "For Burroughs, the site of language – sending, representing, naming – is always blind and always empty. It is language which robs us of individual life and of the world itself, creating a 'grey veil between you and what you saw or more often did not see'."[107] Therefore the act of separating word from body not only creates spaces which allow the subject to lift the 'grey veil' which denies clear vision, it also allows the body to exist in a heightened state of experience within the world, suggesting that this act of separation does not automatically lead to the destruction of the body, but actually allows for new ways of conceptualising the body's relationship to the world. But malignant powers prevent this by controlling ownership of bodies. In the dystopian world that is presented in Burroughs' texts, the

[106] Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971) 28.
[107] Lydenberg, Word Cultures 41.

body becomes a commodity to be auctioned off to the highest bidder, as happens in The Soft Machine: "On the line is the baby and semen market where the sexes meet to exchange the basic commodity which is known as 'the property'."[108] Regarding the body in this way keeps it firmly bound up within systems of control. Moreover, the body remains a valuable commodity because "'I don't even feel like a human without my 'property' – How can I feel without fingers?'"[109] This highlights the apparent inability to experience the world through anything other than the medium of the body. In a letter to Ginsberg in 1950 where Ginsberg has evidently expressed such views of the body, Burroughs is sharply critical of him, writing:

> My personal experiments and experiences have convinced me that telepathy and precognition are solid demonstrable facts; facts that can be verified by anyone who will perform certain definite experiments. These facts point to the *possibility* of consciousness without a body or life after death, and before birth. Telepathy is independent of space-time. I do not see that these are facts of no importance or 'concern to the living.' Why is it 'useless and deceptive' to look further? What are you afraid of? Why all this insistence on confining your attention to 'non-supersensual reality,' to 'palpable objects'? Why this care to avoid any experience that goes beyond arbitrary boundaries (and boundaries set by others)? Mysticism is just a word. I am concerned with *facts* on all levels of experience.[110]

He goes on to emphasise to Ginsberg that he wishes these statements to be taken seriously: "I hope you will realize that this letter is not a joke, and that I mean what I have said."[111] Thus Burroughs believed in the potential for existence without a body

[108] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 145.
[109] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 146.
[110] William S. Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 1 May 1950, Letters, 68.
[111] William S. Burroughs, "To Allen Ginsberg," 1 May 1950, Letters, 69.

or in fact the imposition of any kind of boundaries on consciousness. His mention of telepathy here, as well as the notion of consciousness before birth (thus before immersion in systems of language) also suggests the possibility of consciousness without language. Burroughs, though, does not view the body as the site of authenticity, but instead believes that to fully experience the world, the body must be recognised as a limiting and ultimately controlling factor and one must seek ways of moving beyond it.

According to Hayles, though, Burroughs' work should be read in more complex terms than simply advocating the end of the body. Her argument is grounded in an attempt to counter "the postmodern orthodoxy that the body is primarily, if not entirely, a linguistic and discursive construction."[112] She argues instead that "bodily practices have a physical reality that can never be assimilated into discourse."[113] She makes the distinction between the body and embodiment, stating that:

> Embodiment is akin to articulation in that it is inherently performative, subject to individual enactments, and therefore always to some extent improvisational. Whereas the body can disappear into information with scarcely a murmur of protest, embodiment cannot, for it is tied to the circumstances of the occasion and the person.[114]

The notion of embodiment is important for Hayles as it is the site of individual experience. Despite the positive potential for linking objects, spaces and bodies by understanding them as discursive practices, the danger of losing individual, embodied experience is that the individual's position becomes the fixed viewpoint of the unmarked (disembodied) observer, rather than a fully aware, marked participant.

[112] Hayles, Posthuman 192.
[113] Hayles, Posthuman 195.
[114] Hayles, Posthuman 197.

Hayles' claim is for situated knowledge and relation between subject and object, which is not only comparable to Haraway's viewpoint, but is also precisely what Jack and Cody are striving for in their tape experiments in Visions.

Moreover, in terms of Burroughs' work, it would appear that Hayles has a valid argument. Burroughs says, "Words – at least the way we use them – can stand in the way of what I call nonbody experience. It's time we thought about leaving the body behind."[115] This use of the term 'nonbody' suggests that although part of the self has disappeared once the words are gone, there is still an element of subjectivity remaining which can participate in 'experience'. Hayles' interpretation of this remaining state as embodiment seems viable. However, it is important to realise that as embodiment is performative it does not exist in a concrete sense, but rather from moment to moment – it is, as Hayles points out, 'improvisational'. Burroughs' experiments with tape can be seen as an attempt to reach this state.

Hence Burroughs' work explores options other than existing within the corporeal, and he points out that "Obviously, the human body itself is a very complex machine, which does not mean that you are your body."[116] Thus the subject can be freed from the body as the two are not the same thing, and Cary Nelson sees Burroughs' vision of the body exploding "outward into space" as extremely positive, suggesting "Burroughs deliberately opposes the need to enclose radical experience in protective frames."[117] Removing the subject from its protective frame of the body means that it is able to exist in space, and in the 'soundless medium' that Burroughs

[115] William Burroughs, The Third Mind (New York: Viking Press, 1978) 2.
[116] Odier, The Job 115.
[117] Cary Nelson, The Incarnate Word: Literature as Verbal Space (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973) 228.

identifies, finally free from the word.[118] Similarly, Ihab Hassan believes that through the 'literature of silence' "We are invited to regain our original innocence."[119] This original innocence, however, is not related to the body, but rather moves past it, and the conclusions to the texts of the Nova trilogy explore this by examining the relationship between word, body and subject. The conclusion to Nova Express clearly moves towards the end of the body, which is related to the end of the word:

> My writing arm is paralyzed on this green land – Dead Hand, no more flesh scripts – Last door – Shut off Mr. Bradly Mr. – He heard your summons – Melted into air – 'You are yourself 'Mr. Bradly Mr. Martin – ' all the living and the dead – You are yourself – There be –
>
> Well that's about the closest way I know to tell you and papers rustling across city desks . . .

As the body can no longer write itself: "my writing arm is paralyzed," it ceases to exist: "Melted into air."[120] However, the repetition of the phrase "you are yourself" emphasises that the subject has not disappeared, despite the loss of the body. The Soft Machine ends similarly, with "dead fingers in smoke,"[121] once again connoting the end of writing and the body, and towards the end of The Ticket That Exploded the reader is again presented with corresponding imagery: "no flesh identity – lips fading – silence."[122] The end of the word and the disappearance of the body are again here clearly linked, leading to silence. The use of the word 'flesh' to qualify exactly which identity has been lost again suggests that the end of the body does not equate to the

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[118] This suggests a spiritual or mystical experience which does not sit easily with Burroughs' writing, but given his comment to Ginsberg that "Mysticism is just a word" it seems that Burroughs was not concerned with classifying his ideas in this way.
[119] Ihab Hassan, "The Literature of Silence," 10.
[120] There are echoes here of the end of The Tempest – a play about the ability to bring into being – as a magician but also as a writer – a Utopian world with distinct dystopian elements of absolute control. It also points us to Prospero's line that "the rest is silence."
[121] Burroughs, The Soft Machine 169.
[122] Burroughs, Ticket 202.

loss or disintegration of the subject. These conclusions are characterised by the depiction of body parts – hands, fingers, lips. The body no longer exists as a unified whole, and indeed it is clear throughout the Nova trilogy that the body cannot continue to function as a whole, as it is continually exposed to invasion and penetration. Imagining the self as no longer bounded or totalised as a whole or unified entity means that the notion of invasion is made less threatening, although this is a concept that Burroughs never seems entirely comfortable with in his work.

Timothy Melley thus offers a pertinent reading of Burroughs which attempts to explain the paradoxical nature of his writing, asserting that: "Burroughs finds himself so deeply enamoured of liberal humanism that his own attacks on it continually propel him into a state of panic."[123] The implication here is that Burroughs really subscribes to ideas of personal freedom and autonomy that he attacks in his writing, and this is evident in Burroughs' description of "the human body itself [as] … a very complicated machine which is occupied by someone in the capacity of a very incompetent pilot."[124] Whilst the notion of the body as a machine implies a cybernetic understanding of it, it is Burroughs' description of the self as existing within the body as "a very incompetent pilot" that is interesting. This implies that the body and the subject are separate entities, but that the subject is bounded within a clearly defined body, and as Melley explains, "to view oneself as less strictly bordered – that is, to adopt a self-concept derived from systems theory or poststructuralism – would be to recognize oneself as too 'leaky' or 'open' to contain the scarce, magical, and easily dissipated property called 'agency.'"[125]

Looking at the cyborg metaphor is one way of observing how Burroughs' understanding of the body is different to that of poststructuralism. The cyborg

[123] Melley, 184.
[124] Odier, The Job 115.
[125] Melley, 186-87.

metaphor reimagines the body as an organism which is neither unified nor complete. The cyborg functions as a network or system that has no clear boundaries and as such it is no longer subject to invasion or penetration. It is also conceived of as "a hybrid of machine and organism."[126] However, whereas the body for Burroughs is a potentially dangerous corrupted technology, open to invasion or programming by controlling forces, the cyborg revels in its leaky boundaries and the capacity for corruption – which would be seen simply as adaptation – that allow for the utopian possibilities of connection and contact. Burroughs attempts to explore the possibility and potential benefits of existing outside the confines of a body, as he regards the body itself as subject to invasion because he believes that it is constructed from two halves. But whereas he sees this boundary line as potentially dangerous, Donna Haraway explains that her "cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities."[127] The cyborg metaphor is not about the resolution of differences but rather the possibility of being able to "see from both perspectives at once because each reveals dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point."[128] So where Burroughs, like Kerouac, sees danger along boundaries which for him must ultimately lead to some kind of destruction, Haraway is able to use the cyborg metaphor as a way of demonstrating the positive potential of these points of liminality, allowing contradictory forces to co-exist without either the need to retreat to "an imagined organic body," or requiring instead the acceptance of the destruction of the body.[129] Burroughs ultimately does accept 'leaky boundaries' as positive, and as Melley points out "in postwar culture, even those who can imagine a less centered human subject rarely abandon its

[126] Burroughs, Nova Express 76.
[127] Haraway, Simians 154.
[128] Haraway, Simians 154.
[129] Haraway, Simians 154.

accompanying conception of agency as the property of a centrally housed, integrated subject."[130]

The Nova trilogy demonstrates Burroughs' rejection of any kind of unity either in text or in body, or between writer and reader. Burroughs refuses to allow the word to form the connection between writerly and readerly experience, recognising both the dangers of the controlling power of the word, and the potential power of the author. Writer and reader cannot "attempt to occupy the same three-dimensional coordinate points" as this is based on the premise that the writer's experience or body *is* the word, and it is this dangerous, parasitic relationship that Burroughs attempts to deconstruct through the cut-up.[131] Burroughs' cut-up method is therefore an attempt to release the subject from its imprisonment in the networks of power and control created and sustained by both word and body. Burroughs uses his power as a writer in an attempt to both expose and contain the power of the word. He does this by demonstrating the power of word associations, and through creating gaps and spaces in his texts in order to allow the reader space for their own vision. These gaps are filled with various forms of white noise in order to prevent them from being infiltrated by the word, and it is these spaces which are also crucial in allowing for new ways of conceptualising the body and the subject.

[130] Melley, 187.
[131] Burroughs, Ticket 52.

Conclusion

The works of Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs are firmly situated within the American postwar culture of paranoia and surveillance, and this is sharply reflected in their aesthetic concerns. Kerouac's spontaneous prose method has been described as an attempt to "*de*classify the secrets of the human body and soul" by writing in a way that encourages total honesty from the individual and exposes "personal secret idea-words."[1] His focus on the importance of individual experience is particularly significant given the extent to which this was variously under threat in the postwar period. Meanwhile, Burroughs' work also responds to this environment by laying bare in often grotesque detail a variety of "atomic secrets." This phrase connotes both the universal and the personal, referring to the climate of nuclear fear and control underpinned by the atomic bomb, as well as to the secrets of the human body, particularly that of the addict, as the corpus is also a collection of atoms. In a similar attempt to Kerouac, Burroughs' cut-up and fold-in methods are a means of slicing through the surface of the text in order both to draw attention to the constructed and carefully controlled nature of what we regard as 'reality', and to expose whatever may lie beneath these often complex word and image constructions.

Throughout their work, both writers seek to expose the ways in which the creativity and spontaneous expression of the individual is enmeshed in systems of

[1] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xiv. Kerouac, "Essentials," 57.

control, and they chart the ways in which technological advancement can lead to a loss of agency in one form or another, while also exploiting the potential of some of the technologies of representation to offer new forms of creative self-expression. Whilst there are evidently important similarities in Kerouac and Burroughs' understanding of and responses to postwar culture within their work, there are also some crucial differences in the authors' approaches to language that influence the styles of their texts, and which in turn reflect their starkly contrasting views of the individual. Whilst Kerouac seeks to uphold the notion of the autonomous individual and stresses the importance of embodied experience, Burroughs' work is far more ambivalent about this, and is open to the potential for existing without a body and thus without the strong sense of autonomy that Kerouac emphasises. These disparities may best be illustrated by examining a section of Nova Express entitled "Melted into Air" where Burroughs actually incorporates the final passages of Kerouac's work The Subterraneans.[2]

Significantly, Burroughs chooses to work with a section of Kerouac's novel that specifically discusses the materiality of the text – the "big constructions" of language.[3] In the concluding pages of The Subterraneans, Kerouac very consciously draws attention to the constructed nature of the text, as the novel ends with the following sentences from the narrator: "And I go home having lost her love. And write this book."[4] Kerouac here also muddies the distinction between author and narrator as one becomes the other. In Burroughs' text, though, his treatment of these sentences works to deny the symbiosis between narrator and author that Kerouac establishes, hence Burroughs' fold-in version

[2] Burroughs, Nova Express 154-55. Kerouac, Subterraneans 102-03.
[3] Kerouac, Subterraneans 102.
[4] Kerouac, Subterraneans 103.

ends: "'And I go home having lost – Yes, blind may not refuse vision to this book – '".[5] Whereas Kerouac's work clearly draws attention to the narrator's desire to write himself into being, Burroughs' fold-in pulls in the opposite direction, by both physically cutting up the text itself, and adding phrases to suggest a lack of cohesion. The fold-in method explores the possibility that by disrupting the relationship between writer and reader, the text is in fact opened out, allowing different meanings to be established, so rather than closing down meaning, it in fact "may not refuse vision to this book – ".[6] The use of a dash here in Burroughs' work also suggests this desire to establish a lack of finality. Therefore whilst Kerouac's work narrows down the text's vision to that of the narrator, and so concentrates on a singular perspective, Burroughs' treatment opens it out and suggests further possibilities, allowing potential for vision in a way that Kerouac does not. In fact, the issue of how to remove a dominant singular perspective from the narrative is one of the problems that Kerouac constantly struggled with in his writing, and one that formed the basis of his experiments with tape recording and spontaneous prose. Ann Douglas points out that Kerouac "knew that it is well-nigh impossible to tell a story without putting oneself in charge. Narratives are always involved with mastery, with self-promotion."[7] Burroughs' treatment of Kerouac's prose effectively removes control of the text from the author/narrator, as Burroughs' interspersion of Kerouac's words with phrases such as "fading out"; made of "straw"; "melted into air", suggests disintegration and a lack of permanence or substantial materiality, as well as constituting a denial of Kerouac's intended textual and thus narratorial integrity.[8]

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[5] Burroughs, Nova Express 155.
[6] Burroughs, Nova Express 155.
[7] Douglas, introduction, The Subterraneans and Pic xvi.
[8] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.

In terms of his views on the individual, Burroughs' handling of his own appearance in Kerouac's text is particularly interesting. Kerouac appears to make reference to Burroughs at the end of The Subterraneans: "'I should have paid more attention to the old junkey nevertheless, who said there's a lover on every corner – they're all the same boy, don't get hung-up on one.'"[9] The "old junkey" quite possibly refers to Burroughs, and the fact that Burroughs manages to splice himself into his version of Kerouac's text supports this reading. In Burroughs' revision of the text, he appears as follows: "I see suddenly Mr. Beiles Mr. Corso Mr. Burroughs presence on earth is all a joke – And I think: 'funny – melted into air' – Lost flakes fall that were his shadow: This book – no good junky identity fading out – ".[10] Thus having written himself into the text, Burroughs immediately draws attention to his transient nature as even his shadow is reduced to "lost flakes" and one of his identities "fades out," with the suggestion also that the book itself fades out. Burroughs' treatment of the text may be read as an attempt to ultimately cut himself out of Kerouac's work in a refusal to be cast in a singular identity as an "old junkey." Unlike Kerouac, whose aim in this sequence is reductive as he merges the authorial and narratorial into a single unitary identity, Burroughs refuses to "get hung-up on one" identity.

Some of Burroughs' cut-up of The Subterraneans also quite cleverly draws attention to Kerouac's writing methods, particularly the following excerpt: "Everybody's watching – But I continue the diary – 'Mr. Bradly Mr. Martin?' You are his eyes." The notion that "Everybody's watching" evidently links to ideas of total surveillance, and Burroughs' addition of the phrase "But I continue the diary" clearly emphasises

[9] Kerouac, Subterraneans 102.
[10] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.

Kerouac's stress on confessional prose and desire for complete personal honesty in the face of this culture. Moreover, Burroughs' phrase "you are his eyes" resonates with Kerouac's desire to achieve writing which provides the readers with an experience that is as unmediated as possible, and his wish to write for others to experience "telepathic shock and meaning excitement" through his prose so that the reader could literally have the same experiences as the writer, as the "eyes" of writer and reader become analagous.

Burroughs again works to deny this connection between writer and reader by removing Kerouac's coherent narrative framework and the original text's focus on human relationships. Indeed, Burroughs' version begins "Fade out muttering: 'There's a lover on every corner cross the wounded galaxies.'"[11] Burroughs has altered the original text significantly here, and his addition of new material, particularly the phrase "cross wounded galaxies" serves to both situate the text within the realms of science fiction, as well as shifting the personal experience that is so central to Kerouac's original text into the domain of the universal. The additional material that Burroughs splices into Kerouac's work also often serves to create a more sinister and paranoid edge to the text: "'I see dark information from him on the floor – He pull out – Keep all Board Room Reports."[12] The description of information as "dark" connotes the shadowy, secretive and potentially dangerous nature of information dissemination in the postwar period, and also reflects Burroughs' depiction of the dark shadow of identity disintegrating: "lost flakes fall that were his shadow."[13] The call to "Keep all Board Room reports" highlights the dangers inherent in the written word, as the materiality of the reports means that the information within them can be used as the basis of potentially dangerous evidence

[11] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.
[12] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.
[13] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.

against the writer. Indeed Kerouac's text is particularly risky in this respect as it clearly reveals the identity of its author.

Burroughs' version of the text contains some references to the dangers inherent in a technological society: "Had enough slow metal fires – Form has been inconstant – Last electrician to tap on the bloody dream."[14] This is entirely commensurate with the thematics of Burroughs' work, and the image of "slow metal fires" links to the many earlier references to burning metal throughout Nova Express, relating to the reality film having been destroyed, for example "burnt metal reek of nova"; "The film reeks of burning."[15] The mention of an electrician in relation to a dream here suggests the possibility that dreams, just like the rest of the reality film, can be altered by someone who is capable of changing the electrical impulses in the brain that create them. This again highlights a certain paranoia that the individual is open to total control by external technological forces, in contrast to the portrayal of the daydream in Kerouac's text, where the narrator/author is ultimately able to control the dream by deciding whether to stop or to continue with it at a particular time: "everybody's watching . . . but I continue the daydream."[16] Here the narrator makes a conscious decision to allow the daydream to play itself out, despite its potentially damaging consequences: he is dreaming about a fight that he looks set to lose. However, by "not refusing vision" to the dream, and allowing it to play out, it in fact has a positive outcome, allowing him a flash of insight into his relationships with others. Burroughs and Kerouac therefore act to "not refuse vision" to their texts in very different ways: Kerouac through his emphasis on complete personal confession aided by his spontaneous prose method, and Burroughs by

[14] Burroughs, Nova Express 154.
[15] Burroughs, Nova Express 14, 17.
[16] Kerouac, The Subterraneans 103.

employing writing techniques such as cutting and juxtaposition to allow for the automatic and inevitable play of meanings to take place free from the control of the author, and later through creating spaces filled with white noise in his work in an attempt to allow for clear vision. In an increasingly technological culture where all manner of freedoms can be seen as under threat from a range of sources, both Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs seek to uphold personal freedom and clear, unmediated vision in very different ways. Their works therefore ultimately demonstrate their highly individualised and equally forthright responses to these conditions.

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