



From Death and Dystopia to a New Space Age: An Analysis of
Themes and Practices in the Later Works of William
S. Burroughs.

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Abstract of Thesis

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Thesis: That the texts of the major trilogy by the contemporary American writer William S. Burroughs (*Cities of the Red Night* [1981], *The Place of Dead Roads* [1983], and *The Western Lands* [1987]) construct particular notions of themselves as text, as well as concepts of readerly roles and the position and function of an author, in order to achieve goals "beyond" the text, in the world "outside" it, while at the same time calling the objective existence of this world into question. These goals are both sociopolitical and ideological - Burroughs seeks to alter the consciousness or psyche of the reader, and hence to effect a basic alteration in the nature of contemporary society, thus revealing his essential humanism. These strategies, which are developed and radically transformed throughout the trilogy, are prefigured by one of Burroughs' first major works, *The Naked Lunch* (1959), which I treat as seminal in this regard.