

Theories of Opiate Addiction in the Early Works of Burroughs and Trocchi

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Abstract: In his article "Theories of Opiate Addiction in the Early Works of Burroughs and Trocchi" Richard English discusses William S. Burroughs's and Alexander Trocchi's representations of opiate addiction with special reference to their early writings. English examines the concept of *homo heroin* that can be attributed to Burroughs and lists and expounds its qualities. Among these are: immorality, criminality, mono-objectuality, self- and other-indifference, and, most importantly, the radical physical transformation into a new species, which Burroughs extends in *Naked Lunch*. English shows how *homo heroin* relates to Trocchi's conception of a heroin addict, which serves to illustrate that *homo heroin* is not simply a neologism for 'junkie'. English also argues that Burroughs's radical depiction stretches beyond that of Trocchi and other writers of opiate fiction in virtue of Burroughs's metaphysical claim about species change.

Richard ENGLISH

Theories of Opiate Addiction in the Early Works of Burroughs and Trocchi

In the "Deposition: Testimony Concerning a Sickness" which opens his novel *Naked Lunch*, William S. Burroughs describes his rock bottom on heroin and offers a challenge to the non-addict: "I lived in one room in the Native Quarter of Tangier. I had not taken a bath in a year nor changed my clothes or removed them except to stick a needle every hour in the fibrous grey wooden flesh of terminal addiction. I never cleaned or dusted the room. Empty ampule boxes and garbage piled to the ceiling. I did absolutely nothing. I could look at the end of my shoe for eight hours. I was only roused to action when the hourglass of junk ran out. If a friend came to visit ... [and] had died on the spot I would have sat there looking at my shoe waiting to go through his pockets. Wouldn't you?" (202-03). This passage outlines the core qualities that Burroughs and Trocchi ascribe to their junkie characters in their early works. An addict lives in squalor, his personal hygiene is nil, and the shot of heroin is vital. When stoned, the addict is inert, staring into a void, and waiting for his high to wear off. The death of another person means nothing, since other people are solely a means to an end and not ends in themselves. Their only use is as an object of exploitation. The opiate addict in fiction, like Burroughs in this passage, is a person apart. The test of his separation is the loss of morality suggested by the challenge, "Wouldn't you?" For an ordinary, decent person, the first concern for a friend who has collapsed is to establish whether he is actually dead or not, and the second impulse is to call an ambulance without rifling through his pockets. The addict *in flagranti* lives an existence outside the rest of society, operating within a junkie community with its own rules, conventions and time.

In this article I set out two hypotheses about opiate addiction which underpin Burroughs's representation of addicts in *Junky* (1953) and *Naked Lunch* (1959): a Cellular Hypothesis and a Species-Change Hypothesis. I make reference to various passages of Burroughs's early nonfiction and adduce evidence of similar ideas in Trocchi's *Cain's Book* (1960) and other opiate novels. By an opiate novel, I mean any novel that contains a major character who is an opiate addict; or that provides substantial descriptions of morphine, heroin, or opium use; or both. In addition, I give historical and psychoanalytical support for Burroughs's two hypotheses. For historical support, I advert to the works of two late nineteenth-century medical authors and, for psychoanalytical support, I turn to Lacan's concepts of lack, desire, and the Other. Then I elucidate the science-fiction extension to Burroughs's postulation of *homo heroin* that Trocchi partially shares, and, finally, I level criticism at the above ideas, arguing against them in terms of science but in partial favor of their explicatory value as metaphor.

Part of my argument involves the mixture of textual and biographical approaches to the issue of opiate addiction. My justification is the special relationship between the author and the protagonist in certain opiate novels where there subsists a strong, and sometimes total, identification between the two. This identification is such that these novels are really autobiographies which have been designated fiction. For example, in *Junky*, William Lee, the protagonist, is fundamentally William Burroughs, the author. The two names suggest as much. The first names are the same and "Lee" is the middle name of Burroughs's mother. The biological facts of William Lee stated in the Prologue are the same as those of the author's, for example, the year of birth is given as 1914; his upbringing takes place in "a large Midwest city" (St. Louis); he attends one of the Big Three universities (Harvard); and he is gay. Furthermore, for the original publication of *Junky* as *Junkie* by Ace Books, William Burroughs used his pseudonym William Lee. This suggests that *Junkie* is the autobiography of William Lee which is the autobiography of William Burroughs. The special relationship also subsists with regard to *Cain's Book*. Much less information is recorded about the life of Alexander Trocchi, and so a comparison of minutiae between the story facts and his biographical facts is impossible. However, in outline, the life of Necchi, the protagonist, mirrors that of Trocchi, the author. As with *Junky*, there is a strong similarity between the names of the protagonist and the author, in that both are two syllable terms ending in "cchi." This reinforces the claim of identification between the "I" narrator and the author.

Burroughs and Trocchi met frequently and liked each other, but were never particularly close. They first encountered one another on a plane flying to the Edinburgh Writers' Conference in August 1962. The significance of their early work is that both authors explored the existential challenge posed by heroin addiction and how society malevolently dealt with it at the time. Their reception at the Edinburgh Conference mirrors how addicts were received in general. Burroughs notes, "Hugh McDiarmid [the Scottish organizer] was stalking around in his kilt with his knobby blue knees saying that Burroughs and Trocchi belong in jail, not on a lecture platform" (Campbell and Niel 159).

In *Junky*, Burroughs can be expounded as proposing two hypotheses about opiate addiction: a Cellular Hypothesis and a Species-Change Hypothesis. In *Naked Lunch*, he develops and extends the

latter hypothesis. The first hypothesis claims that the cellular structure of a person changes as a result of constant opiate use: "I think the use of junk causes permanent cellular alteration. Once a junkie, always a junkie. You can stop using junk, but you are never off after the first habit" (97). Junk becomes "a biological necessity" (103). As Lee, the protagonist, admits to a psychiatrist, "I need junk to get out of bed in the morning, to shave and eat breakfast. I need it to stay alive" (19). The ease with which a habit returns to the veteran drug user is another feature of the physiological change explained by the Cellular Hypothesis: "I had been off junk for three months. It took me just three days to get back on" (97). Lee goes on to generalize that "an addict may be ten years off junk, but he can get a new habit in less than a week" (97). Several years after the publication of his first novel, Burroughs revels in affirmation of his hypothesis. In a letter dated October 8, 1957, he writes, "in *Year Book of Medicine*: Doc Isbell of Lexington [the Kentucky Narcotics Hospital] has suggested that morphine acts on the cell receptors and that an excitant forms inside the cells" (*The Letters* 370).

The second substantive claim in *Junky* is the Species-Change Hypothesis. This idea resonates in the work of Alexander Trocchi and echoes faintly in opiate fiction by Robert Deane Pharr and James Mills. *Panic in Needle Park*, first published in 1965, by James Mills is narrated by a reporter who insinuates himself into the community of addicts who frequent Sherman Square in Manhattan, one of the sites for connecting used by Burroughs and his peer group in the late '40's and early '50's. *S.R.O.*, first published in 1971, by Robert Deane Pharr, contains a multi-story nexus conveying the tribulations of a group of addicts and alcoholics resident in a Harlem welfare hostel. Through their depiction of addict difference, these two books suggest that the second hypothesis has a wide appeal. The Species Change Hypothesis, first implicit in *Junky*, is that veteran addicts form a sub-species of *homo sapiens* as a result of the cellular change brought about by junk. For the sake of reference, I shall call this sub-species, *homo heroin*. The metamorphosis into *homo heroin* is reflected in the descriptions that Burroughs gives of junkies after they exhibit inhuman features. Subway Slim is a Pinocchio-like figure made of wood and Mary is an underwater blob: "There was something boneless about [Mary], like a deep sea creature. Her eyes were cold fish eyes that looked at you through a viscous medium ... I could see those eyes in a shapeless, protoplasmic mass undulating over the dark sea floor" (*Junky* 12). Lee describes addicts in New York as of one kind: "The 103rd Street boys ... all looked like junk" (25).

In *Cain's Book*, Trocchi depicts Fay, a long-term addict, as inhuman like Mary in *Junky*: "Fay's face was ... Swinish? More like a pug than a pig. Her untidy hair tumbled into her big fur collar. A yellow female pigdog" (22). Trocchi picks out Jody, another veteran addict, in avian similes: "she stood up for hours like a bird in the middle of the room with her head tucked in at her breast and her arms like drooping wings." Other textual support for this view of long-term addiction is given in Robert Deane Pharr's *S.R.O.* (1971). Sinman, an addict-character, believes that heroin users constitute their own kind. They form and live within their own communities because of their difference: "Junkies ... are a breed apart ... First and foremost ... your junky is a cabalistic wretch. That is why no psychiatrist can communicate with him. There is a general misconception that junkies have evolved a jargon to befuddle the forces of law and order. That is not true. The born junky insists upon isolation from the entire community. He desires to associate only with his like" (145). This quotation reinforces the anthropological element to the *homo heroin* hypothesis by conceptualizing the addict as gravitating toward his own kind, with the twist that his argot is not a linguistic device to confuse the authorities but an exorcism of fraternity. In literal and figurative terms, the addict does not speak the same language as the non-addict.

According to Burroughs, the long-term addict's craving escalates: "The addict needs more and more junk to maintain human form" (*Naked Lunch* 200; my italics). Ultimately, taking drugs becomes all-consuming: "A dope fiend is ... in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control" (201). Like Burroughs, Trocchi represents the veteran user in domestically reduced circumstances employing zoological concepts: "Under heroin one adapts naturally to a new habitat. It is possible to live in a doorway, on someone's couch, or bed, or floor, always moving, and turning up from time to time at known places" (*Cain's Book* 36). Trocchi describes the dehumanization of the addict, referred to by Burroughs above, in Darwinian terms of adaptation to environment, where this environment consists of the dilapidated lodgings or alleyways that addicts frequent. Unlike *homo sapiens*, *homo heroin* does not run on linear-progressive time. He runs on junk time. Nor does he suffer boredom nor possess an end-driven sexuality. Burroughs writes: "junk suspends the whole cycle of tension, discharge and rest. The orgasm has no function in the junky. Boredom, which always indicates an undischarged tension, never troubles the addict. He can look at his shoe for eight hours. He is only roused to action when the hourglass of junk runs out" (*Naked Lunch* 31). Externally, the life of junk is barren. Existence is foetal, spent on the nod or staring at a shoe. Reflecting on a year of

using, Lee recalls only the first few injections and the periods of sickness. What he experiences is "flat, almost two-dimensional" (*Junky* 102).

The long-term addict loses his personality as well as his looks. Junk renders otiose any capacity for real or emotionally honest connection. Trocchi draws Fay as physically hideous and mentally false. She is a non-self within a pseudo-self. Junk has obliterated her identity: "Past forty, and with her blue look, Fay finds it difficult to interest a John ... Dracula's idea of a good lay ... Talking to Fay you have the impression you are speaking to the secretary of her personal secretary ... It's not that she doesn't reply. It's simply you are in touch with an answering service, that Fay herself is not speaking to you" (*Cain's Book* 35-36). On occasion, Trocchi describes Fay in spectral terms, a trope used by Burroughs: "Fay ... is the gray ghost of the district ... She invokes horror, disgust, indignation, a nameless fear. She is the soul's scavenger, the unexpected guest, a kind of underworld Florence Nightingale always abroad with her spike and her little bag of heroin. She is beyond truth and falsity. When I think of her I think of her soft yellow pugface and her violet hands" (36-37). With his reference to Fay as a "gray ghost," Trocchi suggests that addicts are ethereal and therefore occupy a junkie spirit world. Burroughs intimates as much by his frequent use of the term "spectral" in relation to addicts. Furthermore, according to Burroughs, heroin leaves a trace, and *homo heroin* possesses a sixth sense that locates it. Over the course of his addiction, the veteran user develops this ability to detect the proximity of drugs and its whereabouts. Lee says, "I don't spot junk neighbourhoods by the way they look, but by the feel, somewhat the same process by which a dowser locates hidden water. I am walking along and suddenly the junk in my cells moves and twitches like the dowser's wand: 'Junk here!'" (*Junky* 58). In *Naked Lunch*, when Lee is desperate for heroin, he walks along New York City's 4th Street until he sees Nick. "You can always find the pusher. Your need conjures him up like a ghost" (178). Moreover, *homo heroin* can detect where formerly drugs have been present. When the connection departs 103rd and Broadway, an aura remains that Lee tunes into: "the feel of junk is still there. It hits you at the corner, follows you along the block, then falls away like a discouraged panhandler as you walk on" (*Junky* 25). James Mills, the narrator of *Panic in Needle Park*, shares Lee's ascription to the addict of a sixth sense. Mills ruminates, "a longtime addict can with surprising reliability spot a user in a group of twenty people, state with authority what kind of drug he is on, approximately how long it has been since his last fix, and whether or not at the moment he is ... carrying drugs" (13). The concept of an addict's sixth sense implied by Mills provides further evidence for the idea of the junkie spirit world that Burroughs and Trocchi suggest. In sum, the Species Change Hypothesis entails that *homo heroin* has a deviant physiology and psychology in comparison to *homo sapiens*. For *homo heroin*, the straight life drops away. Morality dissipates. The life of junk reduces to a simple and repetitious routine: obtain money, score, use; and so on. Home conditions, personal hygiene, work, social status, marriage, personal relations, family are irrelevant. As Burroughs says, "Junk takes everything and gives nothing but insurance against junk sickness" (103). When he loses that insurance, the addict, according to Trocchi, is "bestial, scarcely human," a "quivering, blubbering, vomiting mass" (*Cain's Book* 18).

Burroughs's dual theory of opiate addiction reflects strands of thinking prevalent in the U.S. during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such thinking established two relevant models of addiction: the biological and the possession-by-drugs. In the former, the subject develops a deviant physiology, hence the inability to defy drug cravings, and in the second, the drug possesses subjects so that they lose normal agency. The Cellular Hypothesis coheres with the biological model, while the Species Change Hypothesis coheres with the possession-by-drugs model. In 1881, Dr. Leslie Keeley, illustrating the biological model, wrote in *The Morphine Eater*: "When [opium] has been constantly used for a long time it produces an isomeric change in the nerve fibre ... [which] is a distinct chemical change in the structure and action of the nerves ... and necessitates the continued use of the drug in order to enable its functions to continue" (52). Aimed at medical practitioners, Keeley's book describes and prescribes for the "opium habit." He analyses the problem according to his observations and treatment of addiction during the American Civil War and the decade or so thereafter. He attributes the rapacity of addiction to the "isomeric change" engendered by the continuous use of opiates. His fieldwork, findings and evaluation precipitated a major school of thought where the source of the problem is considered to reside in the bio-chemistry of the sufferer.

In contrast to Keeley's medical objectivity, Henry Cole offers an addict's perspective of the "awful existence which came to him, blasting all hopes of pleasure and enjoyment in this beautiful world" (3). In 1895, illustrating the possession-by-drugs model, the author describes a fellow addict in *Confessions of an American Opium Eater* as follows: "a lean, wan face, belonging to a creature who is just arousing himself from his long drugged sleep, stares out upon us with ... eyes that dilate with some strange interior light, ferocious yet unaggressive ... devoid of the unconscious response for which we

look in human eyes ... an "opium devil"—one who is supremely possessed by the power of the deadly narcotic on which he has leaned so long. Without opium he cannot live; though human blood runs in his veins, it is little better than poppy juice; he is no longer really a man, but a malignant essence in forming a cadaverous human shape" (235-36). According to Cole's analysis, the addict is "a creature," "an opium devil," "a malignant essence" no better than a zombie, a pre-cursor to Burroughs's dope fiend.

In psychoanalytic terms, the Lacanian concepts of lack, desire, and the Other corroborate Burroughs's two hypotheses. The Cellular Hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) implies total need, by which Burroughs means that the addict must have his fix at all costs. This supreme need resonates with Lacanian desire, the object of which is "continually deferred" and "emerges originally in the Other, that is, in the unconscious" (Evans 39). According to Lacan, the first Other is the addict's mother, who is replaced by the father and his law, and, as the child develops, is replaced by patriarchal culture and its repressive and punitive mechanisms. Desire is caused by lack, where lack can be a lack of being or a lack of an object, for example, the symbolic phallus (Lacan S4, 269). Taking the second meaning first, the hypodermic syringe may be viewed as an instance of the symbolic phallus. Thus, the addict seeks to compensate for the lack of power that he feels due to his self-loathing and poor standing in the community by using the symbolic phallus (hypodermic) to inject opiates into himself to induce a temporary erasure. Returning to the first meaning of lack, the addict lacks self-esteem, love and social acceptance that constitute core elements of being, and so the addict's lack is the "lack of being properly speaking" (S2, 223). On this interpretation, the addict can be thought to represent a deviant form of Lacanian development. His desire for drugs caused by lack (amounting to total need; Hypothesis 1) is the desire for the Other (leading to species change; Hypothesis 2). The science-fiction images which Burroughs produces might well reify the "lack of being properly speaking."

Further Lacanian support for Burroughs's theory of addiction is found in "'Junk' and the Other" by Jeffrey T. Nealon, who expounds the intersection between Burroughs's concept of total need (Hypothesis 1) and Levinas's concept of metaphysical desire, both of which he sees as contributing to a confrontation with an other (175) (Hypothesis 2), even if their kinds of other do not correspond (176). In terms of the other with a small 'o,' several passages in *Junky*, which concern the prosecution and persecution of addicts, provide insight into the mechanism of othering to which society subjects the addict and how that process is intensified not only by an alarmist public relations policy but also by legislation and a hostile medical system. Burroughs's theory of opiate addiction feeds into his General Theory of Addiction. In a letter dated 20 September 1957, he asserts that the General Theory "expands into a world picture with concepts of good and evil" (*The Letters* 367). Beginning with morphine addiction and the sufferer's loss of, but quest for, control, Burroughs extrapolates from what has become known as the "junk paradigm" to his universal claim that society is ruled, and ruined, by "control addicts." The latter have powerful representation among the CIA, the police, the military, politicians, money men and so on. As a result, there is no proper liberal democracy, only the illusion of same.

Despite textual, historical, and psychoanalytic support, the Cellular Hypothesis suffers from vagueness. Nowhere does Burroughs state what kind of cells undergo alteration when a person becomes an addict. He could mean brain cells, blood cells, cells in the liver or lymph glands, or all or none of these. As *Junky* stands, it is silent on the point. Because his hypothesis is non-specific, it can neither be confirmed nor disconfirmed. According to Karl Popper's criterion (18), the Cellular Hypothesis is unfalsifiable and therefore pseudo-science. A counter-objection is that the Cellular Hypothesis explains the longevity and prehensibility of addiction by adverting to metaphor. Notwithstanding, if this is the case, what is the Cellular Hypothesis a metaphor of? In Saussure's terms, it is a signifier that has detached from its signified, that is, a trope that refers to nothing. Lee's hypothesis, although superficially attractive, is empty at the level of content and by extension is empty at the level of explanation. It amounts to the truism that if you take narcotics over a period of time, something in your body changes so that you will have to keep taking them or face withdrawal.

Burroughs's second claim relates to the first and proposes that an addict is an aberrant form of human being, that is, *homo heroin*. By consuming opiates over the long-term, addicts experience an irreversible transformation whereby their physiological, psychological and social needs reduce to a daily fix. All else is jettisoned. Evidence for this claim lies in the physical appearance of long-term addicts, their observed lifestyles and their habitats. Lee is anthropological in his approach to this matter. The Species Change Hypothesis makes no more sense than the first as it suffers from vagueness in the same way. It is a scientific matter to establish identity conditions for a new sub-species of humanity and would presumably require the isolation of a special gene, that is, some kind of junkie gene. Lee offers no view on this head, although he does claim that there is a junk virus. Nevertheless, as a metaphor, Lee's second claim holds value. The life of junk contrasts radically with the straight life, and for

Lee to suggest that addiction engenders a species change hyperbolizes this contrast in a lyrical-poetical way. If you become a *homo heroin*, you become a different (kind of) person and Lee elucidates this transformation by applying figurative exaggeration to the concept of this kind.

In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs develops *homo heroin* into a sci-fi monster. This stretches the concept in terms of its properties way beyond any of the instantiations of long-term narcotics addiction that have been depicted so far. The first appearance of the new variant is in the segment, "And Start West". Lee, the narrator, describes Willy the Disk as follows: "Willy has a round, disk mouth lined with sensitive, erectile black hairs. He is blind from shooting in the eyeball, his nose and palate eaten away sniffing H, his body a mass of scar tissue. He can only eat the shit now with that mouth, sometimes sway out on a long tube of ectoplasm, feeling for the silent frequency of junk" (7-8). The Vigilante, prosecuted in Federal Court for possession of narcotics, offers a further degenerated *homo heroin* on the page following the portrait of Willy: "The physical changes were slow at first, then jumped forward in black klunks, falling through his slack tissue, washing away the human lines ... mouth and eyes are one organ that leaps forward to snap with transparent teeth ... sex organs sprout anywhere ... rectums open, defecate and close ... the entire organism changes color and consistency in split-second adjustments" (9). The sprouting of bodily organs reflects the unstable and ghastly nature of the textual body in which this creature is portrayed.

Trocchi echoes the science-fiction extension through the use of entomological terms, a trope that is beloved by Burroughs. After Joe and Tom Tear have shot up, Joe describes Tom, a black addict friend, in the following way: "his soft black eyelashes stirred like a clot of moving insects at his eyes. His face had the look of smoke and ashes, like a bombed city" (*Cain's Book* 24). Geo, a scowsman like Joe Necchi, is an addict who has spent time in the Tombs for dealing where he undergoes prison cold turkey. Once he has become re-addicted, Trocchi writes, "At thirty three, he is deteriorating; he is preoccupied with disappearing muscle. He watches, horrified, fascinated, the insectal movement of his private decay" (109). Trocchi's depiction of Geo's "decay" and transmutation is reminiscent of Willy the Disk's and the Vigilante's bizarre corporeal states outlined above, while Trocchi's use of "insects" resonates with Burroughs's frequent reference to centipedes.

It might be argued that Burroughs breeches all credibility with his science-fiction extension and that it is simply an example of the rhetorical device of hyperbole. In other words, Burroughs's science-fiction extension is preposterous according to rational norms. In defense, rational norms are not always relevant for adjudicating certain aspects of *Naked Lunch*. Burroughs wrote many sections while he experienced bizarre modes of perception. He was resident in the Beat Hotel in Paris and experimented in scrying with Brion Gysin, where scrying is the practice of gazing into a crystal ball until a vision appears. Under the guidance of Gysin, Burroughs performed lengthy periods of scrying, during which, for example, he witnessed himself with inhuman hands: "thick black-pink, fibrous, long white tendrils grew from curiously abbreviated finger tips" (*The Letters* 405). Jerry Wallace, also present, confirmed this impression of Burroughs's hands. Furthermore, Burroughs refers to the presence of "ectoplasmic" flesh in an addict in the same letter to Allen Ginsberg during this period. On Burroughs's behalf, it can be claimed that through scrying, he may have transcended the realm of phenomena and observed the real or noumenal nature of things, that is, things-in-themselves. What gives this extreme claim substance is that Burroughs pinned faith on such activities as magic, telepathy, witchcraft, and shamanism. He was also much influenced by the thought that he was possessed by an Ugly Spirit (Miles 3). In these and other respects, he was an anti-rationalist. Given also that he was under the influence of drugs much of the time, he was far more open to psychic phenomena than, say, if he had been stone cold sober. For Burroughs to believe that Willy the Disk actually exists in the form that he describes in *Naked Lunch*, but not be visible to the uninitiated, is possible. An advertisement for *The Ticket That Exploded* contains the quote by Burroughs that, "The psychotic is someone who really knows what's going on" ("The Ticket" <<https://www.harpercollins.co.uk/9780007341924/the-ticket-th-at-exploded>>).

An additional defense of the science-fiction extension is an argument by analogy on two counts. One, no righteous literary critic or academic has ever condemned Franz Kafka for transforming Gregor Samsa, an insurance salesman who lives at home with his family, into a massive insect in the first line of his novella, *Metamorphosis*. It is accepted as the premise of a well-told story. Two, without exception, members of the literary establishment have assimilated *Metamorphosis* into the canon of high-brow literary fiction. Given the foregoing tolerance, it would be inconsistent to dismiss Burroughs's and Trocchi's imaginaria as trivial or unworthy. Against my contention, it might be said that Kafka entertains no pretensions to scientific possibility, whereas Burroughs does. Even so, given Burroughs's persistent theme of radical and universal doubt and, above all, of his testing reality to find its porous points, this objection is neutralized.

Off the page, Burroughs and Trocchi travelled in different directions. Burroughs never transformed into one of his science-fiction junkies, while Trocchi lost his powers of productivity and lived the life of a refractory addict. John Calder, the publisher of *Cain's Book* wrote, "he is ... a lost writer ... lost because of heroin. I've known many drug addicts, [and] I've known nobody who was able to cope with it as well as Trocchi, but it killed his talent. He's the biggest example I know for not getting in any way involved with drugs" (qtd. in Campbell 213). Calder also became Burroughs's publisher and was instrumental in the two authors meeting for the Edinburgh Conference. Alex Trocchi lived with limited creative capacity during the final third of his life, and died in 1984, aged 59. He wrote in *Cain's Book*, "I often wondered how far out a man could go without being obliterated" (13). He found out, and it was not as far as he might have hoped. On the other hand, William Burroughs holds no regrets about his own narcotic odyssey (*Junky* xi), claiming to have been cured of his heroin addiction by Doctor Dent's apo-morphine treatment in his forties. He died at the age of 83.

In their representations of opiate addiction, Burroughs and Trocchi can be read as proposing several hypotheses about its nature. In their early writings, they observe, study, and record a marginalized pocket of humanity, *homo heroin*, hitherto unrecognized, which, in Lacanian terms, develops a deviant desire for the Other. Addicts in fiction exhibit a range of extreme and inhuman qualities that lead society to demonize and reject them as a collective. Burroughs goes so far as to posit a science-fiction extension to the concept of *homo heroin*. Although implausible at the level of rational norms, this latter postulation has merit if a Burroughsian method of seeing things-in-themselves is accepted. As a pair, the two Burroughsian hypotheses of addiction not only find a place in the history of ideas because they reflect the theoretical bifurcation established by members of the nineteenth-century medical fraternity, but also because they provide a timeless exploration of the nature of addiction and the changes brought about in the individual who embarks on the life of junk. Furthermore, the grounding of these hypotheses in the story circumstances, albeit of a fantastic nature in *Naked Lunch*, give foundational support to an enduring model of human/other that the (addict/normal person) and (life of junk/straight life) opposites entail.

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