

The Impact of Burroughs's Naked Lunch on Chester's The Exquisite Corpse

Jaap van der Bent
Radboud University Nijmegen

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Abstract: In his article "The Impact of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* on Chester's *The Exquisite Corpse*" Jaap van der Bent posits that although Alfred Chester was critical of most Beat writing, in Tangier in the early 1960s he associated not only with Paul Bowles, but also with William S. Burroughs. Van der Bent argues that *The Exquisite Corpse*, the experimental novel Chester wrote in Tangier, shows the influence of the city's geography and especially the content and form of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*.

Jaap VAN DER BENT

The Impact of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* on Chester's *The Exquisite Corpse*

At a first glance, the ties between the Jewish American writer Alfred Chester (1928-1971) and the Beat Generation seem to be as tenuous as they are numerous. After having earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at New York University in 1949, Chester entered Columbia University when some of the early Beats who had studied there, like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, were no longer around: Kerouac had stopped hanging around the campus years earlier and Ginsberg had left after having earned his B.A. in English in 1948. However, during his first year at New York University in 1946, Chester had not only come to know the budding fiction writer Cynthia Ozick, but also poet-to-be Edward Field, who would become a life-long friend and a staunch supporter of Chester's work. And after having moved to France in 1951, one of the many expatriate writers he teamed up with in Paris was the filmmaker and poet James Broughton. Neither Field or Broughton can be called Beat poets, but Field did associate with some of the poets of the New York School, while the Californian-born Broughton was close to some of the Beat and Beat-related writers on the West Coast. In Donald Allen's anthology *The New American Poetry*, Field's poems are grouped together with those of, among others, Frank O'Hara, the New York School poet who was closest to the Beats; work by Broughton is found in a section which also includes San Francisco-based Beat poets like Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Lew Welch, and Philip Lamantia.

Still, while Chester is linked to the Beats mainly by association, even the foreign expatriates in Paris provide modest but interesting connections between Chester and the Beat Generation. His story "Dance for Dead Lovers," for instance, appeared in the little magazine *Merlin*, edited by Alexander Trocchi, the Scottish writer whose life and work were marked by the Beats in many ways. And while Chester's work appeared in little magazines, he himself showed up in *Denise*, a novel by the Dutch poet Hans Andreus, one of a group of poets referred to as "the Fiftiers"; in the 1950s these poets, among whom Simon Vinkenoog would have the strongest Beat affiliation, provided Dutch post-World War II poetry with a sense of freedom and experimentation which in some ways can be compared to what the Beats brought to American poetry. Published in 1962 and never translated into English, *Denise* is based on Andreus' experiences in Paris in the early 1950s, when he stayed at the Hotel Verneuil, which also hosted James Baldwin and Alfred Chester. Stylistically influenced by *The Subterraneans* (on the dust jacket of *Denise*, Andreus mentions Kerouac as a model), *Denise* depicts Chester in an intriguing way. Dividing aspects of Chester's personality over two characters in the novel, Andreus seems to be aware of the psychological problems which plagued Chester already at the time and which, combined with his heavy drinking and drug abuse, would lead to his mental disintegration and his early death.

When Chester left Europe and returned to New York in 1959, he did so at the height of the popularity of the Beat Generation. Settling in the heart of Greenwich Village, itself the center of much Beat activity, he did not like what he saw, heard and, especially, read. To anyone familiar with the prose that Chester had published during his stay in Europe, it should come as no surprise that he had no patience with, for instance, the spontaneous prose practices of Jack Kerouac, whom he once referred to as an "awful writer" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 118). Chester's own early prose—the stories in *Here Be Dragons* (1955) and the novel *Jamie is My Heart's Desire* (1956)—embody carefully crafted combinations of fantasy and reality, full of symbolical and allegorical undertones. It is hard to think of prose which is further removed from the autobiographical and, at least in the eyes of Chester, formless writing of some of the Beats. Consequently, when a few years later he was asked to review John Rechy's Beat-influenced account of homosexual life *City of Night* (which would be written about positively by Frank O'Hara, so much closer to the Beats than Chester), he tore the book to pieces. In the first place, he felt that it was not a novel at all, but "two books of short stories." And he did not like them: "But Rechy's stories are awful, and they're awful for two very specific reasons which may ultimately sound like one. The first is that disgusting rhetoric that Rechy pours over everything like jam. The episodes are so gracelessly, clumsily written, so stickily, thickly literary; in his determination to boil every last drop of poetry out of pederasty, Rechy ends up with nothing but a pot of blackberry prose. The trouble is, he has no ear whatsoever. He is deaf to the music in language, and thus deaf to the rhythms of homosexual speech" (Chester, *Looking for Genet* 56-57).

Chester's review was one in a series of reviews, published by major magazines like *The New York Review of Books*, *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*, which at the beginning of the 1960s briefly made Chester famous and infamous among readers and writers alike. After having had a go at John Updike, Vladimir Nabokov and Henry Miller, at the end of 1962 he turned his attention to William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, published by Grove Press in November 1962. When Chester's review was published in *Commentary* on January 1, 1963, it was soon regarded as another of his all-out attacks. Decades later,

in his foreword to his edition of Chester's literary essays and reviews, *Looking for Genet*, Edward Field still referred to Chester's review as "a put-down of Burroughs" (Chester, *Looking for Genet* 10). According to a letter Chester wrote to Norman Glass in May 1964, at that time Burroughs was still "really very irritated about my review of *Naked Lunch*" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 113). If Burroughs had been able to read what Chester wrote about him in that same letter, he would have had every reason to be irritated: "My considered opinion of Burroughs is that personally he is a fake, a sick fraud. And there is no point raising this to a transcendental or moral level. My review of *Naked Lunch* is true" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 112).

Still, when in July 1963 Chester travelled to Tangier at the instigation of Paul Bowles, he became closer to Burroughs and the Beats than he would have considered likely. It is true that he did not like all of the "beatniks" (as he called them) who had settled in Tangier or whose work he came across in magazines. He could not stand Michael McClure ("an asshole"; Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 67) and Ira Cohen, but he looked forward to receiving a copy of John Wieners' *The Hotel Wentley Poems* and got along well with temporary Tangier residents Irving Rosenthal, Ted Joans and Philip Lamantia. And, at least in the beginning, with William Burroughs: "I met Burroughs whom I like well enough," he wrote in a letter to Dennis Selby (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 9). In fact, if one takes a closer look at Chester's review of *Naked Lunch*, it is not at all as negative as it is often assumed to be. It is true that throughout the review Chester seems to waver in his appreciation of the book. He clearly takes Burroughs seriously (much more so than he does Updike or Rechy), but he can also be fairly dismissive, for instance when he writes that "the first half of the book is pleasantly readable without too much skipping, and the second half of it is pleasantly skippable without too much yawning" (Chester, *Looking for Genet* 51). There are, however, interesting connections to be made between the review and Chester's own life and work; in fact, even the trouble Chester has in making up his mind about *Naked Lunch* seems to be in line with the protean aspects of his literary output as well as his personal life. Chester's tendency to change his mind in less than no time is also illustrated by his opinion of Hubert Selby's work. In April 1964 he wrote to Edward Field that in his view Selby's story "A Fairy Tale" is "horrendously bad" (*Voyage to Destruction* 92) and four months later, again in a letter to Field, Selby has become "one of the most extraordinary writers alive" (155). It is true, however, that this statement was part of a quotation requested by Grove Press and also, as Chester put it, "part of my campaign to become famous."

After briefly touching upon that personal life, claiming that he lives "almost exclusively among bohemians" (Chester, *Looking for Genet* 48), in his review of *Naked Lunch* Chester zooms in on the four novelists who during the last twenty years in his view have been most influential: Albert Camus, Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet. However, while their concerns and themes in Europe were largely discussed in metaphysical terms, Chester feels that in America these four writers, as well as their American contemporaries, tend to be viewed from a sociological standpoint. In other words: to what extent is their work concerned with, and critical of, contemporary society? In Chester's view, Burroughs is special because "his implications are metaphysical, almost unique in an American, and that he follows the Europeans in his abandonment of the quest for a moral position. He is the first American novelist to be not merely iconoclastic about his civilization, but to have turned his back upon it totally" (51). Of course Chester is aware of *Naked Lunch's* political parodies, but in his view these do not rise above the level of what he calls a "naive George Orwell" (51). Chester clearly questions and disregards the book's social relevance, a view which is obviously not in line with that of the judges who in 1966 would lift the ban on *Naked Lunch* by ruling that it had "redeeming social importance" (Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* ix). In the end, Chester feels that Burroughs owes much less to Orwell and to Swift than to Lewis Carroll and that his "debt to *Alice in Wonderland* is enormous": "Burroughs's rabbit hole is heroin, and like Alice he falls down into a world of dreams" (52). And while it is true that, unlike Alice's dreams, those of Burroughs are "brief and unsustained, rarely lasting a page, often enough lasting barely more than a sentence or two" (52), Chester clearly has a point in linking Burroughs and Carroll. In fact, he may well have been the first to see a connection, if not between Carroll and drugs in general, then between *Naked Lunch* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Ultimately, this connection contributes to his conclusion that "life is a series of horrible and disconnected illusions which, alas, cannot even be relegated to the mind of a drug addict," because "the illusions are the whole of reality" (53). If this statement can be said to apply to *Naked Lunch*, it is certainly true for *The Exquisite Corpse*, the novel Chester wrote during the time he spent in Morocco, and which was clearly influenced both by Morocco and by *Naked Lunch*.

The major problem that would plague Chester for a large part of his life, and which had a strong impact on his work, was the feeling that he lacked a stable identity. When at the age of seven a case of scarlet fever made it necessary for him to be treated with X-rays, he lost all his hair. From then on, he was forced to wear a wig and, in his own perception, to play a role that was detrimental to his sense of

self. Later in life he felt as if he was always playing a role. According to Edward Field, the letters he wrote during his stay in Paris in the 1950s "already reveal an ominous confusion over the different aspects of his nature, his sense of multiple selves, or an unfixed, situational 'I'" (Field, "The Mystery of Alfred Chester")—a personality that adapts itself to the situation at hand. The instability of Chester's personality must have struck Hans Andreus when it made him divide aspects of Chester's personality between two different characters in his novel *Denise*; it is also suggested by the title of a novel Chester began to write in the late 1950s, *I, Etc.* (a title which in Chester's view his friend Susan Sontag stole from him when she used it for her essay collection *I, Etc.*) and perhaps even in the diversity of the stories he wrote in Paris, which all seem to have a different character and "voice." Only after his arrival in Morocco and under the influence of the Moroccan way of life (which forced him to live in the moment) and the use of kif, did Chester gradually and to a certain extent seem to come to terms with himself. This happened in particular after his wig got burned in a kitchen accident, which led to a mental crisis that made Chester decide to stop wearing a wig—an illustration of the fact that he was finally able to accept himself, at least for the time being, for what he was: "I just must learn quietly to accept. I'm too diffuse myself, and there is really something profoundly wrong with me that refuses to let me have my own unified voice (cf. Siddhartha). I must accept this at last because I am nearly thirty-six now and it's not likely my voice will descend from heaven if I haven't yet found it. I'm just a lot of voices, none my own. I just don't exist. And the existential crisis is old fashioned, but there you are; I mean, there I am" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 140).

The Exquisite Corpse reflects Chester's acceptance of multiple selves. As he put it in a letter to Edward Field: "I'm giving up on trying any sort of form and will just throw everything in. First person, third person, outside characters, dreams. Maybe it will add up to a book" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 114). While this description is clearly in line with Burroughs's notion that *Naked Lunch* would "incorporate all [his] routines and scattered notes" (Burroughs, *Letters* 243), it is not difficult to find many other, more specific, connections between *The Exquisite Corpse* and Burroughs's novel. These connections make it more than likely that Chester, even though he was critical of the book, when writing *The Exquisite Corpse* was clearly influenced by his exposure to *Naked Lunch*. On the other hand it should be kept in mind that, apart from one striking similarity, there was also a major difference between Chester and Burroughs. What they have in common is that both started out by writing fairly coherent texts in which the role of homosexuality was largely hidden. That role becomes much more outspoken in the later work of both writers, which at the same time becomes more fragmentary and—especially in the case of Burroughs—more experimental. The difference between Chester and Burroughs is that Chester abhorred a technique like the cut-up and that, even while he himself was falling apart, he continued to write well-phrased, well-structured sentences. In a letter to Edward Field he writes that he may be "really very unfashionable because my main concern has always been language, the sentence" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 92). Shortly afterwards, in a letter to Norman Glass, he claimed that "new minds," including his own "mystical leanings" and the "sociological earnestness (such as in Burroughs and even in Irving [Rosenthal])" do not "interest" him: "What interests me is creating something beautiful best I can. Art, ugh. But that's the long and short of it: I hate art, but it's the only way. For me" (110).

Still, in spite of the difference which Chester sees between himself and Burroughs, most readers of *The Exquisite Corpse* who have also read *Naked Lunch* will find it hard not to think of Burroughs's novel, at least occasionally. In the first place the titles of the two books are obviously, although admittedly also somewhat superficially, similar. Bearing in mind that the original title was *The Naked Lunch*, both consist of, respectively, a definite article, an adjective and a noun; more importantly, the words "corpse" and "naked" can both be said to refer to the human body. In both cases, too, there is a strong connection between the content of the two books and their titles. In the case of *Naked Lunch*, that connection is especially related to the content of the book; in his introduction to the 1962 edition, Burroughs stresses how appropriate it is that the title, "suggested by Jack Kerouac," refers to "a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork" (Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* xxxvii). In Chester's case, *The Exquisite Corpse* seems to refer in particular to the form of the book. It was not the title which Chester first thought of when he began to write *The Exquisite Corpse* shortly after his arrival in Morocco, taking his inspiration from what he had experienced and written during the four years he had just spent in New York. After having written part of the book, which he described as "a book of all things," "filthy and dark and out of date and beautiful," he initially called it *The Maniac* (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 93). Four months later a letter to Edward Field shows that he had hit upon the title which the book would eventually have, after having actually practiced the surrealist parlor game to which the title refers: "How do you like *Exquisite Corpses* as a title to my book? Or maybe *The Exquisite Corpse*? It isn't sexy but there's something nice. It's from that game where everyone draws another part of the body. Remy [Charlip] is here and we did it last night with Dris and Norman, very kified and they are gorgeous. I want

to use one on my book jacket too. It's a robot's head with a childlike torso, a pile of sort of dead cocks at the groin (I drew that) and a kind of spiral whirlwind for feet. My other contributions were a torso with arms chopped off, two heads, Siamese twins, a skeleton for the pelvic area, a man-dog being fucked, and a pair of feet torn from the legs with a hill and a crucifix on it and the inscription 'Goodbye World.' It makes me think I must be very sick. Am I?" (154).

The title of Chester's novel can in fact serve as a further connection with *Naked Lunch* and Burroughs, whose work often has the collaborative quality which is the essential aspect of the surrealist game. This is especially true for the cut-up technique, which Burroughs began to employ after having been made aware of its possibilities by his friend, the artist Brion Gysin. Although, as Oliver Harris has pointed out, neither Burroughs nor Gysin ever actually referred to the surrealist game, there is "ample evidence to suggest that the cut-up method, like the *Exquisite Corpse* game, was the paradigmatic creative act of a collaborative group" (Harris 85). While it would go too far to call *Naked Lunch* a *cadavre exquis*, the way the book came into being at least hints at the surrealist practice: it may have been written by one person, Burroughs, but it was definitely also the result of a collaborative effort, in which Burroughs joined forces with, among others, Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Sinclair Beiles.

In the case of Chester's novel, the reference to the surrealist game is perhaps even more appropriate. While it is true that the putting together of the novel was not a collaborative effort (although it remains to be seen whether or not one or more editors contributed to the final shape of the book), the novel itself can be said to have been created by the various personalities which were all part of Chester, even though in the end these personalities in his own view amounted to "no one" (Chester, *Voyage to Destruction* 228). This is in line with a comment by Ira Cohen, quoted by Allen Hibbard in an essay which convincingly links *The Exquisite Corpse* to the *cadavre exquis*: "It [the novel] didn't involve the folding over of sheets of paper passed around a table of friends, but a deliberate folding of memories, feelings and fantasies coming out of Alfred's own rather bizarre life" (Hibbard 143).

With the surrealist practice and Chester's (and Cohen's) description of it in mind, it comes as no surprise that *The Exquisite Corpse* consists of short chapters in which a number of widely divergent characters are usually involved in one particular strange, surprising or shocking event. In this respect, the chapters can easily be compared to Burroughs's routines in *Naked Lunch*. As is the case in those routines, so too in *The Exquisite Corpse* characters appear, disappear and occasionally pop up again, sometimes under new names and having undergone major transformations along the way. Within a few pages, the first character to appear in the book, John Anthony, has become Baby Poorpoor, who in the eyes of one of the other characters is not a man at all, but a woman called Julie. Xavier, the character closest to Chester in the book ("Many years later, when Xavier was a middle-aged man, he went mad in a tropical country," Chester seems to predict on p. 20), should really be called Dickie, according to his dying father. The latter is so insistent that in the end Xavier feels that his real name is in fact Dickie. A transformation like this is of course in line with *Naked Lunch* where—to give just one example—in the short chapter "The Examination" a straight man called Carl Peterson becomes gay because his doctor, Doctor Benway, insists that he is. It is clear that the multiple personalities of both books formally register the instability of identity; in *The Exquisite Corpse* this comes out very well in the description of a character called James Madison: "Yesterday he was Mary Queen of Scots. The day before that he'd been Joan of Arc, and his brassiere and panties had melted into hard black crumbs that stuck painfully to his body. He'd had to pick them out of the hair like a monkey. Earlier in the week he'd been St. Catherine, and he was still troubled by a slight lumbago. He'd also been Edward II, stamped to death while suffering a redhot poker up his ass. He'd been a Crusader drawn and quartered by an Arab, a seventeenth-century Englishwoman hanged for stealing a loaf of bread, an ancient Hebrew stoned for knowing carnally a tiger. He wondered if anything nice had ever happened. Or was history just a list of tortures?" (Chester, *Exquisite Corpse* 72).

As the passage suggests, the transformations in *The Exquisite Corpse*, like those in *Naked Lunch*, also apply to bodily functions. In one of the first chapters, Xavier is sitting at the bedside of his dying father. Having been operated upon, the anus of Xavier's father has been sewn up and "a length of intestine has been hauled out to detour the excrement" (Chester, *Exquisite Corpse* 13). Curious to find out more about his father, Xavier partly exposes his father's body, with the result that the intestine comes alive in a way which clearly echoes *Naked Lunch's* "talking asshole": "The intestine shot suddenly out of the rubber bag. It spun like the nozzle of a garden hose, flailing and lashing, spraying watery turds every which way around the room" (13). In the end it is Xavier's mother who, talking "gently to the intestine," "wooing it," is able to get it under control (13). Reading a passage like this one, it is difficult not to think of Burroughs. That is even more the case when a character called Mary Poorpoor—no relation of Baby Poorpoor—ends up among a group of women who are telling each other about the abortions they have had. Mary decides to contribute to the conversation with a made-up abortion story

which is clearly reminiscent of Doctor Benway's operating practices: "'Anyhoo, he did the abortion on his dining-room table. You know, those big old-fashioned dining-room sets? Well, that kind of table.' The ladies smiled. She supposed they were thinking of her table. 'He laid a plastic tablecloth out under me. And that's about all I remember of the actual operation because I fainted dead away'" (170). The way in which Mary's doctor tries to convince one of her friends that she will be all right echoes Doctor Benway's way of speaking: "Don't worry, mein dear. Dere's nutting to worry about. Ve had a tiny tiny bit of unexpected trrroubles. It was a very big baby, you see. The biggest I ever delivered, so to speak ... So we had to take him out bit by bit. ... Der isn't anything to worry about. She'll be perfectly fine as soon as de rest comes out." "The rest? You mean you've left part of the baby inside?" "Nein nein, aber nein. Just the head. Und not even really all of that. Bud mein dear lady, vat can you expect? She was probably already in de sixt mont. But dere's nutting to worry about. Nature vill take care of everything, even in matters like this. Nature is no moralist. She never judges. She merely acts. Your little darling is save in nature's hands. In a day or two at the most, the little head vill pop out all by itself" (170-71).

However, it is not only Burroughs's outrageous and dark humor which seem to have influenced Chester. At times *The Exquisite Corpse* has a wistful, lyrical quality which is also to be found in *Naked Lunch* and which was very much admired by Ginsberg. At the Boston trial Ginsberg voiced his opinion that "there is a great deal of very pure language and pure poetry in this book that is as great as any poetry being written in America in my opinion, specifically one line which I would like to read. 'Motel ... Motel ... Motel ... broken neon arabesque ... loneliness moans across the continent like fog horns over still oily water of tidal rivers...'" (Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* xxxiii). The same pure language and pure poetry that Ginsberg refers to are also to be found in *The Exquisite Corpse*, for instance in a passage like the following, which has the same melancholy quality as the lines quoted by Ginsberg: "Old merry-go-round music left from old summers haunted the lanes, was louder at corners where it rose on the wind" (Chester, *Exquisite Corpse* 28).

Finally, if Chester was right in suggesting parallels between *Naked Lunch* and *Alice in Wonderland*, it may very well not be a coincidence that *The Exquisite Corpse* at times also seems to echo the fantasies of Lewis Carroll, although those of Chester tend to be more gruesome. Still, Mary Poorpoor clearly seems to follow Alice's footsteps when, in the company of a man called Tomtom Jim, she tries to reach a place called "fairyland":

Gathering her children, Mary walked fearfully into the depths of the cave. Soon the yellow light grew brighter and more luminous, almost like sunlight. Tomtom Jim was standing alongside a big hole in the ground, and when Mary approached and looked into it, she found a broad blue stone stairway that went straight down. It seemed like an interminable stairway and made her dizzy just to look at it. "I bet that's the road to fairyland," said Tomtom Jim. "Fairyland?" Mary repeated vaguely. "Shall we?" Tomtom Jim said gaily and offered his arm. "Oh, of course!" And they started down the stairs. Fairyland, fairyland, Mary thought. Was that what they were looking for? It took a certain effort to remember the reason for their travels. Her baby! Her little boy! Could it be, was he there waiting for her somewhere at the bottom of those steps? Down the blue stone stairs they went, naked, growing hungry and tired as hours turned into days and days into weeks. (Chester, *Exquisite Corpse* 110)

While the similarities between *The Exquisite Corpse* and *Naked Lunch* can be related to particular descriptions, it is certainly also the structure (or lack of structure) of the two books which aligns them. In recent years the postmodern, mosaic-like and sometimes rather chaotic structure of *Naked Lunch* has increasingly been related to the political changes that were taking place in Tangier and in Morocco when Burroughs was writing *Naked Lunch*. As has been pointed out sufficiently by others, this was a time when Morocco changed from a French protectorate to an independent state, a transition which was accompanied and perhaps partly brought about by bombings, assassination attempts and attacks on Europeans. The country, and the city of Tangier, were definitely in a state of flux, and scholars like Oliver Harris, Kurt Hemmer, Brian T. Edwards and Allen Hibbard have convincingly suggested that that state of flux is echoed by the fact that *Naked Lunch* is a novel in a state of flux.

The Exquisite Corpse can also be called a novel in a state of flux, especially as far as its structure and the continually changing identities and appearance of the main characters are concerned. However, in the case of Chester's novel it is less easy to establish connections between that state of flux and political or societal changes that were taking place in Morocco. Most of those changes had in fact been accomplished by the time Chester settled in Morocco, which by 1963 had become a much more stable country. Still, as in the case of *Naked Lunch*, it is possible to relate the book to the location where it came into being, which was mainly Tangier. As Allen Hibbard has suggested in "Tangier and the Making of *Naked Lunch*," it is not only possible to link *Naked Lunch* to the political changes that were taking

place when the book was written; the city itself seems to have left its mark on the book. "Tangier seems to exist on several dimensions," Burroughs wrote in his essay on the city, 'International Zone': "You are always finding streets, squares, parks you never saw before. Here fact merges into dream, and dreams erupt into the real world" (Burroughs, *Interzone* 58). While this quotation is already suggestive of *Naked Lunch*, and *The Exquisite Corpse*, the link between city and book becomes even more explicit when Burroughs describes Tangier's native quarter as "a maze of narrow, sunless streets, twisting and meandering like footpaths, many of them blind alleys. After four months, I still find my way in the Medina by a system of moving from one landmark to another" (56). The way Burroughs had to navigate the Medina, locating and following landmarks, applies to anyone navigating *Naked Lunch*. And what goes for Burroughs and *Naked Lunch*, in this case also goes for Chester and *The Exquisite Corpse*. In that book, too, we stumble from landmark to landmark, trying to keep track of meandering plotlines and sometimes ending up in a narrative cul-de-sac. Without Tangier, and certainly without *Naked Lunch*, *The Exquisite Corpse* would not have turned out the way it did.

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Author's profile: Jaap van der Bent taught US-American literature at Radboud University until his retirement in 2013. van der Bent's recent publications include articles in the collected volumes *The Transnational Beat Generation* (2012) and *Out of the Shadows: Beat Women are Not Beaten Women* (2015).

Jaap van der Bent (1948) taught American literature at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. His interests in scholarship include the Dutch poet Louis Lehmann and the Beat Generation, especially its impact on European literatures. Van der Bent's publications include "Beating Them to It?: the Vienna Group and the Beat Generation", in *The Transnational Beat Generation* (2012), and "The Women Upstairs: Rewriting John Clellon Holmes's *Go*", in *Out of the Shadows: Beat Women are not Beaten Women* (2015). E-mail: <J.v.d.Bent@let.ru.nl>