

Brion Gysin interviewed by Terry Wilson



Here to Go:
Planet R-101

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Brion Gysin at Hassan i Sabbah's fortress Alamout on the edge of the Caspian Sea, 1973 (photo: Lawrence Lacina).

HERE TO GO: PLANET R-101

BRION GYSIN

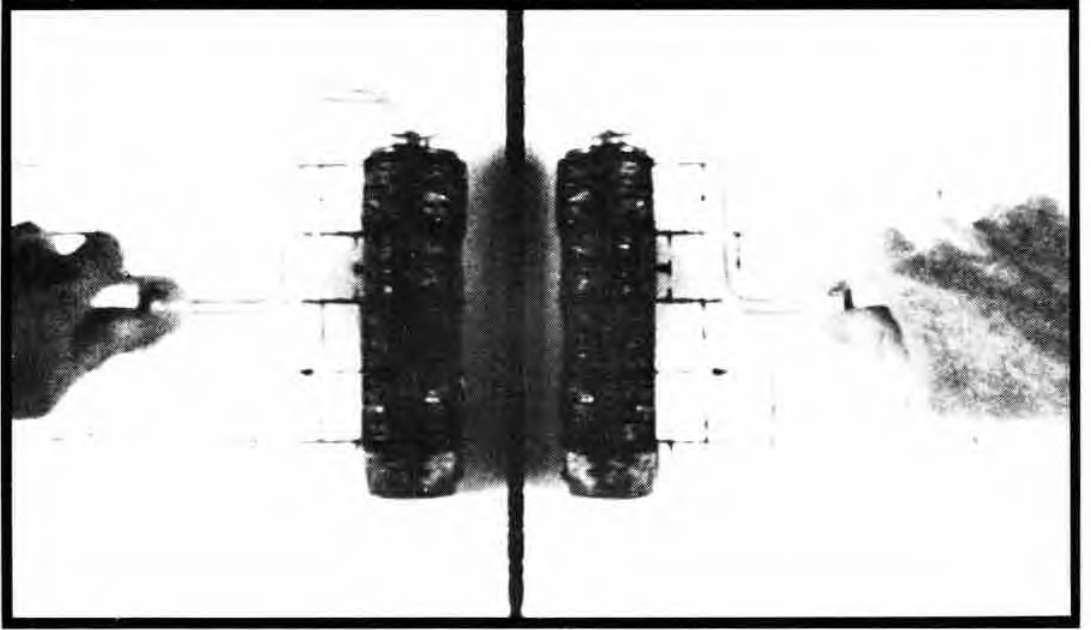
Interviewed by
TERRY WILSON



*With Introduction and Texts by
William S. Burroughs & Brion Gysin*



Quartet Books
London Melbourne New York



First published in Great Britain by
Quartet Books Limited 1985
A member of the Namara Group
27/29 Goodge Street, London W1P 1fd

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Gysin, Brion

Here to go: planet R-101.

I. Gysin, Brion—Interviews

I. Title II. Wilson, Terry

813'.54 PS3557.Y8ZJ

ISBN 0-7043-2544-6

Special thanks to W.S. Burroughs, James Grauerholz and Geoff Travis

A portion of this book originally appeared in Soft Need 17—Brion Gysin Special, Expanded Media Editions, Basel-Paris 1977, ed. Udo Breger, and also, apparently, in a mouthful called The Journal of Art Production and Manufacture in the United States.

Originally designed and published in the United States of America by Re/Search Publications, 20 Romola B, San Francisco CA94133.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Nene Litho and Woolnough Bookbinding, both of Irthlingborough, Northants.

Overleaf: "Roller drawing into my plate glass mirror in the old-fashioned French *armoire à glaces*. Room 25, the Beat Hotel, 9 rue Git-le-Coeur, Paris. This is the first opening frame of the *Guerilla Conditions* drawing I developed under the eye of the camera Antony Balch balanced from the top of the wardrobe, 1963."—BG

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Over: Calligraphic dedication of *The Third Mind* to Terry Wilson, 1979

Handwritten text in a cursive script, possibly a mix of English and another language, arranged in three columns. The text is highly stylized and difficult to decipher.

foreword

I talk a new language. You will understand. I talk about the springs and traps of inspiration.

IN SPIRATION—what you breathe in. You breathe in words. Words breathe you IN. I demonstrate Thee, the Out-Word in action both visual and aural, racing away in one direction to sounds more concrete than music and, in the other, to paintings like television screens in your own head. I am better than Transducer for I show you your own Interior Space.

In the beginning was the Word—been in You for a too long time. I rub out the word. You in the Word and the Word in You is a word-lock like the combination of a vault or a valise. If you love your vaults, listen no further. I spin the lock on your Interior Space Kit . . .

I sum on the Little Folk: music from the Moroccan hills proves the great god Pan *not* dead. I cast spells: all spells are sentences spelling out the word-lock that is you. Stop. Change. Start again. Lighten your own life sentence . . .

In the beginning, Word. You in the word and the word in You-Time . . .

Brion Gysin



William Burroughs, Brion Gysin; Basel 1979. (Photo: Ulrich Hillebrand)

preface by william burroughs

Brion Gysin's dazzling anecdotes and inspired digressions form the matrix for a very precise cosmology. Brion does not identify himself with any codified, preconceived religion, philosophy, or system of thought. His thinking does not derive from Islam, Buddhism, Chinese or Zen formulations, and is categorically divorced from any Western religion. Churches, he says, should be taxed out of existence. He speaks of Hassan i Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountain, as one of his sources, but Hassan i Sabbah left no written teachings or doctrines. The library that was supposed to have been stored at Alamout has never come to light. Brion, who has visited the fortress of Alamout, observed that there would not have been room to store such a library—reputedly consisting of 200,000 books. He surmises that the books, like the Garden the Old Man showed to his followers, were not of this world.

Since so little is known about Hassan i Sabbah and the training his followers received at Alamout, any thought system that derives from the Old Man must be made up of suppositions. When we consider the inferential sources of Hassan i Sabbah's thinking, we see that he has much in common with the Manichaeon or Zoroastrian concept of Good and Evil, in a conflict the outcome of which is uncertain. The Old Man taught that assassination was an act of spiritual liberation, removing obstacles between the initiate and the Garden.

Brion's thinking leaves no room for compromise. He is a confirmed misogynist. The whole concept of Woman is a biological mistake, he says, and a hindrance to Man in realizing his destiny to achieve immortality in space: Space in the Garden of Hassan i Sabbah.

Brion is equally emphatic in his attitude towards communication, which most people seem to assume is somehow intrinsically good. He considers communication the original sin which imprisoned man in a defensive ego and keeps him bound to his worst enemy, namely Woman. God put Adam in a faint and made Eve from his rib. The first word was her Hello. Adam has been in a faint ever since, saying over and over from here to eternity "Hello . . . Yes . . . Hello . . ." Woman and Word are one. Eve was and is communication.

Brion says that we are here to go. The future, if there is a future, is in space. The only thing that could unite the planet is to turn the planet into a space station.

There are many references in this interview to conversations between Brion and myself, and to my written words that date back some years, and in some cases set forth opinions I no longer hold. I have long since ceased to believe in the concept of spaceships traveling in man-time. These can only be aqualung excursions, useful as such but leaving the human ex-

periment right where it is. No matter how effective the means of transport, what is being transported remains the same. Whether we think in terms of spacecraft traveling at a finite speed, or passing immediately across vast distances through artificial black holes, the human product remains unchanged.

The Western approach to space travel is technical. There's a way to do it that works for everybody just as anybody can get on a plane. So space travel is to be conducted by technicians and experts? I was influenced by this thinking when I said that the Little People did not belong at the controls of a spacecraft. Brion says that the Little People exist in a different time, and only certain people can see them. Perhaps space travel is as simple as stepping into another time by rubbing out the word. Space travel may be a spiritual rather than a technical achievement. If you want to move a human creature, alter his basic perceptions.

Some years ago in London I contacted two computer programmers who said they represented an interplanetary agency known as Control. Control was willing to answer any question for one dollar. You gave your question to the programmers, who fed it into a computer some way and out came the answer.

Like, *Question: Would rubbing out the Word result in immediate exteriorization from the body? Answer: Yes. Question: How can this be accomplished? Answer: At first automatic exercise.*

The cut-ups, permutations and tape recorder experiments carried out by Brion Gysin are aimed in this direction, towards making the words talk on their own. The Word must have been outside in the beginning. Let's put it outside again: the beginning and end of Word.

William S. Burroughs

points of order

Hey there! Point of order, please! Wait a minute!

Gardens and books “not of this world”—of what world then? The seemingly enchanted garden I saw from the top of Alamout in August 1973 was of this world assuredly. But was it the Garden in question? The vision of Paradise Marco Polo repeated such tall tales about?

What I saw through the 400mm lenses of my Suprema binoculars really did look like Paradise garden itself hanging up there high overhead about halfway up against the flaming red wall of the mighty Kush topped by the blaze of eternal snow. Breathtaking. In the midsummer dazzle it glistened like a flying saucer of jade glittering with dew, green as the heart of an emerald. Thousand-foot waterfalls whipped into spray by the hot updraft whisked tattered banners of rainbow around it. My hands trembled so much I lost the image.

Mountainsick at over 10,000 feet and deathly afraid I might fall or be pushed or just jump into the chasm at my feet yawning between me and the Garden, I steadied my superb Japanese binoculars on the ruins of Alamout to take a long, long look at this island in the sky. It seemed to be tilted towards me and built on two or more precipitous levels. Was it terraced, cultivated, a natural oasis? Were those ruins I saw up there? The lower shore was screened by a hedge of slim poplars and cypresses, hiding what?

At that point a couple of local kids clattered up behind me to beg a look through my glasses in exchange for shards of ancient glazed pottery they glean below Alamout. Like goats they climb anywhere right up the rockface but they had never been up to the Garden. Their grandfather or his father or someone had been up there but since his time a rockslide had made access impossible. Later, I learned that rich Iranians from Tehran used to fly through these mountains on weekends, shooting ibex from their helicopters. I wonder—have any of them been smart enough to fly in an inexhaustible supply of their golden caviar and hide out up there?

As for the library, I understand that the late Henry Corbin was, in recent years, given access to books in Bombay belonging to the present Aga Khan, whose position as head of the Ismaili sect of Islam derives from his presumed descent from Mohammed's daughter Fatima through the last Old Man of the Mountain, the one who lost Alamout to the Mongol Hulagu, son of Genghis Khan, in 1256. Juwayni, Persian historian of the Mongol conquests, was present at the siege lasting from midsummer until frosts came to freeze stiff the solid bridge of dead bodies filling the chasm which so appalled me. Hulagu rode through the gates of Alamout over the thousands upon thousands of cold corpses of his devoted Mongol archers who served him even in death. Juwayni ac-

accompanied him and presumably made straight for the library. He does not identify or tell what became of the books he counted so liberally. Are some of them among the books which have turned up in Bombay?

Professor Henry Corbin and many others know infinitely more than I do about the Ismailis. I know next to nothing: read Marco Polo in my childhood, became a hashishin in Greece at 19, read my Baudelaire, got syphilis like he did long before penicillin, smoked a lot in the Algerian Sahara and Morocco where I spent what is still more than a third of my lifetime. I did not become an Assassin.

Burroughs in the Beat Hotel days was fascinated by the marvelously intuitive studies on the Assassins, signed surprisingly by a society portrait painter I met at a dinner party (Betty Bouthoul, *The Master of the Assassins*). The wife of the most distinguished, indeed the only French polemologist whose philosophical studies of the art of war rank alongside Clausewitz. Her view of the Assassins is unique in that it deals, however elusively, with the basic problem: Hassan i Sabbah invented a new kind of warfare. How did he do it? By adepts. How did he train them? Did they smoke cannabis or eat it and was there a garden? She further elucidates the thorny problem of legitimate descent by which the last Old Man of the Mountain fathered the Ismaili imam's line of succession which brings the Aga Khan into the 20th century to be weighed in diamonds by his present-day adepts.

Subjects ripe for ratiocination: *Communication Control Drugs Homosexuality*. Incalculable wealth and incalculable consequences. I am not Hassan i Sabbah nor was meant to be. And you . . . William?

Oh, and one more point of order: Don't go calling *me* a misogynist . . . a mere misogynist. I am a monumental misanthropist. Man is a bad animal, maybe the only bad animal.

Nobody else but the ant takes slaves and makes war. No one but man threatens the survival of the planet. Space Man may well blow up the planet Earth behind him. When ya gotta go . . . Now we know what we are here for. We are not here to love fear and serve any old bearded but invisible thunder god. We are here to go.

I got no “precise cosmology” up my ex-ass. Me, I AM a compromise, a compromise between the sexes in a dualistic universe. I’m just passing through, waiting out my vital visa, my Easy Exit permit, I hope. Oh, I know it’s better to have a body than not to have a body, but the minute I got here I screamed out ungratefully: *“Wrong address! Wrong address! There’s been a mistake in the mail. Send me back. Wherever you got me, return me. Wrong time, wrong place, wrong color!”*

Brion Gysin



Brion Gysin, Terry Wilson, London 1981. (Photo: Ulrich Hillebrand)

introduction

Drawn abruptly into this tale of ours . . .

June 16, 1976.

Arrive Paris Nord and taxi to my dinky little Hotel Bretonnerie off the rue des Archives where I stayed a couple of nights January. About 10:30 p.m. Room 33 and off to see Brion, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville about ten minutes away.

Ring the bell, wait . . . Brion in nightshirt, "Oh!" lets me in . . . he flops out on the Arab bed and we talk about each other awhile, arrange to meet here again midmorning. He is looking and sounding much better than in January. He was born outside London, Taplow, Buckinghamshire, in 1916. Swiss and Irish parents? His father died when he was young . . .

“A sorcerer’s apprentice, follower of Aleister Crowley, once asked me if I knew my *real* name. I was dumbfounded, I don’t. Burroughs has told me he knows his—not me. I have often been in doubt about it and written a number of poems in which I attempt to disassociate my ‘I’ from my ‘Me.’ Without pushing this to the point of schizophrenia, I have always felt rather doubtful about my ‘Me.’

“To begin with, I have an unusual surname of Swiss origin, fairly rare even in Switzerland, I am told. This family came down from the hills in the Middle Ages and settled in Liestal, a small town just far enough and independent enough from Basel to wage a petty provincial war with the big city and lose. The Gysin of the day lost his head and the family moved into Basel around 1500. My given name is Brion. My Celtic mother was thinking of one of those insufferable phony kings of Ireland and spelled it with an ‘a’: Brian. Official documents took care of that and spelled it Brion, like the famous wine of Bordeaux, Haut Brion. I accepted this gladly and dropped all my other given names when I became an American citizen . . .

“I was sent to Downside, a school for hybrids in the west of England, run by Benedictine monks, a triumph of my Catholic mother whose zealous decision sat so ill with my Zwinglian Protestant family that I ended up with no inheritance at all. My mother’s family barely survived on pseudo-aristocratic pretensions while my father’s family liked to think of themselves as solidly Republican middle-class folk. I have never accepted the color or texture of my oatmealy freckled skin: ‘bad packaging’ I thought. Certain traumatic experiences have made me conclude that at the moment of birth I was delivered to the wrong address.

“I have done what I could to make up for this . . .”

I met Brion Gysin about 1972, in Duke Street, off Piccadilly. And a bit later, through him, William Burroughs. I was living in Southampton at the time, quarantined in my padded Control Room by day and working away at night on my *Dreams of Green Base*, which I'd been living with since 1965. It had just suddenly occurred to me to order *The Process* and *The Job* sight unseen from a local bookstore, somehow knowing that there would be revelation after revelation. And there was. Having trouble controlling my book of dreams, I had for some time been cutting up separate paragraphs and reordering the sequences at random . . . I felt I was working toward the same ends. So I phoned Brion in London and he said to come up and see him sometime, if I wanted.

Sometime later, I knocked on the door, it opened and I was pushed back by some sort of physical impact. Brion gave the impression that he had been moving at about 100 mph. He had asked me to bring along something I was writing and there I was standing with part of *Green Base* saying: "Er . . . I phoned and . . . I brought this—" He cut me short, took the manuscript out of my hand and shut the door in my face. I stood there, somewhat taken aback, but rather impressed.

I didn't see much of Brion in those days. William had written me a few weeks after I left the manuscript saying he found it "honest and accurate" and that publication would present considerable difficulties—why didn't I visit him? The last time I saw Brion during those Duke Street days I was visiting Burroughs and feeling pretty bad . . .

Walking up from St James' Square, and there is William, hat down over his eyes, newspaper under arm, camera in hand, furtive, inconspicuous, outside Dalmeny Court, no. 8 Duke Street, St James'. "Hello!" I say, smiling. He stares back. "How are you?" I reply that I'm exhausted, physically

and mentally, which is not all that unusual. "Stand back with the 8 over your shoulder" he says, stands back, takes the picture and walks forward. I give him a broad grin. He stares back. Inside, room 18, feeling fine, I tell him about a Dr Jekyll film starring Stan Laurel where he drops the stuff falls flat on his back flies straight onto his feet again and runs out onto the street knocking off policemen's helmets and taking little boys' ice creams. William sits clutching the sides of his chair almost laughing. "Oh, I'd like to see *that!*" he says.

Antony Balch comes in looking young, haggard, long black hair. He stares directly at me. "Do you live here?" he asks strangely. "No . . ." (Years later, in 1979, I *did* live there for awhile, in No. 12 with Roberto Klein, troubled times.) He starts talking about how fine Brion looks now. He is bent over, clutching his stomach. Brion has told him he should tie a string or rope tightly around his waist to protect himself. "What is the thinking behind that?" Antony asks William. "Bad spirits," William mutters. He says Jane Bowles was one woman who never tried to poison him.* I say I used to work in a cemetery and William drops his coffee cup. Antony leaves.

"Now, I mustn't miss, mustn't miss Brion," William says. I get up to go. "No, you come up, upstairs."

And Brion, resplendent, imposing, *radiating* a sort of intense dynamic gravity. "The subconscious doesn't know how to take a joke." We speak for the first time in quite awhile. I say reprovingly that *The Process* "seems very lighthearted." "It was intended to be," he replies. He seems uncommunicative or unwell. He makes me very nervous. William seems nervous. We smoke a joint, he and William embrace and he goes down in the lift.

*This visit occurred in late summer 1973. Jane Bowles died in May of that year. Brion was leaving for Alamout.

I didn't know he was ill until I called William from Southampton after visiting him in New York, June 1975. I asked about Brion, where could I contact him. William said he wasn't well, it was bad. *Why not visit him* and gave me the address in Paris. When I got there I saw how ill he was. Rectal cancer badly burnt by cobalt, later a colostomy in London. We spent an evening together. When I left I said I'd see him again shortly. He looked as if he thought it was unlikely.

Move to Brion's new apartment, rue St-Martin, opposite the new Beaubourg complex. He is fascinated by this . . . sight. "Isn't that something?" It's his subject and object. "I've just gotta get my shit in there and then I can split . . . that's what I'm here to do . . . that might be a good opening for you . . ."

"More like the end," I say morosely.

We spoke together over a period of four days, the tape recorder switched on and off over two of these days. Generally the conversation commenced, and continued off tape. Jerry Briskin joined us for dinner on the final day by which, mercifully, the squeaking Realistic cassette machine had been finally discarded.

Subjects that didn't make it onto these tapes included the missing Antony Balch and Sinclair Beiles ("That's something Sinclair does very well, disappear!"), Denham Fouts, the Duchess of Wind, Brion's "pseudo sister" siren-voiced Felicity, hamburgers, Kenneth Anger, Manson, Scientology ("Grammatology" in *The Process*), Gram Parsons, Pasolini's *Salo*, dope busts, the White Race, and mescaline. We did not get to discuss Brion's tape experiments or his Dreamachine, which flashes stroboscopic light impulses at the brain's alpha rhythm, enabling one to dream whilst keeping wide awake. A long and fascinating discourse around and about Jean Genet stayed off tape.

When the tape was turned off during these talks—as it was many times—we discussed whatever subject it was with a view to putting it back on. If he did not want it on, I didn't push. Sometimes I brought the conversation around to the subject on tape and he went along with it; sometimes—as with Genet—he would not elaborate or, in this case, repeat what he'd said off tape.

(One other reason for the switching-off of the tape was the, to me, somewhat unnerving effects it seemed to produce—at one period a chant, voices out of nowhere breathing *AAAYYAAAA . . . Aa . . . Aa . . . Aa . . .* gradually superseded by the awful squeaking of the reels which stayed through to the end.)

Brion's remark about "dumb answers" in the course of the interview is part of a running joke on and off tape about my disinclination to ask trivial, i.e. *answerable* questions (" . . . and no one on earth can tell you but *you*, you know." — *The Process*). I had said that perhaps the quotes from written works I would splice in with the conversation might seem more positive than his extemporizations, to try to goad him into being more forthcoming and to therefore "Give me the Keys," a demand associated with Ira Cohen.

Four years later, on June 24, 1980, having sampled some incredible Chinese food in the meantime, Brion and I got together again to amplify some topics already discussed and deal with others we hadn't yet got around to, producing a tape taking in magic, painting, the Dreamachine, tape recorders, Control and the Third Mind, and culminating in his long tirade, "The Bad Animal."

Here To Go is an extraordinary and definitive statement by, and portrait of, one of the most influential and visionary of living painters and writers, and one of the few whose work can justifiably be described as "Modern."

Brion has said that he writes “to be loved.” He succeeded as far as I’m concerned.

First on tape concerns his connection with the spirit medium Eileen Garrett, described by Lawrence LeShan as “probably the most talented and most widely and carefully studied acquirer of paranormal information of our time,” and by Brion Gysin as “the witchiest woman in the world.”

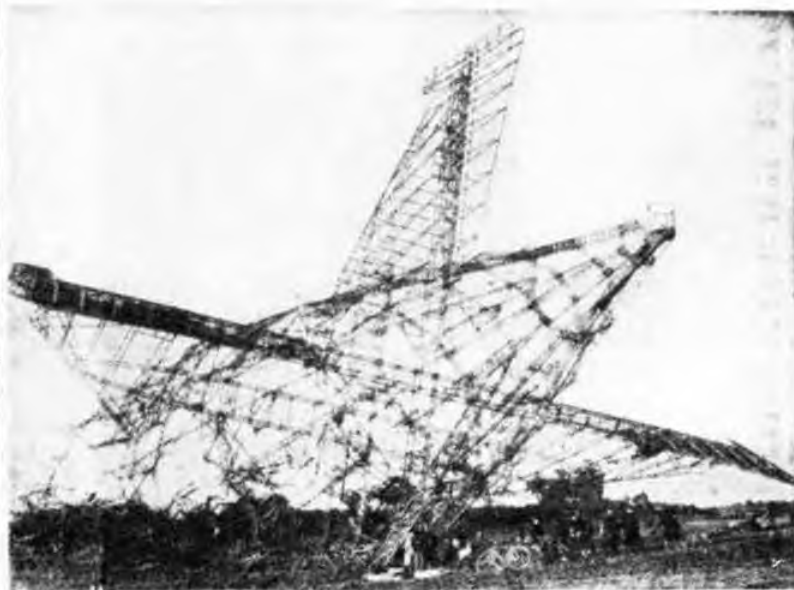
Terry Wilson



Terry Wilson with calligraphic dedication of *The Third Mind*, London 1982. (Photo: Roberto Klein)

**GOODNIGHT
EILEEN**

DEAD PILOT **WARNED OF** **R101 DOOM**



THE WRECK: Burned-out remains of the R101 in which 48 died

By ALAN BESTIC

A VOICE from the dead gave a grim warning of tragedy as the mighty R101 airship prepared for its maiden voyage. But pleas to call off the trip were ignored—and the triumphant flight turned into disaster.

Forty-eight of the 54 people on board died as the 777ft long airship plunged blazing into a wood near the French village of Beauvais.



MEDIUM: Mrs. Garrett



goodnight eileen

B Am I gonna have to shout?

T Yeh—

B I'm surprised that you've even heard of Eileen Garrett . . .

T Well, I know that she was a directvoice medium . . . she was supposed to be on the payroll, wasn't she, of the . . . CIA?

B God knows—they all are . . .

T Do they have a lot of these types of people?

B They believed in it very much indeed, they went to a great deal of, uh, trouble . . . about which one hears only rumors, but both the Russians and the Americans have been interested in telepathy, mind control, for purposes of control, yes.

T Yes. And she's no longer alive?

B No, she died a few years ago (1970) in the South of France.

T Nice?

B Yeah, believe . . .

T Yeah . . . I remember William saying something there, that there was nothing in the papers, it was completely—

B Yes, one found that rather curious, because she had at one time been very much of a publicity star and had been

. . . obviously some strange

talked about and written about in the 1920s, 1930s . . . was a publisher in New York in the 1940s . . . was obviously very much in contact with the sort of people who later became the CIA, I suppose . . .

T And I phoned, I believe, the Spiritualist Association in London to try and find out something about her . . . and, uh, blank, they didn't want to know . . . to speak about her at all . . . they said that they thought she'd passed over.

B That's all? . . . Well, there's obviously some strange conspiracy of silence about Eileen, I don't know . . .

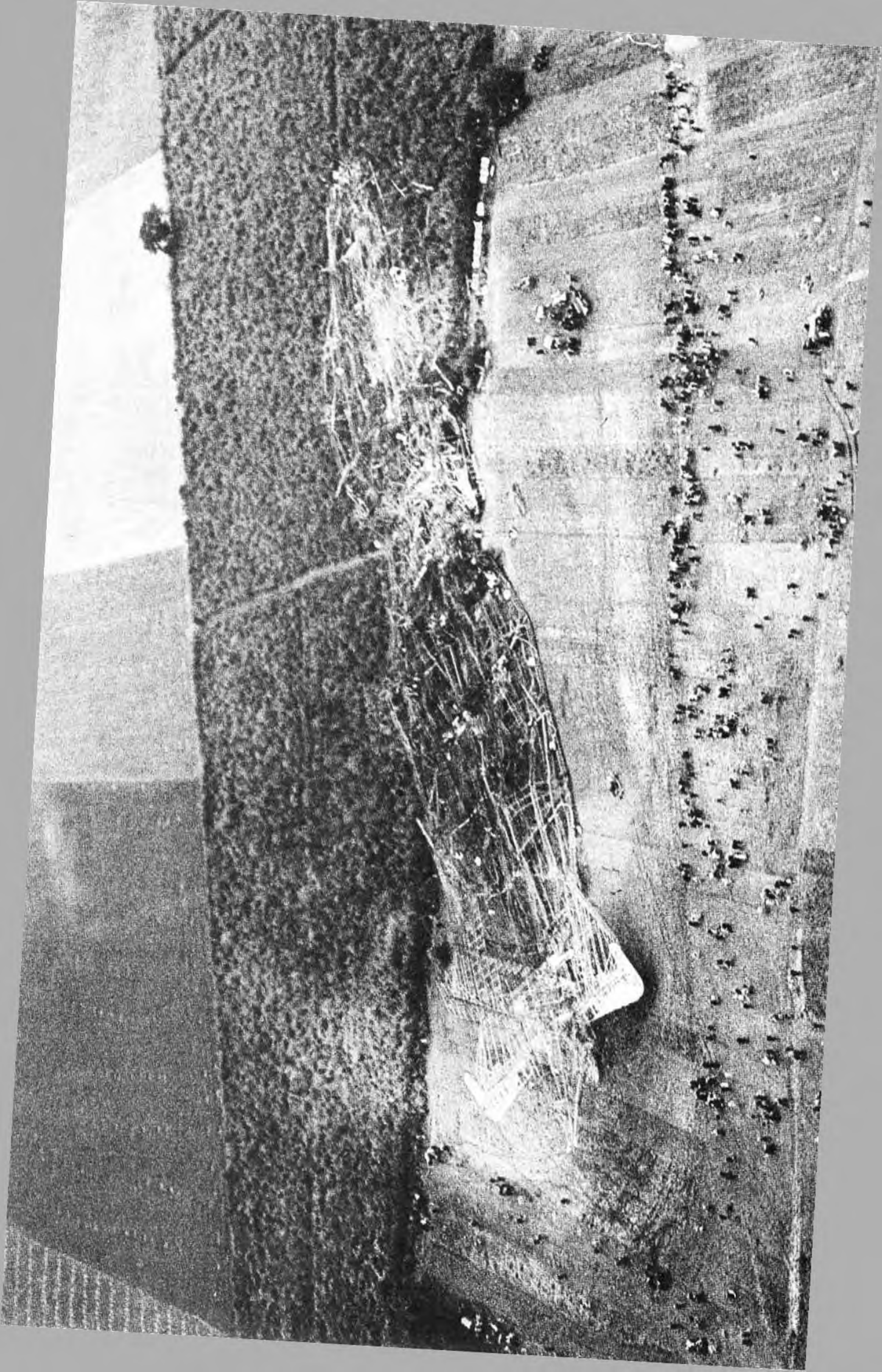
I met her in insane circumstances . . . I was in the Canadian Army attached to some Scots regiment at that time; I arrived in New York for a furlough of two weeks, wearing my uniform, and collapsed at a friend's house . . .



John LaTouche . . . taking a chance on love; Faraway Farm, Connecticut 1945. (Photo courtesy Brion Gysin)

conspiracy of silence about Eileen

John LaTouche . . . a songwriter who wrote, oh, “Ballad For America” which Paul Robeson sang in the late 1930s, and then Touche worked on Broadway, he wrote the songs for *Cabin in the Sky*, “Taking A Chance On Love,” and lots of other things too, and was a marvelously funny, generous friend with whom I was very intimate indeed . . . and I just crashed at his pad which was in Washington Square on the top storey of a building in which Eleanor Roosevelt lived downstairs . . . and, uh, Roosevelt was President at that time . . . rather unusual to have a President’s wife with a flat of her own in the Greenwich Village area . . . and, uh, Touche said “Oh well, that is nothing . . . I’m gonna have *all* the weird ladies here this evening, and I hope that Eleanor will come too.” And I said, “Oh *no*, man, I just wanna relax and you’re gonna give a great big party, I’ll go away someplace.” He said, “No no no you must stay, I’ve invited all of the weird ladies who’re into the fourth dimension, and there’s going to be, uh . . . Evangeline Adams (who was the most famous astrologer at that time), there’s going to be Doctor Mamlock (who was a lady who read palms, a German refugee about which a movie was made, called *Doctor Mamlock*, about her husband’s death under the Nazis and whatnot, she was a sort of celebrity around New York) . . . and, uh, there was going to be . . . oh can’t remember his name now, Bob Somebody who’d been a wrestler in England in the 1930s when I went to school, had married Princess Baba of Sarawak who was the daughter of the Brooke family who owned the island of Sarawak and called themselves White Rajahs, and their children were called Princess Baba and Princess Pearl . . . Maybe it was Pearl who married this . . . wrestler . . . and I had heard nothing more of him until Touche said Oh! that he was going to be there too, and



The dirigible is on fire . . .

I said, "What's he doing in this (laughing) galaxy of stars . . . ?"

And Touche said, "Oh, he's doing hypnoanalysis for the American Air Force . . . and, uh, he's great friends with all these people . . . And, there's going to be *Eileen Garrett*, who's going to be the Star of the Evening. And I said, "Who's Eileen Garrett?" and he said, "*What? You never heard of her? She was the woman who was arrested in England in 1920, whatever it was, under the Official Secrets Act because at a seance at Lady Londonderry's—Lady Londonderry had a great salon of that period—she had gone into trance and contacted the captain of the British dirigible R-101, and he said, "The dirigible is on fire, we are going down," so forth—"And it's all the fault of these contractors at the Air Ministry who put in faulty material and swiped all the money" and so on—ah, there was a scandal . . .*

And indeed the R-101 did crash; the next day the news came that it had crashed: in Flanders, someplace between Belgium and France, something like that, and Eileen Garrett had given the name of the place that it was falling down to, and it turned out that the name of the place denoted a crossroads where there were only three houses on four sides of the crossroads; it had a name but it had a name only on the most secret military maps, it was not a name known to any except the peasants who lived there, or to the military authorities, and it was a hill a very short distance from this crossroads where the R-101 crashed and burned and everybody on board burned up with it—it was a hydrogen-filled balloon.*

And so Eileen was arrested because—how could she

* Actually there were six survivors. For the full story of the R-101 seances see John G. Fuller, *The Airmen Who Would Not Die*, 1979.

Facing page: R-101

daily 24-hour-a-day game . . . being

have known this; they didn't believe in her fourth dimensional capacities, they believed there was another dimension . . . *A-n-d* . . . books had been written about *this*, and she had cleared her *name*, and she'd gone to Vienna where her extrapersonalities had been studied . . . not by Freud but by Adler, who was the nuttiest of all that group; in fact, he was a big coke head . . . and, uh, then books had been written about her and that she had these spirit guides, one of whom was a, I dunno, 16th century Persian at the court of Shah Jehan or something or other like that, on and on, all this kinda stuff, and uh, just while he was telling me all this the phone rang and, uh . . . I wish I could remember this, maybe I'll remember the cat's name . . . the one who was now, this Englishman who was now in American uniform doing hypnoanalysis for some secret US Air Force plan or plot, I don't know, had phoned up to say that he couldn't make it, and, uh, Touche said, "Oh, that's *terrible*, because you had promised to come and cook the meal!" And he said, "Well, I just can't come." Touche then turned to his secretary, whom he was always bullying terribly, and said, "Philip, you must stay and make the food!" And "OOOhhh *nnnoooo* donwanna" . . . "No no, you must stay, that's all there is to it—all these people are coming," like that, there's going to be Bessy Laski, who's Jesse Laski's wife . . . y'know, Famous Players, founders of movies, going to be there; she's bringing a young man who's unfortunately losing his hair but he plays the Chinese lute so well and he's a Mongolian gypsy and we hope that maybe his hair will grow again and maybe he can go back on the stage or something, and this was the first appearance of Yul Brynner in our lives . . . who never did get his hair back and got along very well without it (laughter) . . .

one up on your psychic opponent

And, uh, so all have started to arrive, Bessy Laski, and Yul, and Evangeline Adams, and uh . . . Old Mama Mamlock and, uh, whole bunch of them like that—and no Eileen Garrett . . . So Touche said, “Oh, that’s just typical of her, she always tries to make an entrance; you’ll see, she’ll arrive, but she’ll arrive *last*” . . . she wasn’t gonna get there before any of the rest of these at all . . . daily twenty-four-hour-a-day *game*, naturally, being one up on your psychic opponent . . .

So, uh, she did arrive, and she looked around and she said: “*WHERE IS BOB?* I’ve had a *terrible* fight with him, we’ve had this most *intense* psychic battle that’s been going on,” like that. “I have decided to do something absolutely *terrible* to him!”

At that moment there was a *BAAAAAAAHHH* a great noise in the kitchen like that, and the secretary came out staggering with blood streaming from his hands and his face — he’d opened the oven and a glass pyrex dish had exploded and shot him full of glass splinters . . . Eileen said, “Oh *dear!*” she said, “I meant that for Bob! . . . Poor Philippe has been the victim and I shall *never* forgive myself!” And she swept away again; she wasn’t gonna sit there for some dumb dinner like that. She’d done her whole trick and made her effect and—she was like that, she was on the psychic jump all the time, on the psychic make . . . Uh, she immediately took one sweeping glance at my bare knees and my kilt, and asked the usual questions, which I showed her, that indeed one didn’t . . . umm wear anything underneath them . . . and the next evening she phoned up: (falsetto) “Who’s that charming young man in skirts? . . . Couldn’t you both come around to dinner?” . . . So that’s how I first got to know Eileen.

T Why were you wearing a kilt?

Why don't you write

B I told you, I began by saying I was attached to this Scottish regiment in the Canadian Army, and we were allowed to wear kilts. Naturally, if you're *allowed* to wear a kilt, you wear one, especially if you go hitchhiking . . . useful . . .

Whenever I hitchhiked anyplace or went on leave or anything like that, naturally I always wore my kilt, and had an enormous and immediate success of all kinds.

T So this developed into some sort of association . . . ?

B Yes . . . I went to see her and, uh, I said Oh by the way, that a very amusing thing had happened to me while I'd been in the Canadian Army, in that I had made the acquaintance of a young man called Tex Henson, who was, uh . . . cute as a button, and, uh, turned out to be the great grandson of Josiah Henson, who was the escaped slave preacher who had told his life story to Harriet Beecher Stowe, from which she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* . . . And so Eileen said (falsetto), "Oooooo I'm running a publishing house, why don't you write a book for me?" And I said, Well that'd be very nice indeed. "Well," she said, "come to the office tomorrow and we'll sign a contract." So she gave me a thousand dollars, which was a big sum in those days, and we became firm friends.

I went back to the army and, uh, struggled away and wrote; not only that but I wrote *The History of Slavery in Canada*, came out of the same investigation . . . but, uh, Eileen published this book, which never got any place and wasn't really a very good book, but it got me an enormous, uh, *entrée*, I dunno what word to use in English—entry, into Black life in America, which no white people knew anything about in those days, and still know very little about . . . But from having written one of the very earliest race books . . .

T That's *To Master A Long Goodnight* . . .

a book for me?

B Yeah . . . that got me marvelous acquaintances and friendships among all of the Black writers and in fact the whole sort of Black world that existed at that time. I was really one of the first people to write in a completely sympathetic way about things like that . . .

So . . . I went on seeing Eileen, who was always rather jealous of my friendship with Touche—on purely *psychic* grounds of course! Actually, her reputation had been that not only was she the greatest successful lady medium in England in the 1920s, but then she had joined with Harry Price going around busting all the other mediums by showing up their tricks, and things like that, so she was a kind of fink too . . . but her private reputation was that she was the only woman in London who could suck two cocks off at the same time, so you can imagine what a . . . she was always carrying on like she was one of the great beauties of all time, she had these *enormous* tits she would carry in both her arms like this (demonstrating) and came at you sort of sidewise rocking these tits in her cradling arm, and so, uh, she always came skittering into a room like that . . . Touche called her “the Fiddler Crab,” which was our private name for her . . . But we had lots of very extraordinary things happening . . . for example, she had such a very affected way of speaking that Touche used to imitate her—he was a great mimic; in fact, one of the most extraordinary mimics I’ve ever known—but we had a—I had a very, very tough moment with her once, when she phoned me up and I was sure that it was Touche doing an imitation of her, so (laughing) you can imagine, sorta rude thing, “oh,” y’know, “*fuck off!*” I mean, y’know, “*stop playing, really, come on, tell me what you’re* (laughter) . . . *what you’re really doing*” (laughter) . . . (falsetto) “WHAT?” (laughter) “Whatever’s the *matter* with you,

Maurice Sandoz doing the famous Stigmata

Brion?" . . . I realized it really *was* Eileen . . .

So then . . . the most spectacular thing that she ever produced was Maurice Sandoz doing the famous Stigmata; she had a little showing of in her apartment, about which I've written a piece which is going to be published in French this fall . . . maybe, who knows? . . . I've written a short piece about the, uh (laughing) most extraordinary evening . . .

"Ah, you young men, you are both Old Souls but you've a long way to go." To catch up with her, she meant, and it was true. She was up to such tricks! One night she invited us up to her penthouse apartment, 23 stories above the White Turkey Restaurant on Madison Avenue opposite the Morgan Library, to see Maurice Sandoz produce the Stigmata, no less. It turned out that he did not want to do it for us. He had promised the Pope he would not produce the Stigmata again, even though he was a Protestant and a Surrealist to boot. Eileen wheedled him into it with her blarney. She was great. Touche used to call her "the Fiddler Crab" because she always came dancing and darting in at you sidewise with all her psychic antennae snapping at you as she gave you the insidious old elbow, cradling her huge tits in her arms as she advanced. In Killarney green satin she was a sight.

The room we were in was all uncurtained plate glass looking out onto the upper floors of the Chrysler Building whose windows were blazing with light. The walls of her penthouse were entirely lined with mirrors half-hidden by luxuriant green plants growing up to the ceiling. Eileen talked to her plants: "Come, come my little greenies, grow for Mother!" she cooed as she swept around the room stroking them. Sandoz sat in an armchair with carved wooden arms. Eileen popped more champagne. When Sandoz went into

Ectoplasm as I live and breathe!

meditation with his eyes shut, a red rash appeared on his forehead. Then his sweat ran down red from his hairline. Eileen, smacking her lips with satisfaction over her glass of champagne, whispered to Touche: "The Crown of Thorns, look!" The next stigmata to appear were two deep red spots on the backs of his hands. Touche put down his glass and went tiptoeing over to touch them, put his finger into the wounds like Doubting Thomas. Sandoz snapped out of it, shaking his head with a strangled cry. As he gripped the wooden arms of his chair, his knuckles turned white and a long blob of something really weird sort of slurped down out of the little finger on his right hand. "Oh look, Mister Sandoz!" Eileen exclaimed, "Ectoplasm as I live and breathe!" His chin dropped in horror as he opened his eyes to look down at the stuff and then, with a really tremendous internal effort, he seemed to suck it back up into his finger again. Touche helped the poor man to the bathroom when he asked for it. He locked himself in there and was silent for so long that Touche came back to consult with me. Should we tap, should we rap, should we break the door down? We went back to ask Eileen and what did we see on the living room floor. Nothing but this huge great big Kelly green satin ass. Eileen was down on her hands and knees, combing through the pile of the rug with her long red fingernails all around the armchair. She cocked a wise old beady eye at us and tipped us a wink. "There are more tricks in this trade than you could shake a shilaleagh at!" (BG, *FIRE: Words by Day—Images by Night*, in *Soft Need 17 BG Special*, 1977)

Maurice Sandoz was a member of the Sandoz pharmaceutical family that invented LSD, and so forth and so on, and was a writer himself, a dilettante writer who wrote a couple of books of Fantastic Tales (*Fantastic Memories*,

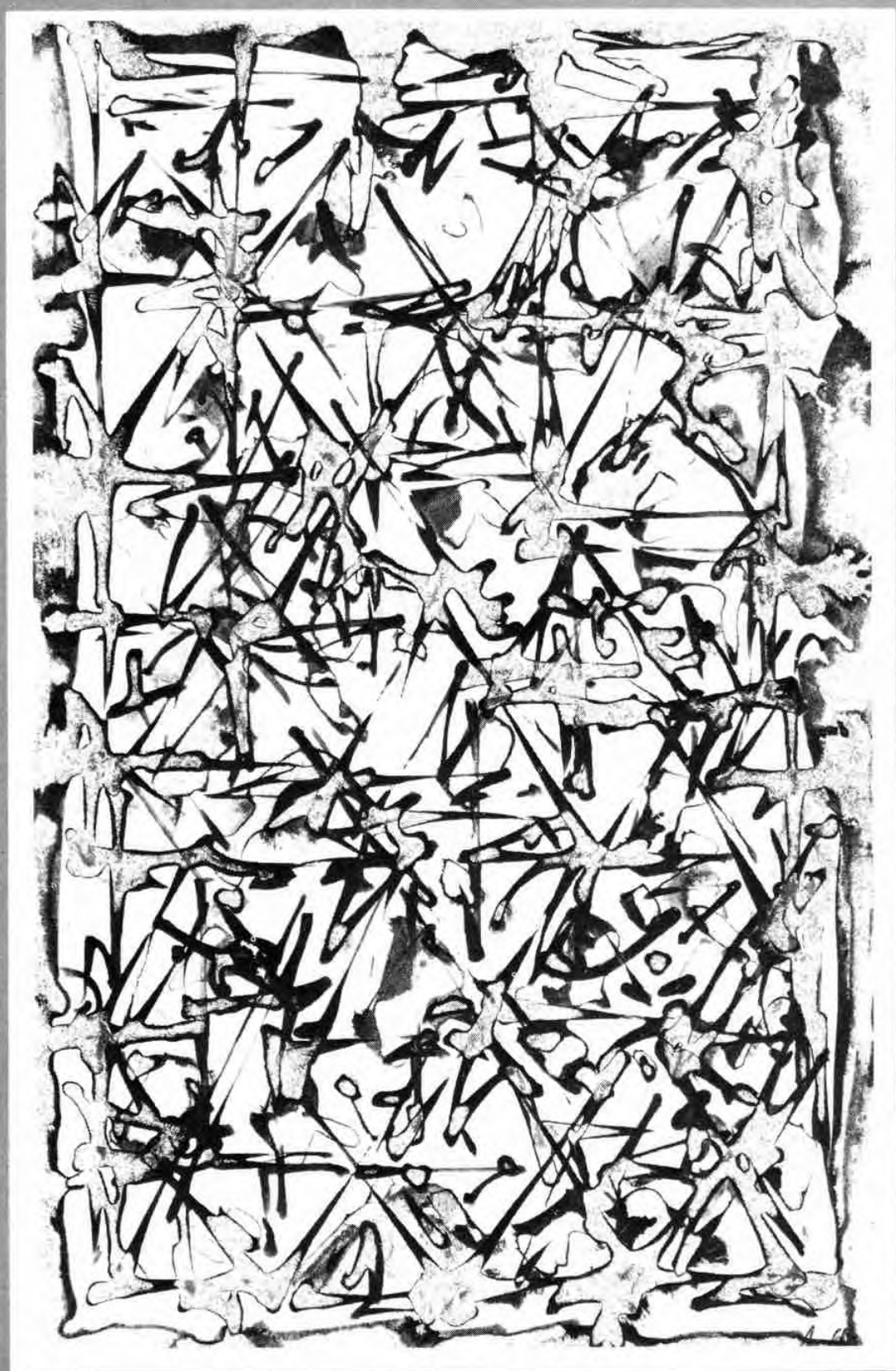
. . . *suicide* . . .

1958; *On the Verge*, 1956), quite good, which were illustrated by Dali and so forth . . . he later committed suicide by jumping out of a window . . . a vastly wealthy man, friend of the Surrealist circles, and I had first heard of him in the 1930s, before he showed up again at Eileen Garrett's . . . 1943-44, something like that . . .

T You'd become involved with Surrealism . . . ?

B 1934 . . .

**OFF
THE
COUCH**





off the couch

T A lot later, you referred to “the Art Wing of the Freudian Conspiracy calling itself Surrealism . . .”

B That’s a fairly good description, yes . . . I had my first show with them in December 1935, which was a group show of drawings that included, uh, everybody famous in the group and a few others who were not usually associated with them, including Picasso, who showed with the Surrealists only that one time, as a matter of fact [Actually, Picasso exhibited with the Surrealists at least six times—Ed.] . . . And, uh, when I went to the gallery the afternoon that the show was to open I found Paul Eluard, the poet, taking my pictures down off the wall. And I said, “What’s happening? What’s happening?” And he said, uh, “Orders from Breton. You have been expelled from the group.” (laughing) So that was my—that was pretty quick—I mean I had to take my pictures out and show them on the sidewalk . . .

Brion Gysin, *Peggy Guggenheim's Window on the Grand Canal Venezia, Italy*, 1962. (Collection Terry Wilson)

Benjamin Péret organized heckling

. . . a Surrealist and dissident, being an ex-friend of André Breton, Valentine Hugo went into the gallery, screaming, to ask for a reason of the brutal exclusion. Here it is. Breton was just decreeing that—like the 14th July had become a square holiday—the 28th January should from now on be the day the Surrealist revolution would be celebrated. The date of decease of Louis XVI. The ‘Pope’ of the Surrealist movement had given orders to his devotees to create posters for his new revolutionary holiday celebrating the execution of Louis XVI. Benjamin Péret organized heckling during the Royalty memorial mass at Notre-Dame. Meanwhile, Marie-Laure de Noailles had been rushing to the best pastry shops in Paris to order miniature guillotines out of chocolate. Even the shopkeepers were shocked. When Brion Gysin presented his design he had the bad luck to leave it at Breton’s place in the rue Fontaine, the evening before the exhibition opened. His poster showed a huge calf’s head wearing a *perruque*, stranded on a deserted beach. Supposed to represent the cut off head of the king it resembled much more the head of the pope of Surrealism. (*Soft Need* 9, 1976)

T Had you felt at odds with them previously?

B I felt . . . yeah, I was very much at odds with them; it didn’t take much, uh, perspicacity on Breton’s part to realize that I was going to be a troublesome element in the group, so . . . I was wiped out for the moment—but this was very common, these sort of, uh, fights were continually happening, the group was run like a . . . well, like the Communist Party is run, with memberships and expulsions, and denunciations, and trials, and confessions and all the rest of it . . . the order of the day . . .

T What other sort of people were you meeting in Paris at this time? Gertrude Stein, you were involved with . . .?

during the Royalty memorial mass

B Uh, not very much, it was considered absolutely anti-Surrealist to frequent Gertrude Stein at all . . . as far as I was concerned, I was an unruly Surrealist, and there were certainly many reasons for which I was thrown out . . . uh, homosexuality, frequenting homosexuals—which was Gertrude Stein, or Cocteau, or people like that—was enough in itself to get expelled from the group. Indeed there were other members of the group, some famous ones, who were expelled through the same sort of reasons, like René Crevel . . . Aragon, who then went off to the Communist Party; Tzara, who for other sort of political reasons of jealousy . . . were all expelled and went their own ways . . . *

T Cocteau, did you get to know him very well?

B No, no . . . I didn't like that sort of life very much at all . . . I thought he gave homosexuality a very bad name the way he carried on like he did in that sort of old-fashioned . . . cuff-shooting sorta way (chuckling). No, I didn't like Cocteau at all, nor was I ever really welcomed in that group; I never got along with those queens any more than I got along with the Communists or with the hardline Surrealists . . .

T You didn't see, or you don't see, Cocteau as ever possessing any special knowledge of any sort . . . ?

B No no no . . .

T What happened after your expulsion then?

B The War, more or less—I mean, you know, one thing or another, traveling around . . . I went to Greece; I lived there off and on for about three years, and I went to North Africa for the first time, to the Sahara, during those years, and then the War came along and I went to America, which began a whole new period of my life, naturally.

* Tzara created a poem by pulling cut-up words from out of a hat at a Surrealist rally, provoking a riot and subsequent expulsion by Breton. (WSB, "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin." Yugen 8, 1962, and *Minutes To Go*)

. . . the fourth of his consecutive nationalities

During the war Brion Gysin found himself in New York with some other great painters of the Surrealist movement. Among them Max Ernst and Matta whom he frequented much in the 40s. Being in America Gysin was traveling between Miami and Havana by airplane. This led him to paint abstract visions, aerial landscapes, Florida bathing in the Gulf Stream. Called into service soon the American military officials took the astounding decision (*de clairvoyance*) to make him learn Japanese, a language written by means of a brush . . . (*Soft Need* 9, 1976)

One night when I was riding along (through Manhattan), I saw Brion Gysin, and stopped to talk. He was now well into the fourth of his consecutive nationalities. In a shipbuilding plant in New Jersey. Shortly afterward he went into the Army. (Paul Bowles, *Without Stopping*)

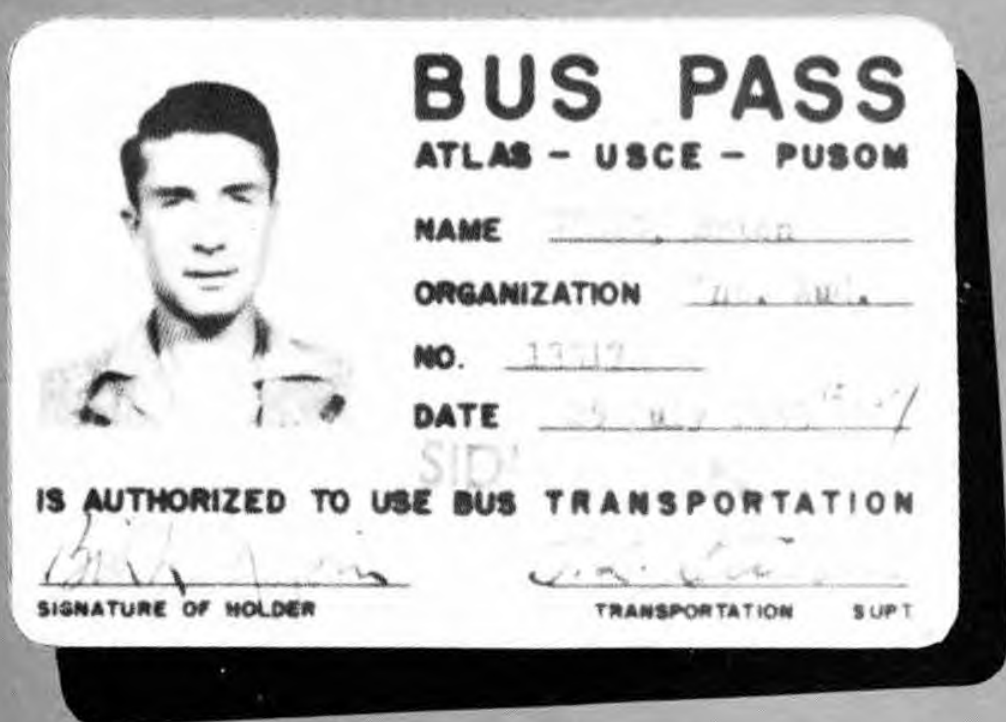
T Sure. And how long in America?

B I was in America from 1940 to 1949 . . . and in 1949 by some kinda accident I got one of those first Fulbright Fellowships, and left, and never really went back again.



NY 1949: "Official portrait that got me my Fulbright Fellowship—they said so!"

**TERMINAL
TOURIST**





terminal tourist

Who runs may read

May Massa Brahim leave this house as the smoke leaves this fire, never to return . . .

B . . . Never went back to live, and I've only been back there even to visit only very briefly . . .

And then it was back to Paris for a year or so, 1949-50, and then in 1950 I went to Morocco with Paul Bowles, who had taken, bought a little house there, and I stayed there really, or felt that I was domiciled there, uh, although I was really only a sort of terminal tourist, from 1950 till 1973 . . .

Magic, practiced more assiduously than hygiene in Morocco, through ecstatic dancing to the music of the secret brotherhoods, is, there, a form of psychic hygiene. You know your music when you hear it, one day. You fall into line and dance until you pay the piper. (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

He taught me how



BG near Fez, Morocco 1950.

to use my ears

- B Yeah . . . what a tale . . . what a tale . . . yeah, I met John Cooke in Morocco but, uh . . . I don't know what to say about all that, really . . .
- T He designed tarot cards . . . ?
- B Yeah . . .
- T A new set of tarot cards . . .
- B Yeah, so he did. How did you even know that?
- T I saw them the other day.
- B Oh really? . . . No kidding? They're still around eh? Well well . . .
- T Is he still alive?
- B Yes, I imagine he's still alive, I think living in Mexico (John Cooke died sometime after this was recorded) . . . and he comes from one of those very rich and powerful families who were the Five Founding Families of Hawaii . . . who own the island, did own the island of Molokai . . . and, uh, many people in his family have been interested in mystic things, and he was particularly interested in magic all his life . . . early connection with . . . what do they call it, kaluhas or something, the Hawaiian shamanistic magic men? . . . Kahunas, yeah . . .
- T Yeah. So tell me about Morocco . . . you got more and more immersed into Islam, or—
- B Not really, no, I never was much immersed truly into Islam, or I would've become a Moslem, and probably still be there . . . uh, it was most particularly the music that interested me. I went with Paul Bowles, who was a composer long before he was a writer, and, uh, he has perfect pitch, an unusual thing even among composers, and he taught me how to use my ears a great deal during the years we'd known each other in New York, but when he'd taken this house, bought this house in Tangier, he suggested that I go and spend a summer there living in the house and he was

. . . large groups of people

on his way to America; he was just going to leave me in the house . . . but it turned out rather differently . . . he was going to New York to write the music for his wife's play, Jane Bowles' *In The Summerhouse*, and he had written a great deal of theatrical music for Broadway, all the Tennessee Williams plays, all of the plays by Saroyan, and many other productions of that time . . . and was a great expert on that . . . but he also had very, very extraordinary ears, and, uh, he taught me a lot of things; I owe him a tremendous amount, I owe him my years in Morocco really, because I wouldn't've gone there if he hadn't suggested it at that particular time . . . I might have gone back to Algeria, which isn't nearly as interesting a country, never was . . .

But, uh, in 1950 we went to a festival outside of Tangier on the beach, on the Atlantic shore, at a spot which was previously a small harbor, 2000 years ago in Phoenician times, and must've marked one of the first landfalls that any boat coming out of the Mediterranean via the Straits of Gibraltar would make as soon as the boat entered the Atlantic; the first landfall would be at this little place not very far from Cape Spartel . . . and, uh, the Phoenician habit was always to establish a center of religion, I mean, a thanks offering for getting them safely over the dangerous sea, one supposes, and a marking of the spot which eventually became a center of their religious cult, presumably a college of priestesses . . . two or three more landfalls further down the Atlantic coast is what used to be the great harbor of Larache . . .

All these harbors are now silted up completely . . . Larache was the site of the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, where Hercules went to get away from the demonic . . . the orgiastic priestesses, who were guardians

going into trance

in a sacred grove surrounded by a serpent, if you remember, a dragon—well, the dragon is the river—in each case there are these winding rivers that go back up into the country; only one of them still exists, the Lixos. Well, the Lixos was presumably the dragon in the mythological tale and there was an island in the harbor, and this spot that we went to had been on the same geographic and even religious plane, as it were, and the festival was given there, which doesn't correspond to the Lunar Calendar but to the Solar Calendar, and has to do with the harvest and actual cycle of agricultural life of the people there . . . And I heard some music at that festival about which I said: "I just want to hear that music for the rest of my life. I wanna hear it every day all day." And, uh, there were a great many other kinds of extraordinary music offered to one, mostly of the Ecstatic Brotherhood who enter into trance, so that in itself—it was the first time I'd seen large groups of people going into trance—was enough to have kept my attention, but beyond and above all of that somewhere I heard this funny little music, and I said: "Ah! That's my music! And I must find out where it comes from." So I stayed and within a year I found that it came from Jajouka . . .

(loud crashes, tape stops)

Your question . . . ?!

T You found that your music was at Jajouka . . . The purpose of the Rites of Jajouka is to preserve the balance of Male-Female forces, is that correct?

B Yes, in a very strange way I think it's a very pertinent question that you ask. Uh, when I met them finally (it took about a year to find them), and went up to the mountain village, I recognized very quickly that what they were performing was the Roman Lupercal, and the Roman

even women's language isn't



The Master Musicians of Jajouka. Background from L to R: BG, Salah & Hamri, Ms. McConnell & Gabriel de Gramont. Far right: Targuisti.

immediately understood by men

Lupercalia was a race run from one part of Rome, a cave under the Capitoline Hill, which Mussolini claimed to have discovered, but is now generally conceded to be some ten or 15 meters further down . . . and in this cave goats were killed and skinned and a young man of a certain tribe was sewn up in them, and one of these young men was Mark Antony, and when in the beginning of *Julius Caesar*, when they meet, he was actually running this race of *Lupercalia* through Rome on the 15th March, the Ides of March . . . and the point was to go out to the gates of Rome and contact Pan, the God of the Forests, the little Goat God, who was Sexuality itself, and to run back through the streets with the news that Pan was still out there fucking as he flailed the women in the crowds, which is why Julius Caesar asked him to be sure to hit Calpurnia, because his wife Calpurnia was barren . . . *Forget not in thy haste, Antonius, to touch Calpurnia, for the Ancients say that in this holy course the barren are rendered fruitful*, or something like that, are the lines from Shakespeare on the subject . . . Shakespeare dug right away that's what it was, the point of the sexual balance of nature which was in question . . .

And up there on the mountain another element is added, inasmuch as the women, who live apart from the men, whose private lives are apart from the men's lives to a point where even women's language isn't immediately understood by men—women can say things to each other in front of men that men don't even understand, or care to be *bothered* with, it's just women's nonsense, y'see . . . and they sing sort of secret little songs enticing Bou Jeloud the Father of Skins, who is Pan, to come to the hills, saying that . . . We will give you the prettiest girls in the village, we will give you Crosse-eyed Aisha, we will give you

Bou Jeloud is on you

Humpbacked— . . . naming the names of the different types of undesirable non-beauties in the village, like that, and, uh, Pan is supposed to be so dumb that he falls for this, because he will fuck anything, and he comes up to the village where he meets the Woman-Force of the village who is called Crazy Aisha—Aisha Homolka . . . well, Aisha is of course an Arab name, but it's derived from an earlier original, which would be Asherat, the name of Astarte or any one of these Venus-type lady sex-goddesses like that . . . And, uh, Bou Jeloud, the leader of the festival, his role is to marry Aisha, but in actual fact women do not dance in front of any but their own husbands; the women in Arab life, all belly dancing movies to the contrary, do not dance in public, or never did, and most certainly don't in villages, ever dance where they're seen by men any more than men dance in front of women . . . so that Crazy Aisha is danced by little boys who are dressed as girls, and because her spirit is so powerful—
(tape stops)

. . . a faint breath of panic borne on the wind. Below the rough palisade of giant blue cactus surrounding the village on its hilltop, the music flows in streams to nourish and fructify the terraced fields below.

Inside the village the thatched houses crouch low in their gardens to hide in the deep cactus-lined lanes. You come through their maze to the broad village green where the pipers are piping; fifty *raitas* banked against a crumbling wall blow sheet lightning to shatter the sky. Fifty wild flutes blow up a storm in front of them, while a platoon of small boys in long belted white robes and brown wool turbans drum like young thunder. All the villagers, dressed in best white, swirl in great circles and coils around one wildman in skins.

butting you, beating you

Bou Jeloud leaps high in the air on the music, races after the women again and again, lashing at them fiercely with his flails—"Forget not in your speed, Antonius, to touch Calpurnia"—He is wild. He is mad. Sowing panic. Lashing at anyone; striking real terror into the crowd. Women scatter like white marabout birds all aflutter and settle on one little hillock for safety, all huddled in one quivering lump. They throw back their heads to the moon and scream with throats open to the gullet, lolling their tongues around in their heads like the clapper in a bell. Every mouth is wide open, frozen into an O. Head back and hot narrow eyes brimming with dangerous baby.

Bou Jeloud is after you. Running. Over-run. Laughter and someone is crying. Wild dogs at your heels. Swirling around in one ring-a-rosy, around and around and around. Go! Forever! Stop! Never! More and No More and No! More! Pipes crack in your head. Ears popped away at barrier sound and you deaf. Or dead! Swirling around in cold moonlight, surrounded by wildmen or ghosts. Bou Jeloud is on you, butting you, beating you, taking you, leaving you. Gone! The great wind drops out of your head and you hear the heavenly music again. You feel sorry and loving and tender to that poor animal whimpering, grizzling, laughing and sobbing there beside you like somebody out of ether. Who is that? That is you.

Who is Bou Jeloud? Who is he? The shivering boy who was chosen to be stripped naked in a cave and sewn into the bloody warm skins and masked with an old straw hat tied over his face, HE is Bou Jeloud when he dances and runs. Not Ali, not Mohamed, then he *is* Bou Jeloud. He will be somewhat *taboo* in his village the rest of his life.

When he dances alone, his musicians blow a sound like the earth sloughing off its skin. He is the Father of Fear. He

The longer I knew them

is, too, the Father of Flocks. The Good Shepherd works for him. When the goats, gently grazing, brusquely frisk and skitter away, he is counting his flock. When you shiver like someone just walked on your grave—that's him; that's Pan, the Father of Skins. Have you jumped out of your skin lately? *I've got you under my skin . . .*

Blue kif smoke drops in veils from Jajouka at nightfall. The music picks up like a current turned on . . . On the third night he meets Aisha Homolka, who drifts around after dark, cool and casual, near springs and running water. She unveils her beautiful blue-glittering face and breasts and coos.

And he who stammers out an answer is lost. He is lost unless he touches the blade of his knife or, better still, plucks it out and plunges the blade of it into the ground between her goatish legs and forked hooves. Then Aisha Homolka, Aisha Kandisha, alias Asherat, Astarte, Diana in the Leaves Greene, Blest Virgin Miriam bar Levy, the White Goddess, in short, will be his. She must be a heavy Stone Age Matriarch whose power he cuts off with his Iron Age knife-magic.

The music grooves into hysteria, fear and fornication. A ball of laughter and tears in the throat gristle. Tickle of panic between the legs. Gripe of slapstick cuts loose in the bowels. The Three Hadji. Man with Monkey. More characters coming on stage. The Hadji joggle around under their crowns like Three Wise Kings. Monkey Man comes on hugely pregnant with a live boy in his baggy pants. Monkey Man goes into birth pangs and the Hadji deliver him of a naked boy with an umbilical halter around his neck. Man leads Monkey around, beating him and screwing him for hours to the music. Monkey jumps on Man's back and screws him to the music for hours. Pipers pipe higher into the air and panic screams off like the wind into the woods of silver olive and black oak, on into the Rif mountains swimming up under the moonlight.

the less I knew about them . . .

Pan leaps back on the gaggle of women with his flails. The women scream and deliver one tiny boy, wriggling and stumbling as he dances out in white drag and veil. Another bloodcurdling birth-yodel and they throw up another small boy. Pan flails them as they push out another and another until there are ten or more little boy-girls out there with Pan, shaking that thing in the moonlight. Bigger village drag stars slither out on the village green and shake it up night after night. Pan kings them all until dawn. He is the God Pan. They are, all of them, Aisha Homolka. (BG, "The Pipes of Pan," *Gnaoua* 1, 1964)

. . . It would be very difficult to say just what they are aware of and what they are not aware of, I have known them for more than 30 years now, 20, more than 20 of them in very intimate daily contact, with some of them at any rate, and for the period that I knew them the most . . .

. . . Obviously they know so much more than I ever thought in the beginning; I think of course they realize that their name has to do with the whole history of Sufi thought, because the family name of the musicians is Attar . . . uh, it was after knowing them well for 20 years and then getting into some kind of legal difficulty and attempting to help them with their documents that I found this out.

Uummm, really the longer I knew them the less I knew about them, is almost a way of phrasing it . . . they, uh, know a great deal more than they let on, of course . . . I don't know how much, how much do *you* want to know, because I could go on for booklength about whatever I have learned about them, which is curious . . .

they had a secret language

I kept some notes and drawings, meaning to write a recipe book of magic. My Pan people were furious when they found this out. They poisoned my food twice and then, apparently, resorted to more efficacious means to get rid of me . . .
(Brion Gysin Let The Mice In)



The 1001 Nights Restaurant, Tangier 1956. (Photo: Herbert List)
"Seek the One in the thousand and the thousand in the One"
Insert: Paris 1966. (Photo: Francis Issac)

they can talk through the music

T Your restaurant . . .

B Oh, the restaurant came about entirely because of them.

(chant becoming obvious on tape)

I said I would like to hear your music every day and, uh, they said Well, why don't you just stick around and live in the village? And I said No, that isn't possible, I have to go back and earn my living . . . and they said, Well, then why don't you open a little cafe, a little joint, some place in Tangier, and we'll come down and make the music, and, uh, we'll split the money?

And, uh, their idea was a very simple one, I think, which got blown up into . . . palatial size, because of the fact that I found a wing of a palace that belonged to some Moroccan friends of mine, where I set up the restaurant and, uh, it turned out to be a very expensive and very . . . as I had no previous experience in such matters, it turned out to be a very expensive venture (laughing) . . . I'd always been at most a customer in such places, and to learn how to run it . . . I had many other things to do which kept my mind off the musicians, although the rest of the staff were always complaining that the musicians were being favored, and I said Yes, the restaurant existed entirely for the music, and it was literally true . . .

A group of them came down from the mountain and stayed a period of time, living in the house with me, and so I heard them practicing, I heard them teaching the younger children how to play, and learned more and more about the intricacies of the music . . . I found out various interesting things about them, first of all that they had a secret language, that they can talk through the music; they can direct a dancing boy, for example, to go from . . . they can give him all his instructions simply musically . . . but that they also have a language of which I really learned

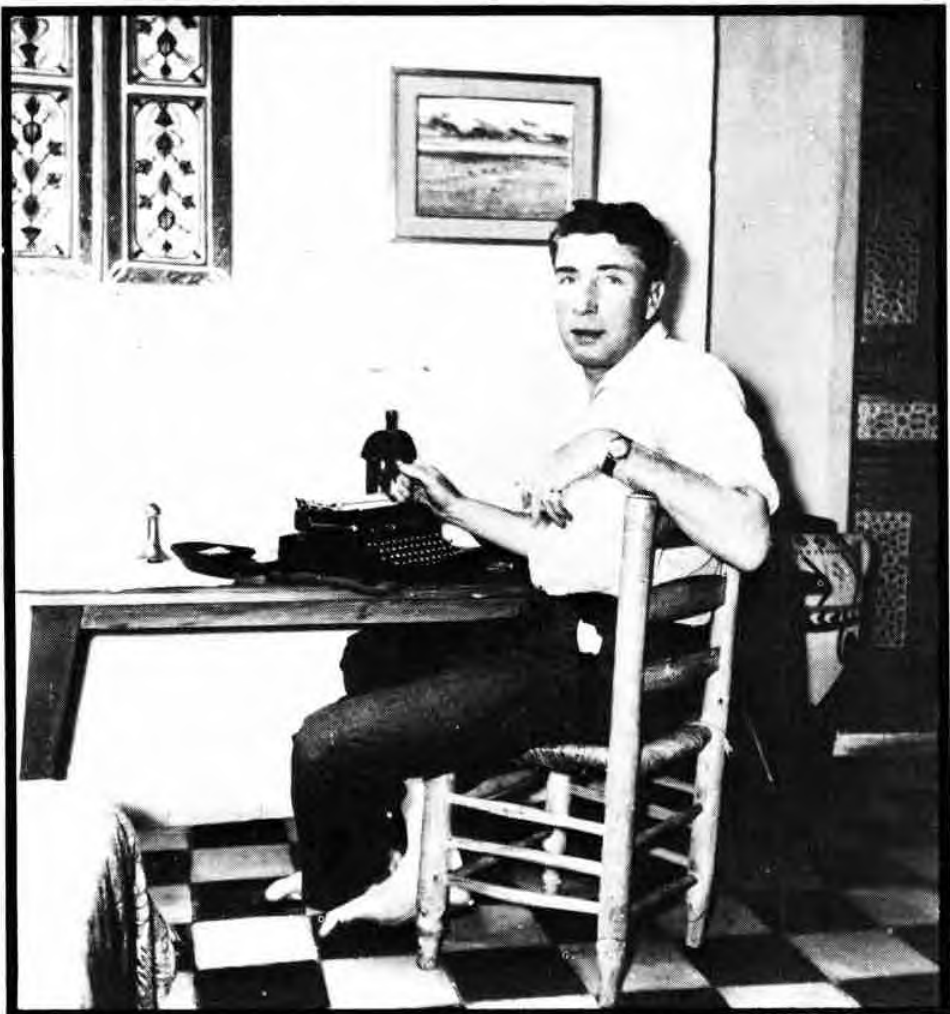
which language it was

nothing, I didn't have the time to, but I think that at that point they would have been willing to teach me a great deal about it, even to start writing a vocabulary to find out what it was, which language it was that they speak in private . . . but, uh, the restaurant folded with Moroccan Independence, a very difficult moment, when all of my clientele disappeared overnight, inasmuch as Tangier had been a small country of its own, with embassies, and ambassadors and their staffs and their visitors and everything connected with them, which was the backbone of my clientele . . . and they all left, and Tangier lost its independence and became part of Morocco . . . so the restaurant folded up and they went back to their hills . . .

And then I saw them later as friends, went back to the village several times for the festival, and, uh, then the Rolling Stones came to stay in Morocco, brought along Robert Frazer, who was an art dealer in London at that time, and he knew them and brought them to visit me and we made trips together through Morocco, and Brian Jones later came back, he wanted very much to go up to the mountain, and although he never got there during the festival time he did bring a sound engineer with him and recorded the music which appears on that record (*Brian Jones Presents The Pipes of Pan at Joujouka*, Rolling Stones Records, 1971), which is now out of print I'm sure . . . about which there was an enormous amount of legal difficulties over trying to get money to the musicians, for all of the usual recording company reasons, and naturally complicated by the fact that Brian had died and that the other Stones were not terribly interested in the record, probably because it reminded them too much of things that they preferred to leave in the past; partly on the musical level, because Brian had wanted to take the Stones' music rather more toward the openings

that they speak in private

that Moroccan music made possible, and, uh, which have appealed to other musicians since and I think will have even more and more effect in the future . . . but Mick was very determined to keep it right down to that R&B which they had ripped off the American Black music, which he found a perfectly good product to last for the next 20 years, and has lasted 10, at any rate . . .



The 1001 Nights, Tangier 1955. (Photo: Donald Angus)

you really get to know people

- T So a different type of relationship with the Jajouka musicians after the restaurant folded?
- B Well, I might say about it, from the beginning, uh, that I got to know them much better than most people ever would because of the fact that we were in business together, whether we were first in business around the restaurant, or later around one or other records that they'd made, uh—you really get to know people only when you do business with them, and we got to know each other very well, for good and for ill, for reasons of business . . .
- T There was some difficulty, wasn't there . . .
- B Plenty . . .
- T Involved you losing the restaurant . . . ?
- B Plenty, yeah, plenty . . . hmmm . . .
- (tape stops)
- T Tell me about your calligraphy, Brion.
- B My calligraphy and what connection it has with the music of Jajouka, for example?
- T Yeh (chuckling)—and what does “Who runs may read”—What does that mean?
- B Well, uh, I first became interested in calligraphy when I was being taught Japanese in the army, during the War . . . and in the Japanese language school had a number of Japanese instructors, and as I was a painter and interested in painting, and in paint brushes, and in ink, uh, I learned quite quickly to understand some of the depth, not just simply for the purpose of recording the language, but the philosophy behind the attack that the brush makes onto the paper, so forth and so on, the running of the ink and all of those rather more abstruse meanings of Oriental calligraphy . . . but from the pictorial point of view it didn't satisfy me because it hangs off the page; as you know, if you see lines of Japanese writing it hangs like

when you do business with them

vines, pinned at the top of the page and sort of dangling down at different lengths across, and not to my mind at that time satisfactorily employing the Occidental picture space, which is essentially a page as a picture is a page, or even as an icon is essentially a page, and, uh, when I went to Morocco I was immediately interested in the movement of Arab writing which goes, as Japanese does, from right to left, instead of as ours does, left to right . . . but I saw that combining the two, as if one took a page and wrote Japanese from top to bottom and Arabic across it from right to left, formed a sort of gridwork which covered and integrated the picture space . . .

But I was not really painting at that time, frankly, I was interested—I was drawing for my own pleasure and keeping up with things, but I was not living a painter's life by any means during those years in Morocco . . . and I came across the musicians and, uh, became deeply interested in them for so long, that it really wasn't until at the end of the time, uh, that the restaurant closed because of personal reasons that had to do with this cat John Cooke, as a matter of fact, not simply because of Moroccan Independence at all, but for private reasons, and, uh, when I opened again I didn't have the musicians from Jajouka back to the restaurant because there'd been changes of personnel and had been personal problems between me and some of them, or particularly one person from the group, who was *Hamri*, the painter, whose mother came from that village and it was through him that I met them in the first place, and he's a very domineering character who became impossible to do business with, so that I had other musicians and other waiters, other people in the kitchen, and, uh, while getting the restaurant ready I found a magic object, which was an amulet of sorts, a rather elaborate

devils of fire, the devil of smoke

one with seeds, pebbles, shards of broken mirror, seven of each, and a little package in which there was a piece of writing, and the writing when deciphered by friends who didn't even want to *handle* it, because of its magic qualities, which even educated Moroccans were not anxious to get in touch with, but it said something like, an appeal to one of the devils of fire, the devil of smoke—to take Brion away from this house: as the smoke leaves this chimney may Brion leave this house and never return . . . And within a very short time I indeed lost the restaurant and everything else . . .

. . . I was out with the shirt on my back.

I barely made it to London where I sold my pictures of the Sahara and then crossed to Paris, where I have lived off and on for the last 30 years. Ran into gray-green Burroughs in the Place St. Michel. “Wanna score?” . . . (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)



“William can look like many things”—Antony Balch. William Burroughs, Paris 1962. (Photo: Antony Balch)

devils that run right out of the inkpot

. . . But I realized that this was a very interesting traditional example of the type of magic that one can read about in any study of magic where this sort of, uh—what’s the word for it?—I saw it as an example of a cabalistic square, which I then began to apply much more directly to my own painting when I returned to Paris in 1958 . . . and, uh, from 1958 till 1964 I worked out all sorts of different applications of this directly applied to my painting . . . And therefore inadvertently became part of that group of writing painters which is now sort of an historical movement all over Western painting, the people who recognized that writing and painting were somehow related . . . and there have been—the new museum here in Paris, Beaubourg, for example, has particularly gone back and bought things of mine from that period of 1960-61, because it fits into a historical context at a moment when writers—a poet like Michaux, who started painting, did kinda writing-paintings, so forth and so on . . . and it was one of the founder moments in Occidental painting as a matter of fact, I wasn’t the only person at all to apply this to painting . . . but it was from that indeed that I then said to Burroughs that writing was 50 years behind painting and that, uh, oh—aren’t you coming to the end of the roll? No? Umm, do we wanna talk about that now, or later?

T Just, “Who runs may read” . . . ?

B Ah, well, “Who runs may read” is the little devils that run right out of the inkpot, some of the fastest runners of them all; as you said, those little characters that you see in there . . . and if you can run as fast as that, well then you can read as fast as that . . . though it would take a lot more explanation (laughing) . . . I’ll do that one later . . .

(tape stops)

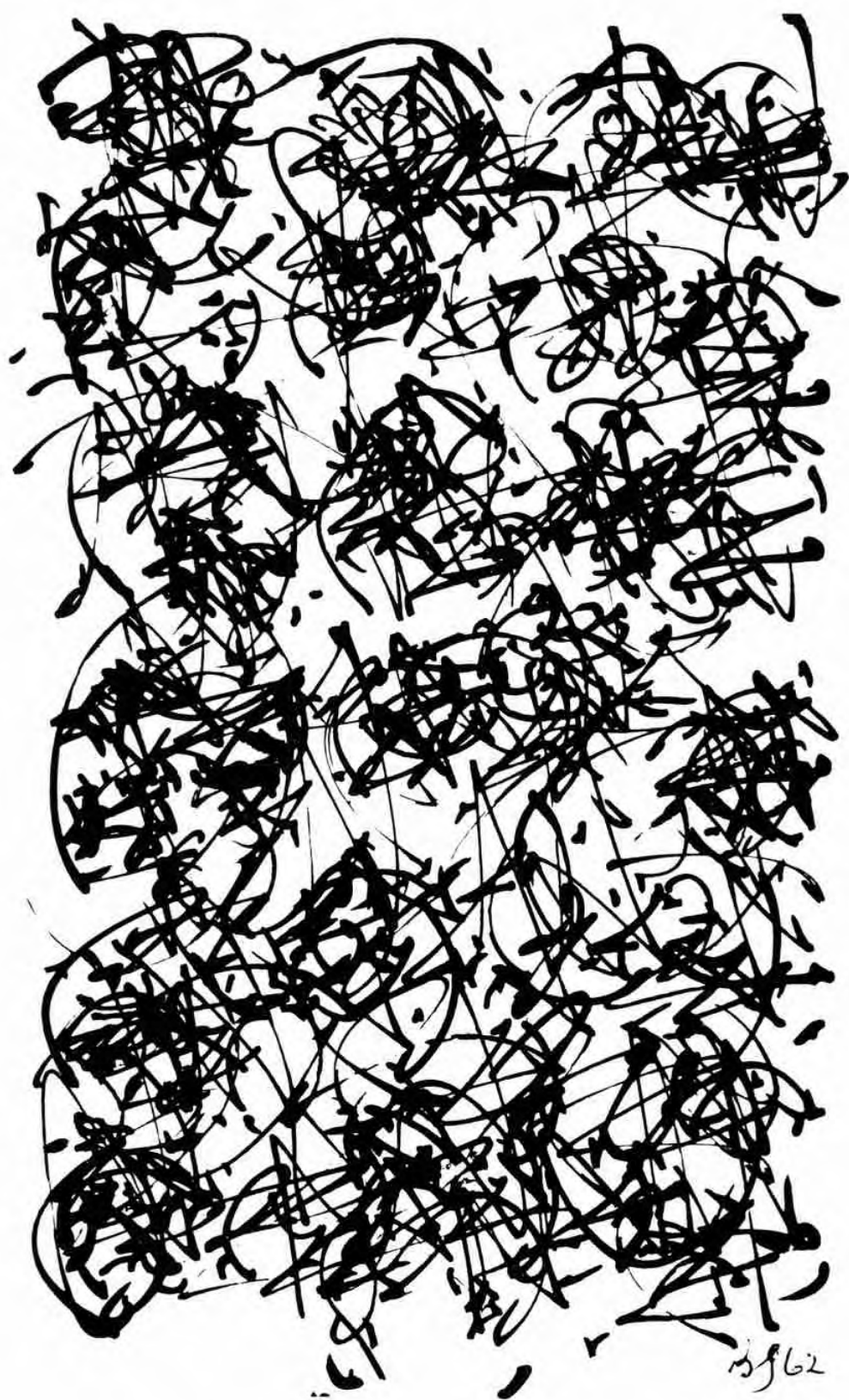


Amontso:
Arish Gyain

"Intersection point between empty deserts and written deserts . . . once the property of WSB who may have left it out in the rain" —BG. (Collection Terry Wilson)



Calligraphy For Terry, Beat Hotel, 1963. (Collection Terry Wilson)



Magic mushroom calligraphy, Beat Hotel, 1962

**MAKING IT
HAPPEN—
THE
PROCESS**





making it happen—the process

And no more evil: none! What is not known yet—and it may be terrible—we shall know, then!

Arthur Rimbaud

The past is refuse precisely directed.

William Burroughs

In 1958 I moved to Paris . . . I had a suitcase full of manuscripts with me but Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press had rejected the first version of *Naked Lunch*; other rejections from American publishers followed . . . (*Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive*, London 1973)

Hamri and I had first met him in the hired gallery of the Rembrandt Hotel in Tangier in 1953, when he wheeled into our exhibition, arms and legs flailing, talking a mile a minute. We found he looked very Occidental, more Private Eye and Inspector Lee: he trailed long vines of *Bannisteria Caapi* from the Upper Amazon after him and old Mexican bullfight posters fluttered out from under his long trench coat instead of a shirt. An odd blue light often flashed around under the brim of his hat. Hamri and I decided, rather smugly, that we could not afford to know him because he was too Spanish.

We make a meet. He lives in “Heart’s ease Street,” rue Git-le-Coeur where I lived 1938-39 . . . Later, I make it up to room #15 . . . (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

painting ties in with

- T This seems to tie in with writing, 'cause—
- B Oh, you mean painting ties in with writing. Of course . . .
- T Yeah . . . and obsolescence . . . you know, people say Why doesn't Genet write something else? And if he says that he's said all that he had to say and that these forms are all worn out, which he has said; people don't seem to get that . . .
- B They don't believe he's serious, you mean, when he makes such a statement?
- T No, they don't believe that such a thing can happen, that poetry, say, as a method, can—
- B Disappear . . .
- T Yeah—just carry on writing it—they don't seem to see it as having any function . . . and when its function is over, why do it anymore?
- B I quite agree. Indeed that's very much the position in the arts today. I mean, who are you trying to educate, the poets or the poetasters? I mean, the *poets* . . . I've said, you know, "Who told poets they could think? Poets are made to sing and make words sing" . . . they're not there for anything else, I don't want to hear a philosophic statement or a political statement from a poet, I want to hear a little music, maybe . . . at the most. I mean, I've been quoted as being absolutely down on poetry—well, I'm against what I call *poesy*, *poesy* gives me a pain in the ass . . . But poetry, of course, exists not necessarily on a printed page, nor even in the spoken word—nevertheless, as a so-called Father of Sound Poetry, I do believe that it's more in the spoken word (and so did the whole movement, it's not my invention that brought it about), in the sense that before we began the *Domaine Poétique* group, for example, in 1960-61, whenever it was, there had been people trying to do poetry and jazz in America, which was a horri-

writing . . . and obsolescence

ble mess I must say, or at least they'd been thinking about *saying* it, you know, using their own breath on it, trying to get it off the printed page where it had obviously died quite a while ago . . . killed by some very great practitioners of the art, like Eliot for example, who was one of the first people who sliced it all up and just threw the best pieces down there on the table . . .

T But I could never understand even after Rimbaud, doing what he did and . . . I mean, that might be a bit radical but . . . they're *still doing it* . . .

B Right, yeah, yeah . . . I don't understand it either—I understand poetry really mostly as is called in French *poesie sonore*, and what I would preferably have called “machine poetry,” in that one has to use . . . I don't mean getting up there and saying it once off, or declaiming it, or even performing it the way people do nowadays, but actually putting it through the changes that one can produce by tape recording and all of the technology, or the even just *minimal* technology that one has had in one's hands in the last few years . . . and that all the rest is really a terrible waste of time, I think. I'm sorry . . . sorry for all the poets who don't think that . . . some of them very charming friends . . . uh, to whom I find it difficult even to remove the blocks . . . uh, let them, but I don't know what they're doing, I really don't . . . I just don't know . . . seems to me that they're doing nothing . . .

T And the novel . . .

B Oh, the novel is still a very different thing; the novel is “Once upon a time there was . . .” We all like to be told a story . . . Uh, the novel can't go on telling the story in the same old way, obviously, but it still is a voice speaking to you, or at its very best it seems to be to you like *yourself* speaking to you, if you really *love* it. Like somebody might

the Great Work

love *War and Peace*, they identify with Natalia, or with whoever it is, like that, and it's—yeah, they think of it as a tale that they're telling themselves by the act of reading . . . Uh, whether *reading* will go on or not is of course a question that we've always asked ourselves, reading or writing; certainly for a long time, even before McLuhan, people had been talking about a non-linear writing age, but, uh, essentially the Great Work, if there is such a *Great Werke*, remains in the future as a complete change of language, that problem that William talks about very well . . . and which he and I have discussed and would discuss and will discuss again and again at length, and do what little one can toward making it change . . .

T I sort of recall, I've got a note here, that you and he went through a period when you were urging him to move back a bit into conventional narrative . . .

B I would still urge him to do so . . . And others, who blame me for having presented these problems to William, uh, some of them for purely commercial reasons, like a number of publishers, who think Oh well, why hasn't he written 20 books just like *Junky*? Why did he even write *Naked Lunch*?

One morning in room 15 at 9 rue Git-le-Coeur (the Beat Hotel) I received a visit from Sinclair Beiles whom I had known previously in Tangier. He was working for Girodias who . . . now wanted to publish *Naked Lunch*. He wanted a complete manuscript in two weeks. With the help of Brion and Sinclair the manuscript was finished in two weeks and a month later the book was published. (*Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive*)

a complete change of language

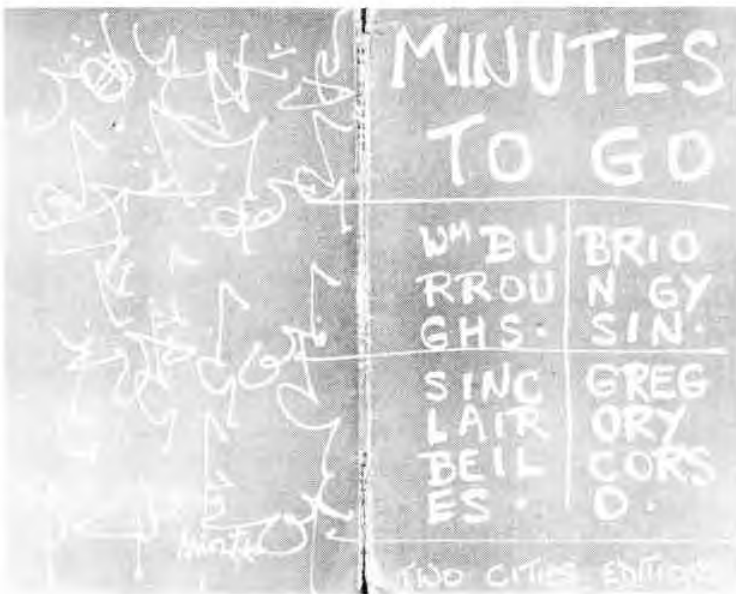
Well, maybe that's just got by, but why doesn't he give us another *Junky-Junky-Junky* or whatever, like that . . . uh, William himself came, uh . . . I don't know . . . perhaps the thing that William and I have most in common, as far as absolute basics of work procedure go, is that when we put our teeth into something we carry it on and on and on and on into its different variations—in fact now that I come to think of it, I'd say that William has a sort of gimlet-type intelligence, much more than I do, but nevertheless our procedure is in a way the same, he maybe in depth drills on and on and on to where a good deal of these texts become absolutely *unreadable*, *nobody* could read them, you just—*William himself* said he couldn't read them a second time . . . uh, they produced a certain kind of very unhappy psychic effects . . . there was no question of their *efficacy*, but, uh, for what one would *use* such a thing, uh, gave pause for thought . . . they were the sort of texts that you might use for brainwashing somebody, or you might use texts for control of an enormous number of people whom you drove mad in one particular way by one sort of application of this dislocation of language, where by sort of breaking off all their synaptic attachments to language you would maybe acquire a social dominance over them, which one considered completely undesirable.

While cutting a mount for a drawing in room 25, I sliced through a pile of newspapers with my Stanley blade and thought of what I had said to Burroughs some six months earlier about the necessity for turning painters' techniques directly onto writing. I picked up the raw words and began to piece together texts which later appeared as "First Cut Ups" in *Minutes to Go* . . . (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

writing is about



Wm Bubrio, Rroungy Ghssin, Singreg Lairory, Beilcors Eso: The Authors of *Minutes To Go*. Publication party at Gait Froger's bookshop, rue de Seine, Paris January 1960.



Minutes To Go book cover

making it happen

T Create events . . . ?

B Yes, well, let alone creating future events, which became quite evident immediately and we've drawn attention to a number of which were predicted in *Minutes to Go*, which was 1960, and came true later; there have been quite a number of things that had extraordinary resonance . . . William has written a very famous short piece (published in *Crawdaddy*, January 1976; his column "Time of the Assassins") in which he said that he asked Jasper Johns what painting was about, and Jasper Johns said, "Well, what is writing about?" And William says "Well, maybe I didn't have my answer then, but I've thought about it a lot since and I think that writing is about *making it happen*." Well, with that in mind, and I don't say that that is all, or necessarily my opinion, but William has written that it's his, uh, and it's true enough, uh—the fact is that what does one do then? "What does one make happen?" becomes the next question. And if it is indeed the writer's job to make it happen, well then it's his choice to decide what to make happen, etc. I mean, we go on from there—another pyramid starts to build itself up . . .

T You . . . uh, did try to influence some Surrealist activities, or alter Surrealist policies at one time, didn't you? I saw that note in the Catalogue: "This must be stopped."

B (laughing) Aha, really?

T Yeah. (laughing) What "must be stopped"?

B (laughing/coughing) Where did you see this?

T The catalogue of your archives.*

B Oh, right, fair enough . . . Oh wow, too big a question there . . . I mean, yeah . . . ooff! . . . a long story, and uh, what "must be stopped" was essentially the Freudian way of looking at the Life Process . . . let's put it as succinctly

* Presumably this refers to the *Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive*.—Ed.

If you want to change fate . . .

and maybe as baldly as that . . .

(tape stops, resumes with:)

B (yelling) Turn the fucker on and let me shout at it and let's see what's happening here. Yeah that's a little bit better—y'hear that squealing of typewriter voices rising out of a Baghdad crowd?—

(tape stops)



William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Room 25, Beat Hotel, after publication of *Naked Lunch*, 1959. (Photo: Loomis Dean, *LIFE*, Paris)

cut up words

Just give me (inaudible) of the word. Actually the Surrealists were long *dead* by the time that the cut-ups came along, the only connection was their futile attempt that Breton later disavowed, what did he call it?—"automatic writing." Admittedly, it was a complete dead end and never got them anywhere . . . uh, but the Surrealists as a live force haven't existed for nearly 40 years . . .

T This was in the Beat Hotel days . . .

B Yeah, well, in the Beat Hotel there were no more Surrealists, there were Lettrists beating at the door, but there were no more Surrealists . . . Lettrists were trying to be the successors to the Surrealists, learning their techniques of party organization—which they did very well—as a terrorist organization . . .

T And they were still making a noise a few months back.*

B Right. Yes that's it, a terrorist organization . . . and a very ineffective one . . .

We began to find out a whole lot of things about the real nature of words and writing . . . *What are words and what are they doing? Where are they going?* The cut-up method treats words as the painter treats his paint, raw material with rules and reasons of its own . . . Abstract painters found that the real hero of the picture is the paint. Painters and writers of the kind I respect want to be heroes, challenging fate in their lives and in their art. *What is fate?* Fate is written: *Mektoub* means "It is written." So . . . if you want to challenge and change fate . . . cut up words. Make them a new world. (BG to Robert Palmer, *Rolling Stone*, May 1972)

* During a performance by Henri Chopin in Montparnasse Brion and I had attended, with John Giorno—TW.

The word which created

T Ummm, you spoke about those sometimes unpleasant psychic results of the cut-ups . . . I've experienced the same thing . . . but to bring it onto a bigger scale, I noted down a dream that William spoke about . . . Somebody said: "They did not fully understand the technique and in a very short time nearly wrecked the planet . . ." In *Minutes to Go* you stated, "It is impossible to estimate the damage" . . . Could we talk about the power that these words can have . . . and you've spoken of painters burning down the subjects they touch . . .

B Yes, yeah . . . essentially, hmmm . . .

T Like the painter in *Minutes to Go*, whose art work blows up the sky . . .

B Hhhmmmm (chuckling) yeah, right . . . Yes, both of those were phrases from *Minutes to Go*, "You cannot estimate the damage" was something out of the, I don't know, *The Observer*, or *Time* magazine, God knows where, but it was a readymade phrase that simply dropped onto the table; several layers of printed material were laid one on top of the other and cut through with the Stanley blade and one simply chose the morsels and put them together, and that was one of the particular phrases that has amused me—this was before I had shown them to William . . . my first games by myself, like that which set me laughing so loud, because the answers were so apt and so extraordinary . . .

. . . I laughed so hard my neighbors thought I'd flipped. I hope you may discover this unusual pleasure for yourselves—this short-lived but unique intoxication. Cut up this page you are reading and see what happens. See what I say as well as hear it.

I can tell you nothing you do not know. I can show you nothing you have not seen . . . (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

the world is Hello!

I think that the estimate of it *is* inestimable, the damage *cannot be estimated* on the sort of nationalistic level of a language to a nation, the damage cannot be estimated at this time because obviously in One World one will speak one language, and there will be one kind of understanding . . . uh, what that *leads to* on other levels has yet to be thought about or spoken about, it may be horrifying even, or denounced at the moment as being horrifying, but it may not be horrifying at all, it may be absolutely delightful, it may be paradise on earth again, when everyone speaks the same language . . . That after all was the Expulsion from Eden and the failure of the Tower of Babel, both failures of language, where the commandment was not to eat that fruit, which was essentially the fruit of communication, the fruit of *language* itself, and communication being the fruit of two personalities knowing each other, Adam and Eve, or Adam and Lilith, or whoever it was, like that . . .

**. . . All Eastern philosophies are hung up on the Word . . .
“In the Beginning was The Word.” Well . . . I’ll tell you the
Word . . . The Word which created the world is *Hello!* (Mya
Himmer, in *The Process*)**

**. . . SHE means to say right enough the first word was
enforced recognition of another being *inside* the human
body. The body *was* recognition of Word. (WSB, “Without
Your Name Who Are You?” Introduction to *Désert
Devorant*, French edition of *The Process*)**

Communication itself is the Original Sin—that was what had been forbidden. Animals do not communicate in that way—I mean, yeah, dogs talk . . . well, that’s a whole

monkeys . . . could talk if they wanted to, but

other subject—I've done a lot of recording of dogs barking back and forth and it would be quite possible to decipher what they're talking about and to understand dog language, I mean, y'know, it's like, *fuck-fuck here—food-food here—News* is spread by dogs over hundreds of kilometers, as we used to hear in Tangier, and I started recording a dog upstairs; I thought that if I recorded him, played him back to himself, that would, you know, turn him around so that he'd stop barking at night, but instead of that my microphone picked up dog voices that I hadn't even been conscious of hearing, or some that even my ears couldn't hear, in other decibels, and I heard that they indeed have a language, and they talk about their dog situation . . . they do, and in great detail, enormous detail, they tell about big gang-fucks, they tell . . . essentially about sex and food, but they talk about sex and food all the time. They also say, *Bad people here—bad people there?—Hhhmmmm not so bad here—Bad there?*—and they talk back and forth back—*bark people there—bark* and forth, like that, and you can understand—anybody who set himself to studying it conscientiously with the machines that we now have at our disposal and our knowledge of semiology and linguistics could decipher dog language inside, I don't know, six weeks, a week . . .

The dogs too, they followed Adam and Eve out of the Garden, as you remember—the only animal that followed them out of the garden was the dog. The cat came slinking along later and never talked, no never opened its yap . . . And monkeys came swinging out of the trees later and made more people, 'cause who did they fuck? They fucked monkeys . . . and made people. And what everybody says, in the Arab world, about monkeys is that *They know—they could talk if they wanted to, but they know*

. . . soon as you talk . . . you have to work

better—'cause if they talked they'd have to work . . . So—as soon as you talk, as you communicate, you have to work—that's a basic law . . . and one could . . . write a book just on that alone . . .

Burroughs was very hard to talk to because he didn't like to say anything . . . Gysin would do all the talking. I'd go down to Gysin's room and he would talk and show me his painting and explain things. Then we'd go back to Burroughs' room and all three of us would sit on the bed—because there were no chairs—and try to make conversation. (Maurice Girodias to Victor Bockris, *The New Review*, 1976)

. . . The methods were first of all a disruption of the time sequence . . . produced by the cut-ups, and one had the idea of rubbing out the word itself, not simply disrupting its sequential order, and finding some other way. There are other ways of communication, so an attempt at finding them would begin by rubbing out the word. If the whole thing began with the word, well then, if we don't like what was produced, and we don't, let's get to the root of the matter and radically alter it. (*Rolling Stone*, May 1972)

We went through the Ice Age in the Cave and came out to hunt sickly-pale like Lazarus or any Haitian zombie with a Reactive mind built in by our women who sent us. Women-sent Mother-lovers, to a man. It must've been great in that Cave—or that's the way they put it. Me, myself, now . . . All anybody was ever supposed to want to do was to get back IN. Well, if you want to get IN instead of OUT then SPACE is not for you and you are going to get less and less of it until you don't have any at all . . .

. . . you've got nothing to lose but that worthless junk

the word is Female . . .

you're sitting on. Get out of that blue frigidaire and Live. You'll know everything. You'll hear everything. And you'll see everything that's going on. Really make the entire scene. Not many chicks will. Say they know plenty already. They do. (BG, *Minutes to Go*)

As no two people see the same view along the Way, all trips from here to there are imaginary: all truth is a tale I am telling myself. (*The Process*)

Few books [*The Process*] have sold fewer copies and been more enthusiastically read . . . a single copy often serving 50 people . . . perhaps the basic message of the book is too disquieting to receive wide acceptance as yet . . . (*Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive*)

To protect this art the right way, clout first Woman and believers in their look of things. (BG, *Minutes To Go*)

T In *The Process*, Brion, the Word is Female . . . it's illusion, the instrument of illusion . . .

B Hmmm . . .

T So rubbing out, obviously—your phrase “Rub out the Word”—

(tape stops, resumes)

. . . disrupt and challenge fate.

B Absolutely, hmmm . . . The Word is the same kind of illusion that Eve is, in that she's not a real creature, she's something made out of man's rib—well, what's closest to your rib is your lung, what comes out of your lung is your breath, what you use to speak with is your breath, all Word is a manipulation of breath—Life is Breath, Death is No-Breath—uh, communication is use of oxygen to produce communication . . . and you have to communicate

it's illusion, the instrument of illusion . . .

with somebody—you communicate with your *own rib*?
. . . Who is the hideous creature that you blame God for
having put beside you in the Garden of Eden where you
didn't *have* to go through this kind of shit—but as soon as
you get out there and have to work, and you're gonna need
more people to work for you when you get old, you're gon-
na have to have some kids, and so you have it with your
own rib—who is this hideous fucking thing which is closer
to you than your own . . . than the vein in your own neck,
and more troublesome—and a big mistake, obviously . . .

T Ordinary sex, then, reinforces the current set . . . human
time . . .

B Even electrically it does . . . you get a little plus and a little
minus plugging into each other like that, back and forth
. . . to no good purpose . . . replicas . . .

**Back to Earth you Drones . . . And keep humping. (BG,
Minutes to Go)**

. . . Mya packs so much power herself that the trick is to keep
making it real. What is real can be real only in Present Time,
you'll admit . . . The consort "withholds" the Queen "Be"
in Perpetual Present Time on the prong of his prick. Without
her phallic plungings several times a day into real reality and
beyond, she could not be what she is. I'm not her Pygmalion:
I don't claim to have created her deep-strata geology but I
have staked it all out. If she should start singing you siren
songs about becoming Sultan of the Sahara or some such, just
throw it out of your mind: steer clear of that reef . . .

. . . If . . . you really want out, I'll tell you one thing you
really should keep to yourself: the World is contained in that
Word. If you have understood, there is no other mystery. The
Way Out is to permutate . . . "*Rub out the Word*" (Thay
Himmer, in *The Process*)

Orgasm . . . a means to get out

- T So alternative sex, then . . . presumably at the point of orgasm focused attention can be used to—
- B Orgasm would seem to be a blackout, a way out of the individual situation, highly prized therefore, and desirable and searched-for, as a means to get out of one's ever-present situation, for even a brief flash or two . . .
- T But if you focus attention . . . whatever image comes into the mind, that would have some effect . . . Some kind of specialized state of mind brought about by training, at the point of orgasm . . . can that actually produce an event?
- B I don't think that anybody in the West, uh, has really devoted any serious attention to this . . . they've devoted the kind of Sexual Revolution attention that is now being directed toward the sexual act, but nobody has thought about it philosophically, religiously—both words I don't like very much—as much as, say, the Hindu religion has . . . and you know about the Hindus . . . I mean, you know how they think of sex and how they treat sex and, from our point of view, what incredibly bad sex they are . . . they believe that any orgasm is a loss of the vital forces . . . uh, they don't really like to think of it in those terms so they transfer this denial to the actual ejaculation of sperm . . . they would seem to have come to the conclusion that one had only a certain amount—I indeed would agree with the idea that one has only a certain number of orgasms in a lifetime—I mean, just think about it, of course it's true . . . (laughing) very simple situation . . . however many or however few they may be, one just has that number, that's all there is to it, and when the number is ended and you're ended or when your orgasms are ended, or whatever it is, that is your number that you hit . . . uh, I suppose they must've thought about it originally in those terms, and they decided to save the expense; they

of one's ever-present situation

would continue to have orgasms but they wouldn't spend any sperm except to make children . . . uh, they do this by physical manipulation which, I don't know why, but no hippie friends seem to've understood the mechanism of—at least no hippie friends that I've talked to who've tried to make it sexually on the Indian continent—have had any idea really what's going on there like that . . . but what they *do* is that they, a man whose partner is in front of him, reaches behind him with his right, or even, I think more probably his left hand, like that, and presses at the very base of his prostate gland and he sends the ejection of sperm not through his urethra and penis but back up into his bladder and pisses it out later . . . and he thinks he's won a round on fate by not having lost his sperm, and therefore not lost that much of his vital force, that much of his life, that much of his productivity, that much of the very life force of which he considers himself to be only a reflection . . . These kinds of thought haven't really, although they're on their way, they haven't got across to the West yet . . .

- T Yeah . . . I was thinking a little . . . these people like Crowley, they had their sex magic . . . these sexual acts were supposed to bring in money, for instance . . . presumably that was concentrated attention—
- B They can, they often do (laughing) . . .
- T (laughing) . . . Uh, not recently . . .
- B Oh yes, if they're handled right . . .
- T Uh . . .
- B Go on for a lifetime maybe . . . marriage, being one of the situations . . .
- T What about Hassan i Sabbah, the Assassins? . . . These were sexual techniques?

Where would you put a

. . . Yesterday a thousand years ago, Hassan i Sabbah, a Persian by birth and school-chum of Omar Khayyam, walked by accident (as if there were any accidents) into the studios of Radio Cairo to find all the cats bombed. He realized like a flash that *he* could SEND, TOO. He took the mike to an unheated penthouse called Alamut near the Caspian . . . his original station nearly a thousand years ago could broadcast from Alamut to Paris with Charlemagne on the house phone and as far as Xanadu East. Today the same lines have been proliferating machine-wise and a stray wire into the room I am In . . . Well, you figure it out . . . (BG, *Minutes to Go*)

B Uh . . . presumably . . . ummmm I've written a piece which has gotten lost; I've sold it to a collector instead of getting it published . . . it wasn't a very good piece, it was funny . . . essentially not a very funny subject . . . but, uh, I made a pilgrimage to Alamout, the castle of the Assassins . . . uh, in the summer of 1973—and I know less than when I started . . . that's it . . . I know less than when I started . . . I know a lot more than any book that I've read about it . . . there are maybe better books, and I understand that Professor Corbin is bringing out new material which he got through the Aga Khan, who is said to be a descendant—in fact the Aga Khan's vast wealth and spiritual authority depends on being a descendant of a captive and then eventually reigning Old Man of the Mountain, and a Fatimid, descended from the Prophet's own daughter Fatima, who was chosen by the British to be a great leader who was not a territorial prince—the British in 1885 realized that they were having such terrible trouble with the Indian princes who were territorially based, that they had a sort of competition which was judged in British fashion by a British court in Bombay, in which they put to

library of 200,000 books?

trial the Sufis as represented by the great-grandfather, or certainly the forebears of Idries Shah, and his rather kind of sloppy commercialized Sufism that he's trying to push in England right now . . .

And, uh, they lost and the Aga Khan won, and the Aga Khan, curiously enough, was a descendant of the last Old Man of the Mountain . . . and the Ismaelis had papers and documents which have recently been handed to, or been given for study by French authorities such as Corbin . . . and I'm sure he knows a great deal more about the Old Man of the Mountain than I do . . . although I think he's not been to the Castle, which is a very extraordinary experience, it's only one of a great series of castles in the mountains to the south of the Caspian Sea . . . and, uh, one learns a great deal from actually visiting such a place, as I suggested you might visit Genet's castle of Fontevrault that he wrote *The Miracle of the Rose* about, and would learn a great deal from just being at base itself . . .

Uh, some of the conclusions were practical—like, uh, it must be fucking cold up there in the wintertime, and this area is so small where would you put a library of 200,000 books; there isn't enough room to put away 200 packages of vitamin B-1 . . . uh, very tiny, very small, very dangerous, cold and uncomfortable sort of spot . . . which I guess Hassan i Sabbah dug a lot, and he must've been very hard to live with is all I can think of . . . (laughing) end of that—push the button . . .

(tape stops)



**"GIMME
THE
KEYS"**





“gimme the keys!”

Prisoner: Come Out!

**See the Silent Writing of Brion Gysin, Hassan i Sabbah,
across all skies! (WSB)**

B You're not gonna ask me to begin with a denunciation of Ira Cohen, whom I love *dearly* and *devotedly*, and really have for many years . . . ? Uh, this sprung off from my saying that you can't walk up to people and say *Gimme the Keys*—right?

T I wasn't going to talk about Ira Cohen . . . uh, we mentioned earlier the quote at the end of *The Process*, the ancient text saying that those who wish to know must know through association with those who know, or words to that effect . . . and, uh (laughing) . . .

B Go ahead . . .

T And you said in *Minutes to Go*, “If you want to disappear, come around for private lessons” (laughing) . . .

B —Oh, so you've come for a private lesson, have you? (laughing)

T Yeah.

B Well, I can do it . . .

T Obviously.

B You're here and I may not be . . .

Algiers, 1956.

How much can somebody

T Uh . . . so “Give me the Keys.”

B (laughing) Ah . . .

T . . . No . . . all right . . . but how much can somebody really give somebody else?

B Not much . . . not much . . . I have a very amusing thing that William remembered, amused me that he remembered it, in the, uh, last edition of *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*, saying—no, it’s not—it’s in *Sideswiping*, or whatever, you seen that book?

T *Sidetripping* (with photographs by Charles Gatewood; text by William Burroughs).

B *Sidetripping*, yeah . . . it says, *For Brion, who said you cannot show anybody anything that he hasn’t already seen* . . . Well, that’s the same thing about any kind of teaching. I mean, nobody can give you the keys unless you know what a key looks like . . . and it doesn’t necessarily look—as Korzybski said about a chair: “This is anything you like in the world except a chair”—except the word “chair.” Well, it’s the same about a key, or teaching, it’s anything you like except what you think it is . . . and if you think it is something, your thought has been molded by that form, and you cannot therefore . . . you say “I’m a lock! I’m a lock! Put in your key and turn me over!” . . . Well, Turn the Boys Over is, uh, one way of doing it; in fact most Oriental knowledge, most mystical knowledge, has been handed on from teacher to adept by Turn the Boy Over . . . now, there must be other ways—there *are* other ways, they may not be better ways—but it’s a way that doesn’t go on forevermore . . . not even on this squeaky machine . . . this squeaky machine doesn’t even wanna turn the *tape* over . . . So anybody who wants to learn does not come in saying “Gimme the Keys!” He comes in and tries to seduce his teacher . . . there are teachers who

really give somebody else?

are beyond seduction . . .

T In other words, the knowledge is stolen?

B Essentially . . . stolen, swiped or exchanged in an atmosp— let's say rather than stolen—which I think is true too, I wouldn't deny that—it's exchanged in a relationship of love, the way a disciple falls in love with his guru, uh, the way some of our American friends, our wanting American friends, have fallen in love with their Tibetan gurus, who are certainly worthy of love, they're charming old gentlemen . . . but, uh, there's not necessarily anything sexual there, whereas in the relationship of the sexes previously, in most Oriental mysticism, was definitely passed from Master to disciple by the actual *act* of love, as in Rumi . . . or some of those greater, famous cases in history . . . but, uh, nobody can rush in like they've come out of the supermarket and want to get into the condominium and say "*Gimme the Keys! Gimme the Keys!*"

(tape is turned over)

"I" from *The Process* . . .

In *The Process* description is done on location. It consists of a number of narrations all done in the first person by different characters. The sections are entitled: I THOU HE SHE IT WE YOU (fem.) YOU (masc.) THEY. These voices are recordings on the Uher of Ulysses O. Hanson of Ithaca, New York, a potsmoking Negro professor skilled in scholarship-foundation-grant and sponsor-hopping, a traveler through a great desert where the fabulous Himmers juggle precarious phantom empires over heat waves and atomic testing sites. His tape recorder is the point of observation that brings each narration into present time . . . There is Hamri . . . Hamri who comes from the mountain village of Jajouka where the

Nobody can rush in . . .



“Paul Bowles in the summer of 1950 took this picture of Hamri in the house, *derb maimouni* in the medina of Tangier, the district called Amrah. Paul had just bought this handsome brown and white silk caftan in the ‘Brothels Shop’ in Tetouan. Hamri had just ‘retired’ from the train.” —BG

and say, Gimme The Keys!

Rites of Pan are still celebrated. Hamri the smuggler king of the trains who was ruined at 15 because he forgot the boy he was visiting has a wicked sister. Hamri the Painter, Hamri who is not at all content to be just a recording . . . And . . . that interplanetary vaudeville team the Himmers . . . This pair who travel through Africa with a million dollars tossed casually into a suitcase leaving a wake of riots and devastation behind them as all travelers in present time must do riding a surfboard on the wave of present time . . .

We do not see the director or the scriptwriter. Their presence is as always inferential. We do not see Hanson who records plays back and changes the tapes. He himself is another recording made by someone who does not appear . . . The last word is not spoken from a human throat . . . Word is once again *outside*. Only the recordings remain . . .” (WSB “Without Your Name Who Are You?” French edition of *The Process*)

“I”

. . . refilled the pipe with my excellent Ketama to send it passing around the re-formed circle on the mat. I told Youngest Brother that I had come further across the Great Waste of the World than he—from beyond a great river of salt called the Atlantic, which runs away in the sands to the west. For the River, I quoth, hath more need of the Fountain than the Fountain hath need of the River. I am that River, running away on your Afrique shore where, from your lips tonight, dear Brother, I have heard the Fountain well up; bubbling up from the great fossil underground river where the blind crocodile of our Master, Hassan i Sabbah, Old Man of the Mountain and Great Sandy Waste, has lurked for centuries in darkness. Youngest Brother nodded eagerly: “Yes, one day he will break out to devour our Enemy the Sun!”

Magic is

“Ah, so he will, indeed!” I thought: “Mister Ugly Spirit himself, disguised as a hydro-helium bomb.”

Yet, oh, the strange relaxation of it! I alone of all these Assassins had ever been foolish enough to conceive of happiness. The staggering assumptions in my young companion’s calm eyes would make my white American compatriots collapse with a whimper or run screaming for the police. There is no friendship: there is no love. The desert knows only allies and accomplices. The heart, here, is all in the very moment. Everything is bump and flow; meet and goodbye. Only the Brotherhood of Assassins ensures ritual community, if that is what you want and some do; of the lesson our *zikr* teaches is this: *There are no Brothers.* (BG, *The Process*)

B Say it again . . . say it again . . .

T In *The Process* . . . “I alone of all these Assassins had ever been foolish enough to conceive of happiness . . . There are no Brothers.”

B And you added that you could conceive of happiness . . .

T No, I can understand how foolish it is to conceive of happiness . . .

B Oh, I see . . . quite different . . .

T I was questioning “There are no Brothers.”

B I said “There are no Brothers” because everyone is always alone. There can be Brotherhoods in which one, uh, meets, eats, sleeps, smokes together, but essentially each person’s adventure is a singular one; one is born at a certain moment and dies at another and the breathing that one does from here to there is done alone and on one’s own.

T The magician mentioned in *The Process* who they see eating his own shit . . . you said a man must make himself truly impure to free himself from the constrictions of the Law, which keep the rest of society from Magic . . .

outside the Law

- B Well, the idea of law is that everyone remains pure within the Law . . . (loud police sirens outside) and everyone who is not pure within the Law is an outsider . . . uh, a criminal . . . And a magician can only be an outsider and a criminal and must be outside of the Law in order to operate or his function would be within the domain of the Law and therefore regulated by the Law itself. What he claims is that he has another dispensation, another and different dispensation; he says better, more expensive, more effective, whatever you like, but another one, outside the Law . . . In fact, Magic is outside the Law.
- T That statement immediately made me think of Genet . . .
- B Ah, Genet too being outside the Law . . . *I am a pederast, poet, uh, traitor . . . etc—thief, uh, yeah thief, yeah—wow, yeah—he says he’s all these things . . . uh, he would like to be . . . he has accepted and defined his own situation . . . uh, actually he’s a very charming, sympathetic, friendly, rather reliable man . . . so that one’s own definition of oneself is not necessarily anything more than a poetic one.*
- T Sure. We mentioned this a bit earlier . . . about being determined factors in someone else’s game . . . umm, how do you feel about Genet’s line?
- B He would claim that he had been—his fate had been determined by someone else’s game and that is what makes him an outlaw, but then that he remade the game for himself by accepting the situation, redefining the rules and acting according to them—in *that*, he is the most law-abiding man; I cannot imagine him ever infringing one of his own self-inflicted rules which—his rules may be about pederastic love, treason in the realm of military dominance, or the administration of property rights . . . but, uh, he has made very definite—he’s a very legalistic man . . .

The next step is

. . . I write across the picture space from right to left and, then, I turn the space and write across that again to make a multi-dimensional grid with the script I picked up from the Pan people. Who runs may read. I have, I think, paid the pipers in full. Within the bright scaffolding appears a world of Little Folk, swinging in their flowering ink jungle-gym, exercising control of matter and knowing space. (*Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

. . . the next step is everyone into space . . . (BG, *Minutes to Go*)

B Ask me a question.

T Right. William, in "Unfinished Cigarette" (*Birmingham Bulletin* 2, 1963, and in *White Subway*), said that it is "NOT good to lose the self before it is yours again" and he says that he would seem to disagree with you on that aspect . . . he says he's "no enemy of the little people" . . .

B What little people is he referring to?

T He doesn't say.

B Uhh . . .

T But he says "their place is not at the controls of a spacecraft."

B He means fairies . . . ?

T Perhaps.

B The Little People: pixies, gnomes, spirits, leprechauns?

T I think he means the Little People that you refer to in *Let The Mice In*.*

B Hhmm. Uh-huh. Well . . . they get into space quite easily by themselves, maybe that's where they exist, in fact. I don't know why he's disagreeing with me.

* Recorded and played at the Institute for Contemporary Arts, London, December 1960, as I painted a picture 6' x6' and quietly disappeared—BG. (Part of this text forms the foreword of this book).

everyone into space

T They don't need the spacecraft anyway?

B They exist in another time than ours, that's really their definition. Uh, I can show you lots right here in this pad as a matter of fact . . . who exist in another sort of time.*

(tape stops)

T Thank you!

B You gonna talk about the Little Folk? (laughing) . . . So, uh, creatures that exist in the same space do not necessarily exist in the same time . . . we do, we exist in what we consider to be the only space-time unit . . . but in a book I read years ago by Nicholas Guppy, about the Amazonia forest, he gave the case of a . . . genus, what do y'call it—no, not a race—a *tree*, a type of tree which grows at only a height of 60 feet, or a hundred feet . . . and dropping its seed every year it approached a jungle area where the trees grew to three hundred feet . . . where it therefore couldn't live in their shade . . . but it seems that this tree, over a period of seasons, of generations, produced dwarfs, dwarf examples of itself, which became a sort of creeping vine that ran along the floor of this jungle until it reached the other side of the jungle, where it ceased making any more dwarves, but grew to its own natural height of a hundred feet again, and went on marching down until it met another piece of mangrove, or it met the sea, or it met a river, or something or other like that . . . and he was aware of the fact that this tree seemed to have a purpose—there was no *denying* the fact that it had a purpose, but it took place over a completely different sort of time than the one that we're used to, or that in which we live . . . And, uh, all of literature deals essentially with time, dislocations of

* We adjourned to another room in the apartment where Brion attempted to show me some of these creatures. I could see what he was referring to, but could not conceive of them as living beings—TW.

all of literature deals . . .

time; the problem of any particular book is essentially a problem of time: the time to write it, the time to read it, the time which is represented in it . . . most particularly . . . so once one started cutting-up, one was cutting *through* time-lines, and, uh, got into an area which seemed to be more that of other sort of creatures than ourselves.

T Hmm. I think, uh . . .

B William says he wouldn't want to see these other creatures at the controls of a spaceship, but his idea of a spaceship is a spaceship which exists in man-time.

T Uh, what he's getting at there is . . . the maintenance of tension-engagement—not to lose yourself . . .

B Yes . . . mmm, it's very evident in his writing; it is one of his particular aims . . .

T He seems to equate the Little People, either them or the concept or concern with them, with losing the self . . .

B Losing that tension, losing the self, losing—yes, in fact entering another time . . . which he, I guess, does not approve of; if he says so, I believe him . . .

T Yes—

(tape stops)

Who reads a newspaper can answer the conundrum of the Ages: What are we here for? Man is here to go. But, it will take more than the resources of energy in matter to keep him up there as long as he insists on being that animal, Man. "Am I THAT? Am I? Am I? Am I? . . ." If I ask that I am more than THAT. Kick that Man Habit, Man. The Biological Film, now showing on Earth, can and must be rewritten . . . In the Beginning was the Word, then . . . Rub out the Word. (Brion Gysin *Let The Mice In*)

with time, dislocations of time

- T Right . . . so “We are here to go” . . . umm, William said that “Time is that which ends” and, uh . . . you can say that, I said anyway, “that man is time is point of time since being time is the whole of time.”* Time ends, man ends. This means something more than man in space . . . ?
- B I’d go along with that.
- T You’d go along with that!
- B Mmm . . .
- T Yeah . . . It’s hard to talk about, but does this happen now, tomorrow, or do we have to be here and live a life and either (laughing) go into space at the end of it, or otherwise we end back here . . . ?
- B Oh, that’s one of those questions again . . . (laughing)
- T *I know*—I mean, it’s obvious that these spans of time are meaningless, as far as I’m concerned anyway. But that’s what it seems like from here, past-present-future . . .
- B Well, Buddhist thought has it all wrapped up in the present alone . . . there is no past and there is no future . . . Present time is the only one that is of any interest . . .
- T True and not true at the same time . . .
- B Yeah, most of our activities are linear; uh, painting is less linear than writing or music, which occur in time . . . the time of a painting is very long or very short, instantaneous, essentially out of time, it varies from one moment to the other . . . take the example of a painting that people have looked at forever like the *Mona Lisa*, it has time which is quite different from that of any other portrait of somebody made about that same time . . . or a holy image, an object of worship, is in a time quite different from the time of an image in a newspaper . . .

* Cut-up of text of Dogen, Zen master, in T. Wilson, *Dreams of Green Base*: “Different mind toward the truth exists man disposes of himself and of time . . . That man is time is point of time since being time is the whole of time.”

a specially constructed set, for me . . .

T More so than music?

B Well, music is also linear, it occurs in time, in lengths of time, it is about divisions of time . . . mathematically calculated . . .

T What can we do? . . . Uh, this “maintain tension-engagement” . . . if I wake up today and see it as a specially constructed state, memory thrown in—and *look*—just look at it, see what’s there . . . is that a good method?

B Yes, it’s considered to be a very good method—it’s basically a Buddhist method even, to look at exactly what’s in front of you.

T Seeing this as a specially constructed set, for me, without thinking, uh . . . I am me, I did this yesterday, or five years ago . . .?

B Mmmm . . .

T . . . and there’s a memory bank thrown in . . .

B . . . Yes, mmmm . . . not to any great value, according to them . . .

(tape stops)

**THE
TORSO
OF
1960**





the torso of 1960

I tried to create illusion, but—you're wrong, you're always wrong. It's known the world over. (BG, *Minutes To Go*)

T "Just to be here is wrong"?

B Yes.

(squeaking)

T (laughing) In *Minutes to Go*—and here we go again—"If you want to disappear, come around for private lessons"—did anybody come around?

B *Hah*, "did anybody come around?" Did I manage to disappear? (laughter) . . . I don't know, that's all I can say to that . . .

T Did anybody come around? I mean, did you get callers and, uh, people telepathizing their names and addresses?

B Well, to some extent, yeah . . . I had some strange visitors, lots of strange visitors . . .

T And, uh, did they turn up saying Can I disappear today?

B Well, they'd come, stand in front of the door and go through incredible changes . . .

First light show of the *Domaine Poétique*, in the *Galerie du Fleuve*, Avenue de l'Opera, Paris 1959. (Photo: Nicolas Tikhomirov)

I sat once for 36 hours



Beat Hotel, 1961. (Photo: Gino Forman)

looking directly at the mirror

T (hysteria)

B . . . rather a dark hallway, they'd stand there glimmering, showing off their psychic aptitudes . . . Sinclair, for example, used to stand there with a kind of . . . bluish glow around him in the dark, and turn into rather fierce Chinamen, and I'd say, "No, no, Sinclair, you can't come in," and I'd send him away . . .

T He told me that you had a mirror in your wardrobe, you used to open up—

B Yeah.

T And you tried these things of making the image . . .

B Yeah, I sat once for 36 hours looking directly at the mirror; I was sitting lotus position on the bed, the mirror was face to me, and anybody could hand me things around the corner of the mirror, like food, or cigarettes, or joints, or whatever, to keep me there for that length of time, and I sat and kept awake for 36 hours, just staring into this big mirror . . . saw all sorts of things . . .

T Well, I've never done that for 36 hours! . . . The image changes continually . . .

B Yes, yeah . . . you see great galleries of characters, running through, and—how far have you gone? How—

T Well, the black, congealed, nasty faces . . . alternating ghastly, monstrous image with sort of angelic, uh—

B And you've seen scientists, too, in their sort of 19th century labs, uh . . . ?

T No, just alterations to the actual face . . .

B Uh-huh, you haven't seen whole events or whole scenes sort of frozen—

T No.

B Not ever? Just the face itself? You've seen all sorts of Oriental faces?

T Yeah.

I got to the point



Beat Hotel, Paris 1959. "Where is the big yellow paper seen on the right?"

where all images disappeared . . .

- B And faces which never existed, and great chieftains of unknown races, and so forth and so on, going back and back further and further in time and history?
- T Y-e-s, but not to that extent, no . . . mainly alternations of beautiful-ugly-villainous-saintly . . .
- B For how long? What is the longest period of time for which you've looked in the mirror?
- T Maybe not more than an hour, I'd say . . . maybe more . . . I don't really know . . . I started doing this maybe ten years back . . . those times I may have sat there a long time, but I don't really know what I was doing . . . I find it harder to do now . . .
- B It was very hot around 1960-61, all sorts of people all over the world were having odd experiences with the mirror . . . and, uh, my man in Morocco, who cooked for me for years, for example, once said that—I had been absent from Tangier at the time, but I was staring in the mirror—and he casually mentioned that he had been doing the same sort of thing . . . he had in his house a large plate glass mirror, 19th century ornately framed kind, and he had seen the same sort of things happening . . . and then I found people who were in California, people who were in India, people who were all over the place had sort of caught on to it for some time . . . so the mirror *was* hotter at one period than it is anymore . . .
- T One of the things that interested me about Cocteau, I always wondered—
- B He must've done a great deal of mirror staring, yeah . . . he used it often and very successfully in his films—one of his main props, as a matter of fact . . .
- T Yes. Did you get to the point where you didn't know which one of you was . . . where . . . ?
- B I got to the point where all images disappeared, eventually

The Biological Film . . .

. . . after certainly more than 24 hours of staring . . . where there seemed it was a limited area that one could see only a certain distance into, uh, where everything was covered with a gently palpitating cloud of smoke which would be about waist-high . . . that was the end, there was nothing beyond that . . .

T A Buddhist told me once when I mentioned it to him that it was dangerous . . . that, uh . . .

B You'd swap places with one of those people?

T Yeah.

B Who knows, who knows, I don't know . . . but people who have some sort of mystic discipline are forever telling you that any personal experimentation is dangerous, you must do it according to the rules that they have laid down . . . and I've never agreed with that either . . .

Yes, the years in the Beat Hotel were full of experiments . . . it was the right time, the right place, and the right people meeting there together, there were lots of experimental things going on . . .

T Tell me a little about the projections, projecting a mask of light onto yourself . . .

B Well, projecting . . . at the proper focal distance projecting one face on another, uh, is the area in which I worked in the light show I developed for the *Domaine Poétique*, the sort of sound poetry group, 1962-3-4, thereabouts . . . and there were theatrical performances in which we used projected images in a way that they hadn't been used up until that time—and still haven't been used again, it's rather remarkable that they haven't . . . I worked it out with Ian Sommerville as a technical help . . . and a very great one . . . and we did shows that persuaded other professional artists, like George Maciunas of Fluxus and people like that, who included it into the area of experimenta-

Walk away and

tion which they called Expanded Cinema . . . so I've come to the conclusion that he must've thought it was actually a movie that we were showing him, hadn't realized that our finances wouldn't allow such a thing . . . and it was, uh, some of the first experiments done with two projectors, the soft focus fade-ins and fade-outs passing back and forth from one to the other, and it was a continuous light show, in fact very much part of the whole early movement of the light show . . .

We started it about 1960, doing things with just a small projector in one room . . . Ian made the kind of box that I had seen used in the American army as a teaching aid, where you can take any document, put it in this box and project it onto a screen . . . he made one and we used it for projecting collages and arrangements of photographs and things onto the ceiling . . .

T How would it be? You were on stage and it was projected onto you—

B I played into my own image, and out of it, or I was surrounded by an image that was, uh, partly projected onto me, depending on what colour I was wearing—I would wear black, for example, and then open a zipper and, uh, wearing a white T-shirt underneath I would be somebody else . . . I would be another projected person, into which I could walk or out of which I could walk . . .

T Walk away and leave the projection there . . .

B Yeah, hmmm . . .

T Uh, these projections actually put onto an audience—

B Well, the audience to some extent has that done to them in any big ballroom scene, where you have one of those balls of beveled mirror projecting creepy lights all over them—yeah, of course . . . The light shows that developed later in the States, and went along with rock shows, did

leave the projection there . . .

include projection on the audience . . .

T How did you feel when this was projected onto you?

B What—physically? Those things are very hard to discuss . . . yeah, one does feel something in fact . . . one does . . . but those are slippery subjects . . .

T It does seem, to some extent, to mold features, or affect—

B I wouldn't want to go that far, but as you pointed out, pictures of me taken in 1960 look as I look today, 1976, 15 years later . . . but they were pictures of myself projected onto me, and there I indeed appear to be another person, 15 years older, which I am now and look oddly like the projection . . . but I don't know what conclusions to draw from that.

T You projected masks, didn't you?

B As well, yeah . . .

T They look similar . . .

B Hmmm . . .

. . . Blues deepen like vertigo into permanganate purples. An icy chill sweeps the very length of darkness after sun, cracking the desert rocks like a rattle of fire across the Sahara. Step into a grain of sand. It is Everybody's Earthly Kingdom bathed in the white light. You can get the light with prayer, mescaline, fasting, sex and know where to find it again when you want it. Practice makes perfect. Neither prayer nor mescaline nor anything else makes it happen. The light is there. Myself, I think that our troubles have only started and now that we have cut you in on this you are in on it whether you like it or not. You are on our side now that you have read this far and you are sitting pretty. This has taken you out of the area of words. If they throw words at you cut them up and throw them back. If you want to make them disappear just rub out their words. If you want to disappear . . . (BG, *Minutes to Go*)

MEKTOUB





mektoub

Every magician must eat his own excrement eats his own words. (BG quoted by Sinclair Beiles, *Minutes to Go*)

B You're gonna ask these great big airy questions . . . ?

T Yeah, I'm gonna ask these—in fact already have asked these great big airy questions which cover so much time and space—is that right?

B Time and space . . .

T Yes . . . so we'll have a quote from *The Process*, or *Let The Mice In* . . .

B And then after that'll be followed by my dumb answers, is that it?

T Yeah, after that'll be followed by your dumb answers.

B Ah . . . (laughter)

T No . . . uh, those quotes'll show what I'm trying to get at and what you're ummm . . .

B Well, my answer is that what is written is written: *Mektoub*—and essentially what is extemporized as we're doing now is of a different quality; I said that William has his show on the road with highly polished answers ready, as you say it looks as though ticker tape was coming out of his mouth—and here we are kinda floundering around on a sunny afternoon in June . . .

With Boomba, near Tangier 1955. (Photo: Herbert List)

. . . *the spelling wrong*

—So ask me a question! . . . a straight question to which I can give a fairly intelligent answer, which I'm capable of . . .

T I was just thinking about the difference between sunny afternoons in June and ticker tape coming out of your mouth . . .

(laughter)

It's been your way though, hasn't it? . . . Not to formulate, not to have this ticker tape, to be a sort of . . .

B It's not my style, no, it's not my style at all . . . and it is William's . . .

T You're like a sort of ocean . . . When I read that last night . . . and I can't remember the *name*, but, uh . . . the man who got the flute from Bou Jeloud and made the reproductions . . . didn't he? He made copies of Bou Jeloud's flute.

B Where did this come in? Last night . . .

T That's in the liner notes to the Jajouka recording.

B Uh-huh. Right.

T It just reminded me of you. Bou Jeloud was angered by the man who made the reproductions.

B And that's *me*?—That's me, or am I Bou Jeloud? (laughing)

T I don't know.

B I am not Bou Jeloud nor was meant to be . . . No, I don't really quite see the reference to those liner notes, 'cause I don't think I've read them . . . (laughing) I think I'd better go and read them now!

(tape stops)

Ah . . . now that I've read them, I see that that is a text supposedly by Hamri, who is illiterate, can neither read nor write, but has dictated some tales to various people, and, uh, I wouldn't vouch for their authenticity. Hamri, of course, is "Hamid" of my book *The Process*, and is a

the story wrong too, quite often

painter, and now married to an American wife who is trying to make a, a Paul Bowles-type Moroccan writer out of him—an illiterate writer by dint of tape recorder—I think she doesn't even have a tape recorder, she just takes them down from dictation and, uh—

T (muttering) I'll give her this!

B Well, she may need something like that, because she gets all the spelling wrong, and, uh, gets the story wrong too, quite often . . . but Hamri did—Hamri and she, with the help of someone else published a little book in Southern California of these *Tales of Jajouka* (Capra Press, 1975), which has disturbed the musicians themselves terribly because they had wind of the fact that this, uh, slanderous publication was going around (chuckling) telling untrue stories about them . . . and Hamri's stories are sometimes very amusing, quite salacious, and talk very freely and even rather, uh, frankly and—certainly from the Moroccan point of view—very shockingly about sex in the village, which of course is never talked about—practiced all the time and never talked about, as in (laughing) as in an English village.

Well, they may not even practice it there, I don't know (laughter) sure they don't talk about it . . . However, the Moroccans don't like the idea that it's been written about at all, and I'm sorry I haven't got the little book here for you to copy down some excerpts from, 'cause some of it I found very amusing, but I seem to've misplaced it, or lost it, or . . . tossed it away even, I don't know . . . hope not . . .

T What can you remember from it that was amusing? The salacious stories, what did they involve?

B Well, the sex life of the eldest musician, who is a man who claims to be about 120—and may possibly be—and is a

The salacious stories,

charming little old cricket of a man who is carried by the other practicing musicians, is carried to big festivals . . . and, uh, he has a long and, as I said, salacious story of running after dancing boys all his life and various tricks that've been played on him or he has played on others, and things like that—at least as *Hamri* recounts it, I know *nothing* about it.*

T “Nothing is true . . .”

B (laughing) “Nothing is true, everything is permitted” . . . not everything is permitted in the village, it's not true . . . alas . . . it's not really Hassan i Sabbah's village, but another . . .

I went to Hassan i Sabbah's Alamout, as you know, I wrote a rather poor piece about it that nobody even bothered to turn down, it just sort of came back to me some way without any proper refusal from whoever I sent it—oh, *Rolling Stone*, I think . . . must've been quite shocked by it . . . The story of going to Alamout with a very charming and witty, rather campy American friend, and, uh, that may've been too much for them, I don't know . . .

T It was just that that was too much for them?

B Well, maybe they just didn't . . . no, it wasn't their sort of thing at all, in fact they, they're not publishing things like that, they're into politics . . . Watergate-type, CIA . . .

T Fear and loathing at Alamout . . .

B (laughing) Yes, fear and loathing . . . hmmm . . .

T It must've been quite an experience to be there?

B Overwhelming. Very difficult physically and psychically. I had asthma, mountain sickness, and sheer funk . . . uh, wearing town shoes, climbing up to those really extremely

* For more on Hamri and Jajouka see “Send Up With Our Shadows” tapescript with BG, Rikki Stein and others in the *Soft Need BG Special*

what did they involve?

inaccessible spots . . . where there are traces of the fortifications and, uh, whether they date from the time of the Old Man himself one doesn't know, but the castle was utterly destroyed by the Mongols . . . one can judge that it must've been an absolutely impregnable place, but really very small, too small to hold a library such as he was said to have possessed . . . the Mongol conqueror was accompanied by a historian who claims that he actually saw such a library, that it was destroyed or utterly dispersed at that time . . . uh, recently French scholars have claimed to have come up with original manuscripts which are in the hands of Ismaeli followers of the Aga Khan, who had settled in Bombay several centuries ago, and Corbin has recently published some material here in France; but I haven't had the official version of that, because he was scooped by a journalist who runs a pseudo-psychic magazine and managed to get hold of Corbin's papers and produced a rather ludicrous account of what was supposed to be in them . . . I think we're going to have to wait for the documents to be properly published, but there may still be written information that we don't know about with regard to the organization of the Assassins . . .

T In terms of the cut-up technique, being in direct line from—

B Ah well, Hassan's private story . . . was that he went to school in, uh—y'got any more squeaky tape here, or you running out?—he went to school near Meshad, in eastern Iran, at the University of Nishapur a century or so after the Turk invasion of that part of the world, and he found that he had to share a room with two other boys; one of them was Omar Khayyam, who became the great mathematician, astronomer and poet, whose *Rubaiyat* everybody knows in the Fitzgerald translation, and the other boy

He was the victim of

became the prime minister of that whole vast empire . . . and they took a schoolboy oath that they would always help each other in later life . . .

And after they left school Hassan i Sabbah went back to his native town, which doesn't exist anymore; it was south of where Tehran is today, and, uh, the oldest of the three became prime minister and gave the job of court astronomer, which was a lifetime sinecure, to Omar Khayyam . . . and Hassan i Sabbah then presented himself at court and asked for an equivalent position and was given the direction of the finances . . . And he found when he came to deliver his speech on the exchequer that his manuscripts had been cut in such a way that he didn't at first realize that they had been sliced right down the middle and repasted—books were individual folios that were pasted into bindings at that time, or else one great big roll out of which one read . . . All of his material had been cut up by some unknown enemy and his speech from the Woolsack was greeted with howls of laughter and utter disgrace and he was thrown out of the administration . . . So he was the victim of a cut-up, and that was the reference that you remembered, in fact . . .

T And you suddenly found yourself in line from that . . . you produced cut-ups and it tied you in even more so than you had been—

B Huh. I don't know that I really wanna be tied into anything . . .

T Whether you wanted to or not . . .

B I found it very disturbing when I was at Alamout, to imagine . . . uh, *find myself* under strong psychic attack—whereas the friend with whom I was traveling went scampering around the precipices like a goat, I suddenly was attacked with vertigo, which I hadn't ever experienced

a cut-up . . .

- before in my life, and altitude fever—it's very high, it's about 10,000 feet, perhaps more . . . so that there was some physical reason for that . . . But I also felt psychically attached to the place as I have never felt before in any other spot in my travels . . .
- T These effects perhaps could give some indication as to what actually was the state of mind of those adepts there, rather than hashish—
- B I felt that I was somebody that'd been pushed over the precipice, and I wasn't certain that I wanted to be a victim to such an old scene . . .
- T (pointing finger at him)
- B Yeah, long pointed (laughing) William on top of the tower pointing a long bony finger—and there was I tumbling into the precipice—no, that's not the way I wrote this at all . . . I refuse this version . . .
- T Brion, what I was thinking of before, orgasm to produce events—could that be a finger or a penis—
- B Oh, I haven't followed you on *that* one at all! Whaddya-mean?
- T The techniques taught or used there . . . it was an all-male community . . . ?
- B Yes, yeah . . . although other people have now said that it wasn't, but it must have been; physical possibilities are such that it must have been a monastery-fortress—as there were many others in Islam, it was not a new invention. A Ribat, or Rabat, such is the name of the capital of Morocco, originally means a monastery where warrior-monks were gathered, who were pushing Islam . . .
- T I was just trying to tie in the—
- B The exact methods—we don't know enough, there aren't enough documents.
- T But we can assume that—

ordinary Male-Female sexuality

B Oh, a writer can *assume*, a fictioneer can assume . . . but as I said, there probably are going to be more and more documents available within the very short future . . .

T We've said that ordinary Male-Female sexuality reinforces human time . . .

B Mmmm . . .

T The question is what alternatives actually do.

B One would have to go and ask the Assassins . . . I can't answer that . . . It was a subject that I offered to William: I met a woman who'd written an extremely interesting book about it, in 1958, some time like that, and then I started talking about it to William, who took it up with enormous enthusiasm and who came, over the years, to develop a point of view on the subject, but that's not based on any new research . . .

. . . each one of us, naturally, has his or her own move to make in the game. I abhor the word and hate having to use it to refer in any way to our activities, but Mya, being a woman has to be "played with," of course . . . Mya's ambitions are, like Mya herself, potentially limitless. It would not be good for her or for anybody else if she became what she wants to be: the Ace of Space!

. . . my own next move can be accomplished only in silence—utter and absolute silence. I mean this quite literally . . . I have little more to say beyond what I feel I owe to you as a fellow-male who has been drawn abruptly into this tale of ours. *Mektoub*: It is written! The rest is up to you. Be as cautious as you can, of course, for you know that as soon as you have anything like a kingdom, enchanters and conjurers will always drop in from all over Creation to take it away from you, naturally enough . . . (Thay Himmer, in *The Process*)

reinforces human time . . .

- T You said—or it says in *The Process*—“Time is running out and so is this side of the tape”—which it is—“I am about to become as mum as a monk” . . . “the next step is silence”.
- B Well, that’s what comes after the end of the tape, obviously . . .
- T Sure . . .
- B Silence . . .
- T I was thinking of what you said—that you could split . . . You want to get all of your stuff into—
- B Into cold storage—like a cold museum . . .
- T A cold museum . . .
- B Yeah . . . (laughing) a cold, stainless steel-and-glass museum, like Beaubourg . . .
- T Like—?
- B Like the one which I showed you, the new museum in Paris.
- T I thought you said *Bor Bor!*
- B No, not at all! (laughter) I don’t know—I shall call it that from now on . . . The Bor Bor Museum . . .
- T (laughing) Just where you don’t want it . . .
- B Hmmm . . .
- T Oh, this is so hard —
- B Well then stop it for a moment . . .
- (tape stops)

So: there are no blue Little Hills and none of the rest is true, either. I condemn the whole thing. Then, like the governor before the execution, I want to wash my hands but, on this man’s train, there is no water forthcoming. No matter what plunger I push: HOT or COLD, nothing flows out of the rocking walls at my once-magical touch . . . Pushing my face into the mirror over the basin, I say, I breathe to whoever is

. . . physical action of cutting through . . .

in there: “Human problems remain insoluble on purely human terms.” Whoever it is I see in there nods in agreement with me . . . (“I”, *The Process*)

T I was saying, a cut-up is not necessarily just these scissors on paper, it’s juxtaposition of street signs, newspaper, anything you see . . .

B No, I don’t agree with that . . . my point of view has always been from the beginning that it was the physical action of cutting through the material, the word material, which was most like the action that a painter takes when he applies colors to a canvas or ink to a paper, for example: it’s dealing directly with the material as matter, and it’s not simply association lines that are set up by the sort of juxtaposition which occurs in the manner that you’ve just described . . .

T Isn’t it really though a case of fighting fire with fire . . . no disagreement?

B No disagreement, no . . .

PLANET
R-101





planet R-101

“The future is with Control.”

**I go back sick from spells . . . Gysin paint these proceedings
and is *not* dead . . .**

B Life began with creepy ladies . . . who wore bugled dresses
and jet beads and who came sort of creeping up to my
mother and said, uh, “I don’t know if you know it, my
dear, but you have an *Old Soul* here.” . . . and I used to
turn purple with rage and stamp up and down in my Little
Lord Fauntleroy suit (laughter) . . . circa 1920 . . . Oh, I
got photographs, got photographs to prove it . . .

T (laughing) Yes . . . ?

**Yes, I am. I am Here. I remember. No one can separate Me
from Mamie, the doll lovingly misnamed for the lost Belgian
nursemaid, Amie. The world has just recently been invented
and it revolves around Me. Me is my real name, no matter**

BG, Mistro near Sparta in Greece, 1935. (Photo: Brion Gysin)

daily voyages of discovery . . .

what they call Me. My daily voyages of discovery, out claiming all these newfound lands as mine, prove to Me that everything belongs to Me, everything, everywhere. Puddles are ponds, washtubs the ocean. The sky is my ceiling, a walk in the backyard is a dazzling adventure. You can see just how vast the green world was in the summer of 1917. And how new! Lovely sunshine, falling nowhere else. We are in Deseronto, Ontario, Canada.

In this lush jungle back of Granny's house, the dangerous thicket of reeds behind Me is taller than Me and as difficult to get through as the high picket fence it resembles, there in the back-go-round. Purple flag lilies, iris, bloom in the damp ground. Flowers fascinate Me. No bee has yet stung Me. A bright glade of goldenrod as tall as a forest of trees can hide Me from Mummy. She cannot smell them. The flowers give her asthma. Are we not, perhaps, on our way to the privy to make Business? The privy is that first wooden shed with only that one tiny window to let out the flies. All these years later, the stench is still in my nostrils. To do Grunts, as we call it, my china potty is better for Me. My nappies can still wet themselves and so can my cot. A mystery. Hard to tell who does this to Me. Daddy's Little Soldier stands up to urinate. That's what we call it, not pipi. No baby talk for Me. Say your night prayers to find Daddy. Whoever He may be.

Hurry on back past the woodshed and under the clotheslines to the back porch covered with prickly wild cucumber vine. The screen door on a spring can pinch fingers or send Me flying into the kitchen where Granny is making a gingerbread man with cherry red eyes just for Me. Granpa is hiding upstairs with a book. Granny calls Granpa "Poorwill." There is also a bird called Poorwill. Granny sleeps in the same bed with him. Mamie and Mummy sleep in the same bed with Me. Mummy has brown kittens (bronchitis) in her chest. The

do you believe in fairies?

sun wakes Me. Her kittens are purring and all the birds in the wide world out there are singing for Me. My Early Morning Breakfast has been laid out for Me by the Fairies. Mummy has warned Me to be quiet as a mouse or the Fairies will stop bringing it to Me. Eating out of my Hi-diddle-diddle Dish with my silver pusher and thumb-spoon, drinking out of my somewhat battered silver christening mug, gives Me time to plan yet another glorious day.

Marjory Hartigan kissing me in England, May 1920. On the back of this snapshot, in Granny's spiky hand: *Caught again at Brighton, Eng.* Clever old Granny got it wrong, though. This tender assault is taking place in London's Kensington Gardens, near the statue of Peter Pan. "Do you believe in fairies?" I am reluctant because of the whooping cough. Sailing from New York in January I gave it to all the other children at my fourth birthday party aboard the old *Mauretania*. Dame Nellie Melba gave me the party and drew picture stories for me on a big envelope. That morning, I had heard her "exercising her organ" as she called it, with her cabin door open. An inhumanly beautiful sound. "Mummy, Mummy!" I cried, "listen to the nightingale!" Melba overhears me and comes flowing out of her cabin, overwhelming me, carrying me all over the ship to tell everyone on board, from the Captain to the cooks who made peach melba for my party that "out of the mouths of babes," this was the most utterly thrilling, the most staggering compliment of her long career.

Melba made me a star. She held me up in the lounge and people clapped. She held me up on the Captain's bridge and the crew cheered. The Captain himself showed me over his ship. He put earphones on my head to listen to the icebergs that sank the *Titanic*. In the crackling wireless room, "Mister Sparks" sent messages from me to Granny back in Deseronto

I wake up screaming . . .

and on ahead to London to announce my impending arrival to Grandfather Gysin, signed: Master Brion. Later, I blew out all four candles on my cake while Melba sang "Happy Birthday" to Me. Feeling gracious, I allowed them to put me to bed.

I woke up screaming. Screaming for Mamie. Screaming for Mummy. Screaming for anyone because I needed attention. When it came, it came as a shattering surprise. A drunken steward poked his brutal head in the door of my cabin and snarled: "Shaddup ya lil shit! Shaddap or I'll knock ya lil block off, ya hear me?" That left me as breathless as if he really had chopped off my head. Life had unbuttoned Me. The very idea that a steward, *anyone* dared speak like that to Me! The world was not what it pretended to be, after all. My universe needed revising before I dropped off to sleep. I woke up another man.

I woke up at sunrise in England, loving the world. Nanny had knotted blossoming chestnut boughs to my shoulders, so I could fly with the fairies all night. Early Morning Breakfast was there with melba toast cut like sailboats and birds. My social life was adequate. I was not invited to castles but I did know a few eligible little girls. A Field Marshal's granddaughter invited me to an Easter egg hunt, in their charming old house and garden at Banbury Cross, to ride a fine horse. There were some little Honorables present who spoke and acted as if they never had to make Grunts.

I cover the waterfront of Littlehampton with my prawn-catching net sloped over my shoulder like Daddy's rifle, cogitating on my first poem: "*Sailors, ships and smell of tar . . .*," still burning in my nostrils only 60 years later. Stuck for a second line, I meditate on sailors. While we were having tea on the lawn at Grandfather's house, four nearly naked men carrying ladders came to repair the damage done

Nobody knows and nobody cares . . .

to his house when a wartime Zeppelin was brought down in flames on Streatham Common, across the road. These magnificently manly men have blue and red drawings all over them. One man has a Chinese dragon wound around his arm. Flags and anchors. Hearts and flowers. A whole peacock fanning its tail all over his back. In the War, they were Sailors. Sailors are Jolly Jack Tars. They smell good.

“*When my ship puts out to sea . . .*” We are sailing to America, soon to see Aunt Kit in Kansas City, Kansas, Mo. Sailors are nicer than stewards. Nobody knows and nobody cares what a sailor wears. Sailors don’t have to be tidy when they sit down to tea. “*When my ship puts out to sea . . .*” Mummy has to be my amanuensis. I can read but I can’t write yet. “*I can’t sail it very far . . .*” Mummy must have been my first editor, too: “*Because I must come home for tea.*”

A rude woman on the beach, seeing me teeter on a diving board drawn up on the rocky shingle, has the impertinence to call out to Mummy: “Madam, your little girl is going to hurt herself.”

Tinkerbell, the Peter Pan fairy, dances on the ceiling of the hotel dining room when a handsome young waiter plays with the sunlight on a silver fork.

In our own cabin on this inferior boat from Southampton to New York, we find an old woman in our upper bunk, drinking her heart medicine out of a bottle with three stars. When she tosses her potty out of the porthold onto the head of the pilot, according to Mummy, they throw her overboard. Otherwise nothing to report on this boring Atlantic passage on a second class boat.

Kansas City has a real live mermaid in a theater, Annette Kellerman. A naked man who locks himself up in chains, can jump into the same tank of water and come out, Houdini. A little lady in huge feathers of flame: Loie Fuller.

Might have learned something useful

I am sitting on a board across the arms of a barber chair, having my curls cut off. In the mirror, I can see around the curtains into the Turkish bath. Naked men in there, sailors, are chasing each other, playing at leapfrog and piggyback.

Aunt Kit grows a mysterious fruit called papaws on a vine over the sun porch of her California Spanish-style stucco bungalow on a triangular lot.

A slice of American pie in Kansas City, Mo. in 1920.

In 1932, back to my English public school, Downside, in the depths of the Depression, across Canada by cattle train and the Atlantic by cattle boat. The Headmaster's egregious chauffeur Tom picks me up at Southampton.

"Late again, sir. You'll catch it." I laughed. It was weird to be called sir again. I dropped off to sleep as we wound our way through the countryside I got to know so well, Hardy's Wessex. Three times a week, we used to go pub crawling through its narrow stone-walled lanes covered with ivy, from one old inn to the other, reeling back to Downside dead drunk. Nearer school, we had haunts in the ancient hedges by the Roman road, leafy tunnels and refugees from the rain, hollowed out by shepherds centuries ago. Since then, generations of Downside boys have lain in them with a chum, smoking forbidden cigarettes, enjoying each other's company, enjoying each other—*forbidden fruits*.

Downside was, is, beautiful. A little world of its own, monastery and school since the Middle Ages. With Henry VIII and his landgrab of the monasteries, the Reformation expelled them to Douai in Flanders. They came back under James II and fled again when he did, to return when George IV was much under the thumb of Catholic Mrs Fitzherbert, his mistress. The dates, if not the details, are incorporated into the Gregorian arms of the Downside abbey and school. Do they still appear in a bold black seal on the dead white glaze of

like those noisy leather joys . . .

the thick Wilton china we ate off in the Refectory? The four Houses of the school: Caverel, Barlow, Roberts and Smythe, are named after English Catholic martyrs, rich benefactors, titled people, all well-connected. The Benedictines have been called the great Country Gentlemen of the Church.

The Monastery and its Abbey loom over the school, fairly mysterious and apart. Up long echoing stone-vaulted corridors, musky with the smell of men and incense, schoolboys can visit monks who are relatives or close friends of the family or even monks on whom they have developed a schoolboy crush. Such monks may give special instruction, others come down to take daily classes. One or two sleep in the school buildings and take on scholarship boys for extra tutoring in preparation for Oxford. The Headmaster is always a monk.

“The Sack,” as we called him, was a fairly alarming figure: more than six feet of black Benedictine sacking, out of which emerged a tiny chinless head with a great beak like a nose. His voice carried for miles in great squawks. He slushed his words in a way so easy to imitate that it was our constant delight. He reigned over many generations of raw backsides beaten into hamburger by his birch and his malacca cane. Middle-aged men, who still bore his stripes across the ass, sent their sons back to Downside for more. Age had mellowed him by the time I came along. As the Daimler swept into the quad and drew up by the bell tower, there he was waiting for me in the middle of the night. He so nearly filled the Gothic doorway that he stood in a nimbus of light. Tom the chauffeur muttered a mock *God help us all!* The Sack threw a long shadow across all our lives. He never beat Me. More’s the pity, perhaps. Might have learned something useful like those noisy leather joys in which the English, the Germans and now even the Americans so delight. (BG, “Snapshots from the Family Album”)

the future is with

B But, uh, that was a previous wave of the same sort of mystic hogwash that is flowing over us right now . . . that occurred around 1900 I think. My father's elder sisters, and his aunts, and people like that in the 1880s and 1890s had all been to India, and were Annie Besant-type Theosophists, and were all into the childhood of Krishnamurti, and Doctor Leadbeater, who I think was later jailed for pinching chorus boys' bottoms, or something or other like that . . .

T (laughing) Gurdjieff . . . ?

B Gurdjieff and all that gang, they've been going on forever, people think they've just discovered it now—of course, it has grown in immensity . . . some of which was foretold as long ago as 1906 by Franz Cumont, who wrote a history of Oriental religions (*Oriental Religions In Roman Paganism*, Dover Books). He said, "Just let us imagine that at some time in the future there are Tibetan lamas wandering around Boulder, Colorado, and with monasteries in Scotland, and there are Maharishis covered with flowers and knowing grins that have swept away all the young people—if this should ever come about, we could say that this was indeed the state of Ancient Rome before the arrival of Constantine . . ." So he was, uh 75?—no, not quite—he was 70 years ahead of his time, when he predicted a situation very like which is going on today . . .

But it does seem to be a moment in the development of any society before it goes into spasm and produces something else . . . Rome went into spasm and produced the Dark Ages . . . we don't know what will happen this time, but certainly our society seems about to go into spasm with the possibility of the development of One World (laughing) first preached by Wendell Wilkie in the American Presidential elections of 1940, but nevertheless

Control

. . . uh, given the supersonic transportation, and the even swifter electronic communication that exists, one does foresee that if we could only get rid of the arms manufacturers and their pernicious product, there would be indeed enough for everybody to live quite happily on this planet.

(off tape, which ends:)

The future is with Control.

T You ended with the statement that—

B That the future is with Control.

T I can imagine some people's reactions to that.

B I can imagine their reactions to it, too . . . but, uh, the facts are that one cannot imagine a future of a bunch of stumblebums going around living on relief forever in cheesy Bloomsbury hotels run by insane Pakistani managers—

T Bayswater!

B Bayswater. (laughing) I was trying to make it more literary (laughter). The fact is that, uh, if the planet is going to be a landing pad in space, as Buckminster Fuller says, it has to be so organized that when you make a trip into space you can be certain to come back, and not find that the control tower's out on strike and that you're fucked . . . uh, there can be no step off this planet that doesn't derive from a highly organized base to which one can return for an indeterminate future—unless we see it as a future like that depicted very well in a science fiction book called *Dune* by a man called Herbert, God knows who he is, in which they look back toward the Blue Planet and say "That indeed is the greatest achievement of man—there is a planet utterly destroyed, wrapped in plastic" . . . to which no one can return in the Dune Space, where everyone travels through the galaxies . . . no one can return to planet Earth, which is the Blue Planet, because it

. . . the greatest achievement of man

has been so completely fucked up and destroyed and is now wrapped in plastic and unusable . . . nevertheless that is the *symbol* of the greatest achievement of man, to have destroyed a planet—and everything points to the fact that we're doing our very best to destroy this one . . .

Writers—like some people we know and won't *mention*—are interested in disrupting, dislocating, destroying language . . . uh, painters, none of whom we will mention, have been interested in cutting the throat of the very art that they pretended, or have been . . . uh . . . don't peer into that thing as though it was gonna bubble up like a cauldron . . . even if these words are on this tape (laughing) I don't think it's gonna stop—no matter how much I insult this squeaking little beast that you've got here . . . it's gonna go on until you have to listen to this.

T Rubbish disposal machine . . . !

B . . . and write down all the rubbish that's on it . . .

T Maybe that is an achievement, to do that . . . it's fighting fire with fire again —

B I remember very well traveling in Morocco with my Uncle Rothschild, who wasn't really an uncle, but an aunt, and a lady with whom he traveled who was the widow of the head of the Republican party in the state of New York . . . and speaking about America—long before Watergate—this was 1950-51, she said that the very *proof* of the greatness of America was that it was the most corrupt nation that one had ever seen in all of history; the corruption in America left the corruption of Rome, or any ancient state of which one knew, in the *shade*—and that this was the proof of the greatness of America . . .

Well, this is very much like the attitude of somebody like that ex-B-girl Isabel Peron, who became the head of the state of Argentine, because the Argentinians had been

. . . a planet utterly destroyed

saying for several generations that their country was *so rich* that nothing you could do to it would ruin it—and now it is announced that she just about, well, put the complete fuck into it . . .

These ladies are gonna take over all of the states—we're gonna have Margaret Hatcher-Thatcher or whatever she's called is gonna be Prime Minister of England, Indira Gandhi head of India, Lady Bandanaraike keeps fucking everything up in Ceylon, uh, Golda Meir doing her best internationally, even though she's retired from the particular hotspot that she prepared for everybody, getting Armageddon under way; in the very near future one can imagine Mrs Ching-Ling Mao turning out to be the Red Empress of Red China and running the whole show, along with an American lady vice-president who has taken over from a sickly paralytic slightly insane Super-Nixon-Dixon type of Emperor-President of America, who will undoubtedly be somebody like Constantine Rockefeller III, or something like that.

Uh, the future is fairly predictable from a historical point of view, and it all points toward ecological, military, political, psychic ruin . . .

So: from this planet, somebody, some people are going to try and escape. The Moon Shot was certainly a move in that direction, the whole history of that is fascinating, but it opens up an escape hatch which wasn't left to a rummy Roman emperor like Nero, or Commodus, or any one of those insane emperors that followed one after another.

It is now imaginable in the historical process that some group might actually get off this planet. Science fiction has an extraordinary way of coming true: everything that Jules Verne wrote, for example, in the—what was it? 1870s, 1880s?—*everything* has come true . . . that seemed

the future is fairly predictable . . .

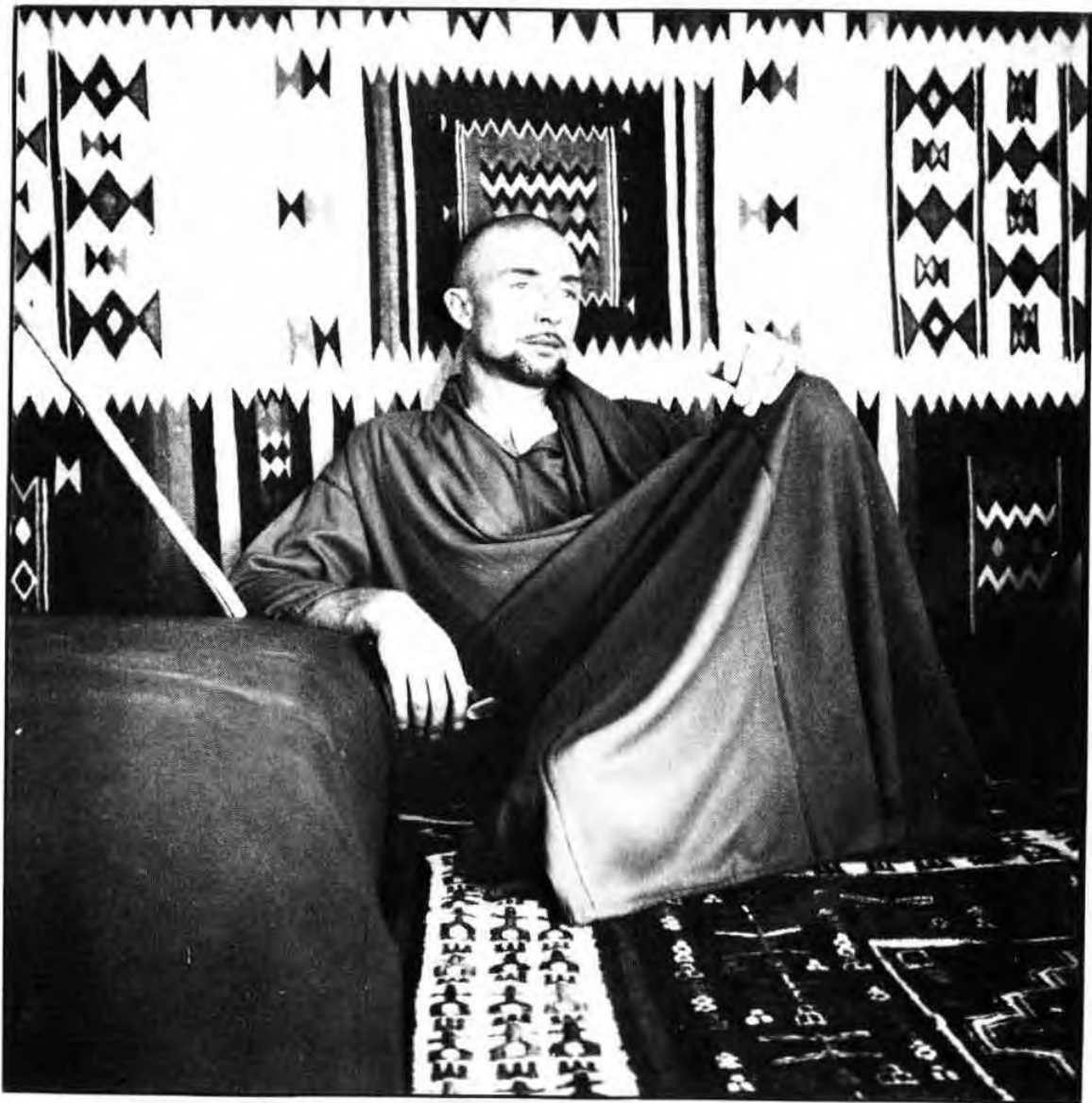
impossible at the time . . . submarines, the trip to the moon . . . to the extent that, in his book about the trip to the moon (*From The Earth To The Moon*), I have in the notebook an illustration published at that time that shows a space capsule almost exactly a replica of what did take place. In his book, it appeared in an old woodcut long before photographs appeared—here was this picture of a space capsule that had returned—it had returned to Earth in the Pacific Ocean, just exactly where it really did, it *looks* like the space capsule that the Americans sent to the moon and brought back, and it had the American flag flying on it . . . in 1880, drawn by (Albert) Robida, who was an illustrator for science fiction works at that time . . .



of opinion.” We got an incredible Chinese restaurant ahead of us and nobody can have an opinion about it until they’ve eaten there, can they? Let’s grab a bite before we go.

Well, that much of the story has already come true, and any science fiction writer, and I’m not one, can imagine such a future very easily . . . I have no axe to grind—I don’t even have an *opinion* about all of this . . . when you asked just a few minutes ago what would people think of the answer “The future is with Control”—this is not a matter for opinion; as William said about choosing a Chinese restaurant: “It’s not a matter

**ALGERIAN
EPISODE
1955-56**





algerian episode 1955-56

(Mya has to be 'played with' . . .)

T We have some pretty weird photographs of you in Arab drag with your head shaved and a Berber beard. Where were they taken and what sort of person—*Who* were you, then?

B Yeah, that's a nice question: Who was I then? Those pictures were taken in the original old Turkish wing of a huge colonial villa on the coast about nine kilometers outside of Algiers in 1955 during the Algerian war. My friend John Cooke was married to the lady who had bought the place up and done all the improvements on it like air conditioning and indoor swimming pool, etc, Scary Mary. The two of them had come floating into my restaurant, The 1001 Nights, in Tangier, telling me that they had been on my trail for a long time. Their Ouija board had sent them across the Sahara looking for a man whose name was not Brahim, the name my musicians call me to this day . . .

Very early in the evening, the customers usually came

Brion Gysin, Algiers 1956.

very strange people

to dinner at nine or ten, or some such hour as that—and at about seven o'clock my headwaiter came to me and said, "There are some *very strange people* downstairs (chuckling) . . . looking for you" . . . and I looked over the balcony and I saw this pair dressed up in all kinds of . . . campy desert gear, and him with the shaven head, and the sort of beard cut in a particularly sort of Arab fashion, very short just like a two-day growth of beard cutting a very sharp pattern on the face, and her *b-i-l-l-o-w-i-n-g, h-u-g-e*, in all kinds of veils and bangles and spangles and everything else like that, and they came, they just came floating in giving me the impression that they were really *Magic People*, and that they had all of these things at their *fingertips* . . . most particularly money (laughing) . . . They were the first rich hippies I had ever seen in sandals and saris and sarouels but dripping with real jewels of great price in the best possible taste, paying cash and drinking only champagne. I was swept away by this god-send to my faltering finances, my restaurant was staggering to a full stop after Tangier lost its independence and became part of Morocco again. The Cookes became the stars of my late show, they gave parties and sent people or dragged people there just about every night they were in town.

John Cooke was a sweet cat, a real gas. He was funny and flip and fearless and fey as the lightfooted Little Folk. Moroccans immediately dug him for a natural, a real *djenoun* or even a *mejdoubi*, a holy madman. He had big Buddha ears sticking out on both sides of a wide grin full of great big square white teeth and big bugged-out green eyes laughing like crazy. He shaved his head, of course, and went barefoot wearing jewels on his big toes. He could sign a check with his right foot and often did for any

looking for you

amount that was needed. When they got married, he handed what was left of it over to her to handle and claimed that he really felt free. He was a great dancer and did whirling dervish dances in California style, whizzing like a top across the marble floor of my restaurant until he skidded on water or something and nearly stove in one side of his skull against a table. He was out like a light for quite a spell but came back stronger than ever with his big silly lovable grin.

He offered to teach me things but often came to a full stop with me because, to questions like: What do you have to say about Communication? I would answer that I was against it. Communication was destroying the world of value around us, has destroyed it in my time. Electric light chases the world of the Little Folk away. Radio has ruined music once made by every man, woman and child in the community. Tourism has attacked ancient cultures like syphilis. Cameras have soaked up the soul with their theft of the images of the holy places.

Despite our basic differences, John Cooke told me fascinating things about a billion buck scam he was onto called Scientology whose leaders were L. Ron Hubbard and Mary Sue. The names alone were enough to make me laugh myself sick but who was *I* to have an opinion when my restaurant was coming apart under me like an old rotten undervest or a leaky boat in heavy weather—who *was I*?

T They helped you out?

B They did indeed. They helped me right out of the restaurant business, eventually, and there was I out in the street with nothing but what I wore on my back. They helped me right out but before they got around to that, they called me from Algiers begging me to come and help

Communication was destroying

John, to come quick, just close down the restaurant for the summer since business is dead and come help John who has just been stricken by paralysis. Zap! just like that. The doctors didn't know.

There are no doctors because it is August and they have all fled back to Paris for the holidays and a lot of them will never come back at all because the war is coming right up the front drive to our house with a curfew enforced between nine at night and six in the morning. We can't move. We can hear them machinegunning in the upper reaches of our property where we're trying to raise pedigreed poultry. The rebels are stealing our chickens, unless it's the army or the police. We'll send you the money to close down the restaurant and come. John is asking for you night and day, aren't you, John dear? Yes, you see, you really must come at once.

T And you went? You just up and walked into a situation like that?

B No, I flew. I had to. I just felt I had to. There was nothing else to do. I liked John a lot and I was sick of the restaurant because I'd been at it every single day and night for the two years since I'd opened it, not even taking the usual day off a week because my Swiss banker said every penny counted and he was counting them. We all needed a rest and the political situation looked hopeless both here and there.

T You mean in both Morocco and Algeria?

B Yeah. By the time I was on that plane to Algiers, I felt I was really on the case, playing a role, if you like. What Leary called saving John from the black magicians.*

T Is that the story of *The Process*?

B No, *The Process* is purely a fiction based on prophesy of

* Timothy Leary, *Jail Notes*.

the world of value around us

future fact, like the war in the Sahara right now. Or the present state of the dollar. But to get back to those pictures taken in the Cookes' house, I was posing, of course. I was playing along in these rich kids' magic charade and, after years of restaurant-keeping, I was swept away by the amount of money that was changing hands. The whole scene went sour when John was cut down literally overnight. He lost the use of his legs, just like that, *zap!* and he was paralyzed. A mystery. Magic practices? Spooky sex? Don't know.

I carried him around on my back to what therapists there were in a dumb place like Algiers. Everyday, I swam him in this dumb little pool they had in the house. Eventually, I helped him get off to Denmark to some center but he never got well again. Never walked. Don't even know that he really wanted to. Anyway, one day at lunch, out in the garden, Mary Cooke pushed me to the idea of shaving my head, like John's, saying as John was paralyzed and I was carrying him around, she said: "I think that you would look less odd if you both had your heads shaved and grew sort of little Arab-type beards."

And then later they called in the person who became her next husband, who was this Australian practitioner of Scientology whom I had met in London, and he *too* shaved his head and grew a little Arab-type beard (chuckling)—I think perhaps instead of being *less* remarkable he made it look *more* remarkable . . . And it was the Australian who actually *snapped* those snapshots, but it was I who posed them and decided on them, and then just said, "You hold the camera and you take the picture."

And I think that what had most changed me was to see myself in that image and to recognize something that had not previously been quite so evident to me: that I was not

Tourism has attacked



Brion Gysin, Algiers 1956.

ancient cultures like syphilis

my Body Image . . . I think one does grow up thinking of oneself as being one's own Body Image, perhaps those of us who are inclined to narcissism more than others, and it had been, it was obviously Mary's *intention* to make this very evident to me when she sort of teased me and cajoled me into taking on an aspect of John's image . . . So it was not a brand new concept but it was the time that I really felt it deeply . . . I was somebody who had just *changed* from somebody who hadn't recognized his own separation from his Body Image to somebody who recognized this fact.

T What was John Cooke's image at this time?

B John was a practicing magician on a private income. He had been born rich and far out in a family of rich far-out people from the Hawaiian Islands, descended from millionaire missionaries. He didn't really have to go around conning anybody but himself and he was touchingly gullible. He didn't read much, even in his own field, which was magic. The only books I remember him with were the *Collected Works of Alice A. Bailey*, an average American housewife who thought she had once been Cleopatra, like many another. He was "strickly" West Coast. He handed over his estate in Ojai Valley to Meher Baba, the Silent Sufi, who set it up as his psychic spread called Mehermount. John couldn't even go back there. He got eased out of "The Movement" by some predatory chick who claimed that she was diabolically possessed and made psychically pregnant by him, so he had to marry her or else. He did and she soon divorced him under California state law for the half of his bread and split to form a new cult around her infant daughter, "born of a virgin by parthenogenesis," and why not—after all, John swore he had never laid a mortal finger on her but he had to allow as

You hold the camera . . .

how some sorta vibration just mighta sprung on her while he was letting his energy shoot around loose. She got away with about half a million dollars.

You must admit that this was heady stuff for a modest Moroccan cabaret keeper like myself, used to dealing in Moroccan magic every day in the week but it was all for pennies, small change, while here was the real Money Magic, even if it did mean dipping into their Scientology. They were keen on making me into an "Auditor," claiming that I was a natural "Clear" and a born "Operating Thetan." I could go right to the head of the class and make all sorts of easy money. They counted on me to start a big drive on the French captive audience we could get every time we gave a party.

When guests came they had to stay all night because of the curfew. The house was huge and well-known; people came in droves although we didn't know any of them, personally. People will go anywhere for free food and drink, especially in wartime and the Algerian War was raging away practically at our doorstep.

Beachboy friends from Franco Beach turned out to be terrorists who killed our local barber because he talked too much. Isn't that what barbers are for, I asked; how about Figaro? Not any more, they replied, and I've noticed that barbers don't have anything to say anymore, anywhere.

Then there was Djamila Bouhired who became a national heroine when she left her bomb in the downtown Milk Bar which blew up and made strawberry sundaes out of some sixty or seventy customers of all colors and flavors.

Whatever else it did about bringing the war to a peak and then to an end, that Milk Bar bomb made a date. Graham Greene borrowed it to use in Saigon in his *Quiet*

you take the picture

American. William Burroughs has mentioned it because he was scurrying through Algiers about that time on his way back from the terrors of high society life in Venice where he had puked and passed out at Peggily Googily's (Peggy Guggenheim) sinking pink palazzo. He had fled by way of Sicily, Tunisia and was whirling back to the erstwhile security of his pad in Tony Dutch's male whorehouse in In-terzone, Tangier. I did not see him there at that time and I didn't run into him again until we ran across each other in Paris, in the Latin Quarter, a coupla years later, at least. 1958, I think. Perilous times.

For the next coupla years after that, William and I spent our time exchanging stories. Life stories.

T Was it a fair exchange?

B I really don't have an opinion—how could I? He told me all about junk and I told him all about magic in Morocco. Junk is certainly winning over magic, isn't it? Worldwide.



Baby Zen, Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, Grand St, New York 1965. Final shot of "Cut Ups" by Antony Balch.

INTERZONE





interzone – the live world

From The Naked Lunch screenplay by Brion Gysin

*“The River is
served, Sir
Naked Lunch is
before you . . . ”*

Interzone, of course, was Burroughs’ very personal vision of the Tangier scene in the 1950s, here reinterpreted by me to include the cast of characters whom we both knew there at that time. This is from a very early version of the *Naked Lunch* film script. —BG

164.

INTERIOR OF TRANSVESTITE AIRLINES PLANE CARRYING WILLIAM LEE TO INTERZONE.

The HOSTESS trills this out in her most chilling tones, icicles. Chilly with menace. Her voice bouncing as the plane bounces wildly.

HOSTESS: “Please fasten your seat belts . . . Put out whatever you’re smoking. We shall be landing . . . momentarilllllly!”

Interzone

165. EXTERIOR.

Wheels landing.

166. INTERIOR. CUSTOMS HOUSE IN INTERZONE AIRPORT.

LEE is having a bit of trouble with his papers.

The COMMANDANTE with foam on his face and a shaving mirror hanging around his neck is recklessly waving a straight razor as he is shown WILLIAM LEE's passport by a subaltern.

COMMANDANTE: "Alto! Alto! Halt! Basta! Basta! Passporte no bueno . . . Kaput! . . . No good passporte . . . Passapao no boa-boa . . . You sabe sheet, meester?"

The COMMANDANTE is holding LEE's passport and waving it at him.

167. INTERIOR.

An old friend of LEE's has come to meet him: GERTIE

Interzone

ARSON surrounded by a crowd of other EXPATRIATES, waving to William.

GERT: "Hello, William."

LEE: "Hi, Gertie."

In the background, behind these Birds of Paradise in brightly flowered shirts, JOSELITO's Spanish family, all in heavy mourning. CARL goes through Customs with JOSELITO on a stretcher. LEE does not see CARL because all his attention is taken up by his scene with the Customs.

Customs House scene in Interzone Airport. WILLIAM LEE is dressed as he was when he left the hotel.

Wearing a hat and clutching his briefcase, he is tackled by fearsome Customs Officials while the crowd streams by around him and them. The cops are going over LEE's manuscripts with magnifying glasses. GERTIE ARSON is trying to get the attention of COP, and takes him aside to bribe him.

COP: "Terrible, these writers . . .
filthy stuff they write . . ."

Interzone

- (breaks into a guffaw but stifles it) . . . Hey, fellers, lissena this . . . Hot dawg!”
- COP 2: “Dirty pictures, too . . . cut outta magazines.”
- COP 3: “This stuff should go inna incinerator.”
- COP 4: “Him, too, along with it . . . Calls hisself a *writer* . . . Migawd!”
- COP 5: “Is all this crap for your personal use?”
- LEE: “Yes.”
- COP 6: “He says, yes . . . Mi-gawd, looka this thing willya!”
- COP 5: “And how do we know that?”

168.

INTERIOR.

- LEE: “I got an exclusive. I make with the live word.”

169.

INTERIOR.

- COP 4: “Wise guy! Take off your clothes.”
- COP 5: “Yeah. Maybe he got dirty tattoos.”
- COP 6: “Wash out his hair. Maybe he’s got dope in his hair.”

Interzone

GERTIE ARSON bribes
COP 1 who pockets the
money with a broad wink to
WILLIAM.

COP 1: "Let them through fellas.
Got an atom bomb in that
bag of yours?"

170.

INTERIOR.

LEE answers grimly patting
his briefcase as he goes off
with GERTIE, avoiding his
hiss of welcome.

LEE: "Right here. Don't worry."

GERT: "Come on, William. I'll
show you the ropes in Inter-
zone."

171.

A & B EXTERIOR. THE PLAZA.

Everybody in the Plaza
scenes is on set all the time.
There is a permanent state of
semi-riot going on and this
flares up, now and then, into
real violence.

A one-eyed villainous
CHIEF OF POLICE with a
toothpick directs the RIOT
POLICE who march up and

Interzone

down saluting. SHORE
PATROLS of every nation
tramp around in single file.

Continual movement of cops
through the crowd.

Hipsters with smooth
copper-colored faces lounge
in doorways, swinging
shrunken heads on gold
chains, their faces blank with
an insect's unseeing calm.

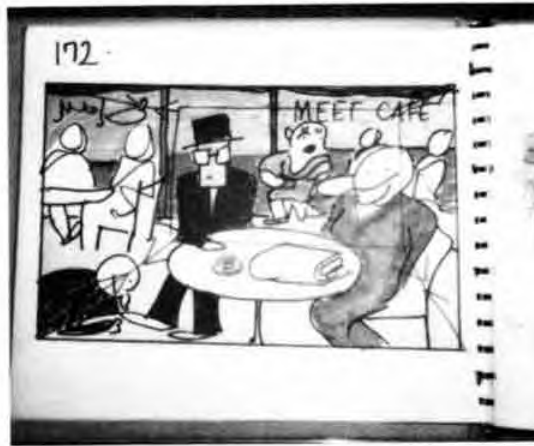
Behind them, through open
doors are tables and booths
and bars, copulating couples
on rows of brass beds, people
smoking curious pipes,
junkies tying up for a shot in
hammocks, people eating,
talking, bathing, shitting in a
haze of smoke and steam.
People gambling. A young
man leaps up with a cry and
stabs his opponent, an old
man.

The MEET CAFE

LEE and GERTIE ARSON
sit at a front row table on the
terrace. At other tables:
IRIS, AMERICAN HOUSE-
WIFE, MAD SPANISH
DRAG QUEENS covered
with crucifixes they kiss as
the funeral goes by.

Interzone

LETTER-WRITERS who
look up with bestial faces.
MONSTERS who drop
newspapers. MUGWUMPS
inside, hanging out as in Soc-
co Chico cafes.



171.A. EXTERIOR.

Crowd scene with GERTIE
and WILLIAM in crowd.

(music: mix.

171.B. EXTERIOR.

(riot music)

GERT: "This is the Plaza of Inter-

Interzone

zone. When there's a riot, the shop shutters slam down like guillotines."

172.

EXTERIOR.

Sitting at the table. GERTIE throws down bundles of newspapers and invites WILLIAM to sit down.

GERTIE: "And this is the MEET CAFE. When all that erupts, trays hang in the air as patrons are whisked inside by the suction of panic."

IRIS: "My asshole is occluding. My cunt got terrible green juices."

Camera in to IRIS, sitting back against a railing. MUGWUMPS glimpsed inside, smoking pipes, playing cards, etc.

While WILLIAM looks around his shoes are attacked by a SOLLUBI who tries to shine them with the oil off his nose.

WILLIAM kicks at him petulantly and leaps up, upsetting Shoebox on his own pants.

Interzone

LEE: "No good. No bueno.
Heavily infected area . . .
Saay!"

173.

EXTERIOR. REVERSE OF 172.

LEE: "What kinda creep joint you
running here, anyway! Shining
my shoes with the oil off
his nose."

MANAGER: "Sorry, sir. He slipped by
me."

POLICE beat up SOLLUBI.
Growl from neighboring
NATIONALISTS. POLICE
march on the bystanders.
First semi-riot. MUSICIANS
march down. Into the begin-
ning of the funeral, marching
up.

CARL following JOSE-
LITO's funeral.

RADIO: "Do not panic citizens of
Annexia . . . In the event of
revolution or war, you will
see it happen *while* it hap-
pens . . . on your State
Television Screens."

Interzone

174.

EXTERIOR.

LEE: "It's a funeral. Stand up, Gertie. Show respect for the local gooks and their customs."

JOSELITO's funeral followed by family mourners all in black.

CARL stands out very blond in the middle.

LEE is still on his feet. MANAGER wipes his shoes with his napkin, very subservient with either a sharp eye for OR utter indifference to the little whirlpool of violence behind him.

GERTIE drags herself to her feet, spilling newspapers. Little beggar boys rush in on all fours, rooting under the papers.

GERTIE: "I suppose one *should* . . . but . . ."

CARL PETERSON is among the mourners. He stands out very blond and pale in the middle of all that black. LEE puts on his glasses and looks at CARL with that same malevolent

Interzone

love/hate look he gave
CARL in the baths. Like:
*"Look what I wrote for
you!"*

LEE: "Why so pale and wan, fair
bugger?"

GERTIE is slapping off the
little boys affectionately and
retrieving his newspapers.

GERTIE: "My dear, I'm working on
the most *ma*rvelous inven-
tion . . . a boy who vanishes
as soon as you come! . . .
Leaving behind him nothing
but a delightful smell of bur-
ning leaves . . . and a sound
effect of veery distant train
whistles."

(sound of whistles)

To the end, LEE stands as if
turned to stone, looking after
CARL.

JOSELITO's funeral disap-
pears into the shadows but
light still strikes CARL.
Street Arabs gather around
him catcalling and whistling,
making terrible faces and
gestures as they dance
around just out of reach.

KIDS: "Jooooooselito! Paco!
Pepe! Enrique! Jaunito!
Joseliiiiito!"

Interzone



BG: Taken in Tangier . . . this is somebody called The Captain, or something, who was a, had a yacht, was a very mysterious man who later married a very wealthy American woman and . . . There's William looking quite magical—

TW: His *hat!*

BG: His magical hat, yes, his magical hat . . . he's always had magical hats . . .

Interzone

175.
EXTERIOR.

GERTIE waving at CLEM and JODY. CLEM and JODY come on scene smoking huge cigars looking like LBJ Agnew or any such. They trip up a spastic and do a wild dance, imitating him as he flounders like a broken centipede.

GERTIE: "Oh here come Clem and Jody. They know what they're doing, *those two . . . they've got their orders.*"

LEE: "Who are they?"

GERTIE: "CIA men copping out as Peace Corps Coordinators. Oh, hello, you two . . ."

PLAZA

CLEM and JODY join LEE and GERTIE, sprawling all over their chairs like Mountain Boys.

JODY: "*Hey . . . garsong!* How about some service."

CLEM gestures at the aftermath of the mini-riot, sandals, teeth, etc on the pavement.

JODY: "Thirty years in show business and I never handle such

Interzone

a routine like this. Here, I gotta dispossess 25 thousand gook refugees livin' in packin' cases . . . give myself a big bang of H . . . cancel all that free floor: GIFT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE . . . and get gang-fucked simultaneously. What am I? . . . an octopus already?"

GERTIE: "My, you two certainly manage to keep busy. You must have all sorts of energy.

JODY: "We do! We try to teach them squealin' bastards out there to sing: *Three Cheers for the Red White and Blue* . . . but it can't be done."

CLEM: "Ungrateful bastards!"

JODY: "Ingrates . . . every one of them ingrates."

176.A.

EXTERIOR.

Arrival of LOVELY UGGLESTONE another expatriate queen. LOVELY waddles across with an elegant hand held out.

GERTIE: "Speaking of ingrates . . . here comes Lovely Ugglesstone. Watch out for this one

Interzone

LOVELY and GERTIE embrace. . . . Oh Uggles daaaahling!”

LESLIE: “Gertieeeeeeeee . . . daaaahling!”

GERTIE: “I want to introduce my friend, William Lee, the *infamous* explorer. He penetrated to the very depths of Upper Baboonasshole . . . pronounced Babba Nasoul in case you didn’t know, dearie. William is the only white man who ever survived the unspeakable initiation rites of the Agouti Society.”

LEE turns into an explorer for a flash. Mosquito net over his forehead.

LESLIE: “Ooh, Society, Society! How I *do* love Society! I’ve heard all about *you*, William Lee. I hear you’re *glooooo-riously* notorious.”

LEE: “Hmph!”

176.B. EXTERIOR.

LESLIE: “So you, my deah, are going to buy *me* a drink, naturally . . . because *I*, my deah, am even more glooooooriously

Interzone

notorious than *you* are! Fact is, I can't afford to buy myself a drink. I've spent my every last kurd or turd . . . or whatever these copper coins are called, here . . . buying penicillin for Coco's clap. He's down with it fore and aft, again, I came near kicking the little bawstard right through the wall into the next house . . . But you all know what kind of sentimental old thing I am."

GERTIE: "Don't we ever!"

177.A. EXTERIOR.

SHOESHINE BOY comes out of MEET CAFE . . . SHOESHINE BOY approaches their table, and starts to clean WILLIAM LEE's shoes. He has a rumble with several other hustlers with shoeshine boxes. Bargaining rug dealers, persistent peanut sellers, a man with a tray of unwholesome looking food, sellers of candy covered with flies and assorted beggars

Interzone

come up. While talking, LOVELY ogles some passing trade. Sailors etc. A very commercial scene.

LOVELY: “You’ll just love it here, Mr Lee, because Interzone is not really a city but an almost infinite series of small cells with soft walls through which people can sometimes come . . . *Plop!* . . . right into your bed because all rooms in Interzone are bedrooms in which people keep piling up on top of each other, eating, sleeping, smoking, making love and doing business at *all* hours of the day and night. Nothing in Interzone *ever* closes. We are a *very* commercial people.”

177.B.

EXTERIOR. TERRACE OF THE MEET CAFE.

The SHOESHINE BOY has put on his hustling smile and looks up at LEE from his box of tricks on the pavement. Puts up his hand to be paid. LEE looks down at the boy with dead cold undersea eyes, looking both cold and

Interzone



WSB, garden of Jay Hazelwoods' Parade Bar, Tangier 1964.
(Photo: Antony Balch)

predatory. LEE takes the boy's arm and runs a finger along his veins. LEE could well be saying this over LESLIE's speech.

LEE: "With veins like that, kid, I'd have myself a time."

The SHOESHINE BOY, very hip and matter-of-fact.

BOY: "Junk is no good baby. Cooks the brain."

Interzone

178.

EXTERIOR.

FATS TERMINAL, gang leader of the MUGWUMPS, passes LEE's table. When LEE's eyes meet his, he gives an all but imperceptible nod. LEE turns stiffly in a slow half pivot with his whole bust as he recognizes FATS THE PUSHER. GERTIE gestures.

(music)

GERTIE: "Don't look now but that's Fats Terminal, our local pusher."

The MANAGER is barely intelligible.

MANAGER: *"The River is served, Sir
Naked Lunch is before you . . ."*

179.

INTERIOR.

LEE leaps to his feet and follows FATS into the interior of the MEET. FATS sits at a table surrounded by his gang of MUGWUMPS.

LEE: "Can I score, Fats?"

Interzone

FATS: "On spec?"

LEE: "So I don't have the 20 eggs on me, Fats . . . but I do have a Travelers' Check."

FATS: "I am not American Express. Make it 30 eggs this time, tomorrow."

LEE: "Tomorrow?"

LEE taps his briefcase.

FATS hands the tube over with ill grace.

LEE: "Fats, I write this script *my* way. I got two kindsa publicity here . . . Favourable and otherwise. *Hand over that tube!*"

180.

INTERIOR. LEE IN A BARE BASEMENT ROOM OF THE VILLA DELIRIUM.

(furious sounds of typing)

LEE is writing furiously, typing with two fingers. His briefcase beside him, pouring out paper. The typewriter jumps all over the table, like a live creature trying to get out from under his fingers. The typewriter turns into a centipede on the table and LEE continues to typewrite on its back.

Interzone

The typewriter develops two
Hydra heads from its roller.
LEE reaches out to strangle
it and it bites him in the arm.

LEE: "Jeezus! That mother-
fucker's hungry . . . Need
some first aid, I guess . . ."

LEE picks up his spike and
gives himself a shot.

He writes with one hand,
furiously . . . speaking the
words as he writes them . . .

LEE's voice (over): ". . . blood bloomed in my
syringe . . . like an orchid.
Blood bloomed like an or-
chid in my syringe."

LEE goes back to finishing
his shot.

LEE just sits there.

MUSIC: *Home is the Heroin*
Home to the hilt
How many years
threaded
On a needle of blood?
The old junky has hit
a vein
has hit a vein!
Blood blooms in
the drop
in the dropper,
like a Chinese paper
flower

Interzone



Interzone

*in a glass
a glass of water.*

*Time jumps
like a broken type-
writer
and the boy with the
firecrackers
explode in his hand
turns into a flabby
old man . . .
And the slack and
flabby old man
is the broken boy
with the firecrackers
explode in his hand.*

"How many years threaded on a needle of blood?"—Latin Quarter? Earls Court? New York? (Photo: Antony Balch)

Interzone

181.

INTERIOR. ROOM IN THE VILLA DELIRIUM.

LEE sitting sunk in his junk, wearing a black waistcoat, gets out of himself by double exposure optical and stands there, listening very intently down into himself with all alarm bells ringing. He hears his own blood pounding the rumor of the city outside and steps approaching.

*Who are you?
What are you
doing here?
Where are you
going?
What are you
writing?*

LEE TWO picks up his .38 revolver and stands guard over LEE ONE slumped over his typewriter. The door opens by itself and there stands LEE THREE with his hat on.

LEE TWO: "What are you doing here?
Who are you?"

LEE THREE points to LEE ONE and says to LEE TWO:

Interzone

LEE THREE: "You were not here for the beginning."

LEE TWO: "You will not be here for the end."

LEE THREE: "What is he writing there?"

Flashback to CARL asking:
"What are you writing there?"

LEE TWO: "Time . . . for you."

LEE THREE: "Can I borrow that gun a minute."

LEE THREE takes the gun from LEE TWO.

182.

INTERIOR.

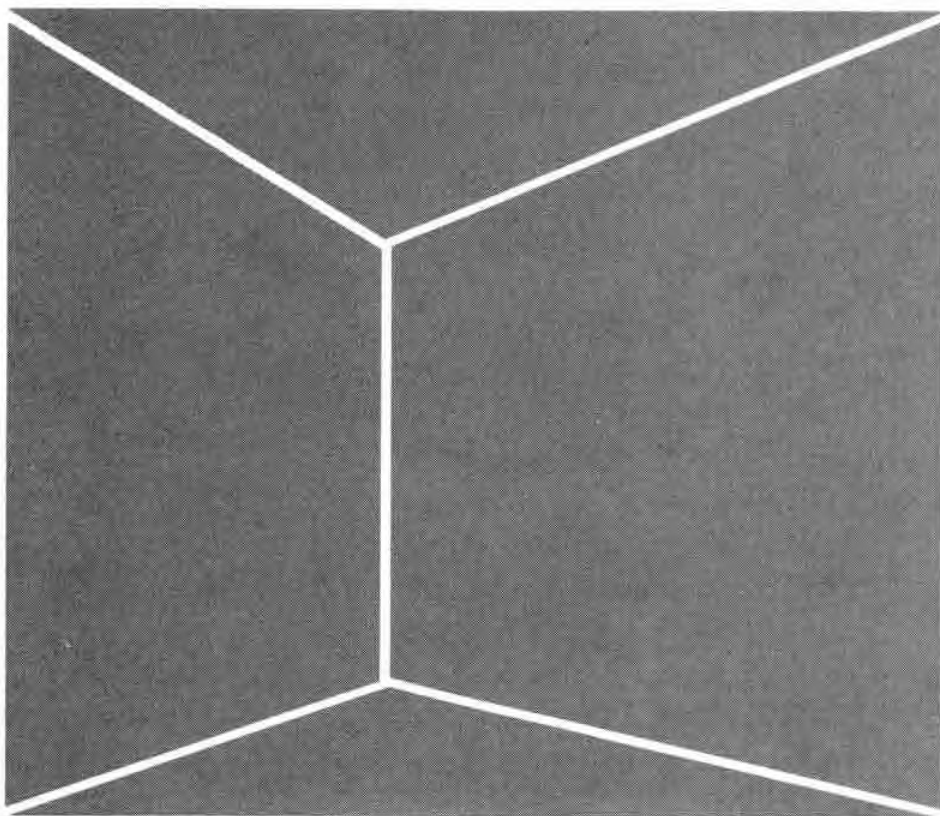
LEE THREE blasts away at the typewriter and a dictionary. LEE ONE simply sits there watching this happen.

LEE TWO: "Like that, eh?"

LEE THREE: "Yes . . . like that. Word falling . . . Image falling. Break through in Gray Room."

LEE TWO takes the gun back from LEE THREE and blasts away at the dictionary, too.

Interzone



Sounds of shots from Chorus of PISTOL POEM
by BRION GYSIN:

“A single pistol shot on a short loop of tape was recorded by the BBC sound effects studio and rerecorded as heard from the distance of one yard, two yards, three yards, four yards and five yards. These reports were run through their possible permutations and laid in sound layers with my voice speaking the numbers. Believe it or not, you can dance to this.” —BG

Interzone

A D E B C	1 4 5 2 3	. \$ £ - (
D A E B C	4 1 5 2 3	\$. £ - (
A E D B C	1 5 4 2 3	. £ \$ - (
E A D B C	5 1 4 2 3	£ . \$ - (
D E A B C	4 5 1 2 3	\$ £ . - (
E D A B C	5 4 1 2 3	£ \$. - (
B D E A C	2 4 5 1 3	- \$ £ . (
D B E A C	4 2 5 1 3	\$ - £ . (
B E D A C	2 5 1 4 3	- £ \$. (
E B D A C	5 2 4 1 3	£ - \$. (
D E B A C	4 5 2 1 3	\$ £ - . (
E D B A C	5 4 2 1 3	£ \$ - . (
A C D E B	1 3 4 5 2	. (\$ £ -
C A D E B	3 1 4 5 2	(. \$ £ -
A D C E B	1 4 3 5 2	. \$ (£ -
D A C E B	4 1 3 5 2	\$. (£ -
C D A E B	3 4 1 5 2	(\$. £ -
D C A E B	4 3 1 5 2	\$ (. £ -
A C E D B	1 3 5 4 2	. (£ \$ -
C A E D B	3 1 5 4 2	(. £ \$ -
A E C D B	1 5 3 4 2	. £ (\$ -
E A C D B	5 1 3 4 2	£ . (\$ -
C E A D B	3 5 1 4 2	(£ . \$ -
E C A D B	5 3 1 4 2	£ (. \$ -
A D E C B	1 4 5 3 2	. \$ £ (-
D A E C B	4 1 5 3 2	\$. £ (-
A E D C B	1 5 4 3 2	. £ \$ (-
E A D C B	5 1 4 3 2	£ . \$ (-
D E A C B	4 5 1 3 2	\$ £ . (-
E D A C B	5 4 1 3 2	£ \$. (-
C D E A B	3 4 5 1 2	(\$ £ . -

(Lee does a softshoe routine)

LEE ONE: "Like that, eh?"



BG . . . me painting a *huge* picture, I don't know how many feet by how many feet, some . . . 15'x20' or something, on a big roll of paper, which William lost, strangely enough . . . moved out of the apartment and forgot to take that with him . . .

**PAINTING TO
PALAVER TO
POLAROIDS**





painting to palaver to polaroids

“Here is space-time painting.”

T Was it your painting that brought your ideas home to William, originally?

B My ideas? No. William was always full of ideas. The first time we met, I don't think I could get a word in edgewise. I had mounted an exhibition in the Rembrandt Hotel in Tangier, January 1953 I think, and as I've written, William came whirling in talking a mile a minute, just before closing time. I was showing small pictures of the Sahara, culled from the notebooks I took along with me on a trip through the winter of 1951-2. The Sahara is so vast, you dig, any pictures of it have to be miniatures. I had a show up on the wall but all Burroughs wanted to talk about was his trip to the Amazon in search of the telepathic drug *yage* or *ayahuasca*, made out of the *bannisteria caapi* vine (see William Burroughs/Allen Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters*). It

“Wanna score?” he asked

was said to make you telepathic. I felt right away that he didn't need too much of that stuff and I may well have tried to launch into my theory about how the *telephone arabe* works in Tangier but I'm sure he didn't want to listen at that time. Our exchange of ideas came many years later, in Paris.

In the meantime, I was busy putting together The 1001 Nights in order to get to hear the musicians of Jajouka every day for the rest of my life, as I had promised myself and them. That took up all my time. I saw William only when he came to my place as a customer, the day after he got his regular monthly stipend from home, I guess. There would have been no writing without that loyal support from his mother, always. I knew nothing about that at the time nor even that he was writing until Paul Bowles told me about it and gave me *Junky* to read, if I remember. I was cold to the whole subject of junk, then and later. We really got together only after he kicked the junk habit with the aid of apomorphine, the cure he preached so much about none too successfully. Anyhow, that came later. During those years I was running my Moroccan restaurant I guess he was writing a good deal of what became the great manuscript from which *Naked Lunch* was culled and the following books were delivered by the cut-up method but again all that was years later.

In the interim, I had a body of work to show a gallery owner who came by and offered a show in New York. That came in real handy when I found my good friends had “relieved” me of my business in Tangier. One show led to another in Rome and in London which brought me back to Paris again where I ran into William Burroughs on the Place Saint Michel in the Latin Quarter, in 1958. “Wanna score?” he asked and I nodded. Someone had sent him a

. . . I nodded

letter full of grass from Tangier and he later got into some weird bad trouble over this a bit later.

Burroughs was holed up in Room 15 of the old hotel without a name at 9 rue Git-le-Coeur. It soon got to be known as the Beat Hotel and a whole generation passed through there on its way from the Coast to Kathmandu and back again. A whole lot of things happened there to a whole lot of people.

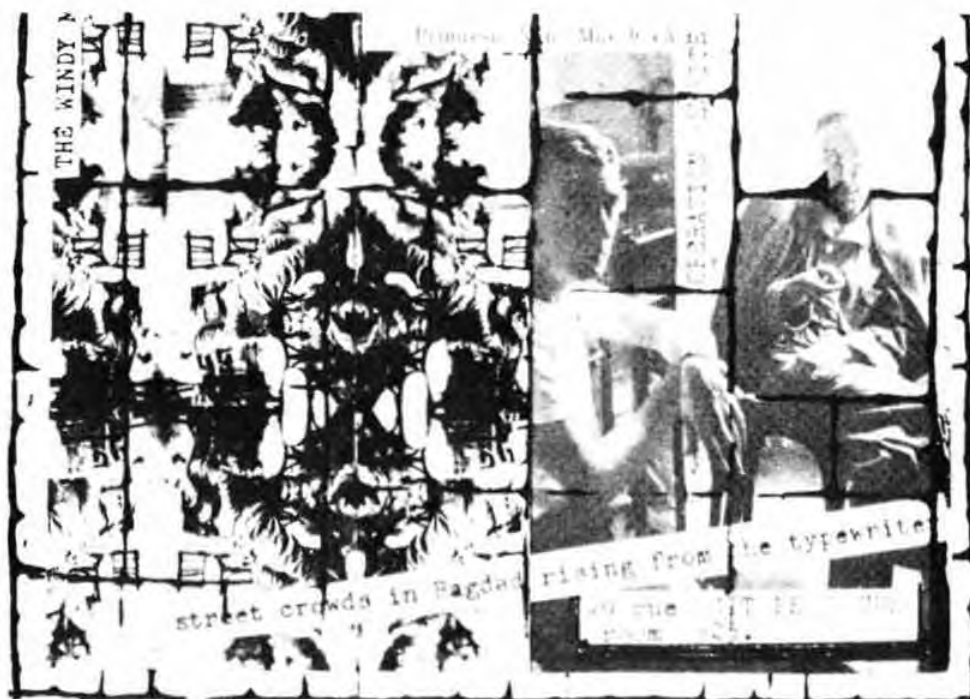
T You were in rue Git-le-Coeur in the 30s, weren't you?

B Ah, but in very different circumstances; I had a beautiful place on the corner there, loaned to me—

T St. Andre des Arts?

B No, on the corner of the rue Git-le-Coeur and the Quai itself . . . but, uh, I hardly penetrated into the street as a matter of fact; yeah, I knew a bit about the street but I didn't know the hotel, I don't remember what was happening in the hotel in those days, I think it was a brothel, I'm not sure . . . In the 50s, someone turned Allen Ginsberg onto the place and he gave out the signal. Just about everybody and anybody passed through the Beat Hotel but some of us got to be more or less fixtures, fiercely protected by Madame Rachou who ran her hotel by radar to keep off the heat from coming in burning down the place once and for all, nailing up the doors and windows like they did to all the little old hotels around the Quarter, eventually. I built myself into Room 25 on the third floor front for years while Burroughs ran in and out grabbing this room or that one for a few months and then splitting, abandoning manuscripts that I stashed away in my padlocked footlocker I liberated from the US Air Force in Morocco and had painted blue, decorated in Tetouan. Still have it. The Burroughs Archive in Lichtenstein came out of it.

an ad in an agony column,



"That's a photo of William and me, in 1959 I guess. Wm just through his cure that day, those days, wearing an old sweater of mine which I later sent to a friend, Algerian Benaissa who was in jail . . . that sweater had quite a history . . . I got it from John Cooke's wife, Scary Mary, in Algiers. I've never actually bought a fine sweater like that but several have come my way by themselves in the course of a lifetime. The last one came to me about six years ago in the horsepistol, the Royal Free Horsepistol in London. It's just about shot now. I'm waiting for another to show up this winter . . . or earlier, the weather's so bad this year, isn't it . . ." —BG

advertising for an enemy

Burroughs and I saw each other more than a lot. No, not 24 hours a day. No matter what people may say, we were never lovers. Allen Ginsberg writes that he has one set of ideas about making it sexually with friends, I have another. Not a matter of principle. Friends just don't turn me on, I guess. Like Jean Genet in a very funny text he once wrote for me in the form of an ad in an agony column, advertising for an enemy.

J.G. cherche, ou recherche, ou voudrait découvrir, ne le jamais découvrir le délicieux ennemi très désarmé, dont l'équilibre est instable, le profil incertain, la face inadmissible, l'ennemi qu'un souffle casse, l'esclave déjà humilié, se jetant sur lui-même par la fenêtre sur un signe, l'ennemi vaincu: aveugle, sourd, muet. Sans bras, sans jambes, sans ventre, sans coeur, sans sexe, sans tête, en somme un ennemi complet, portant sur lui déjà toutes les marques de ma bestialité qui n'aurait plus—trop paresseuse—à s'exercer. Je voudrais l'ennemi total, qui me hairait sans mesure et de toute sa spontanéité, mais l'ennemi soumis, vaincu par moi avant de me connaître. Et irréconciliable avec moi en tous cas. Pas d'amis. Surtout pas d'amis: un ennemi déclaré mais non déchiré. Net, sans failles. De quelles couleurs? Du vert très tendre comme une cerise au violet effervescent. Sa taille? Entre nous, qu'il se présente à moi d'homme à homme. Pas d'amis. Je cherche un ennemi défaillant, venant à la capitulation. Je lui donnerai tout ce que je pourrai: des claques, des gifles, des coups de pieds, je le ferai mordre par des renards affamés, manger de la nourriture anglaise, assister à la Chambre des Lords, être reçu à Buckingham Palace, baiser le Prince Philip, se faire baiser par lui, vivre un mois à Londres, se vêtir comme moi, dormir à ma place: je cherche l'ennemi déclaré. (Jean Genet)*

We were whipping up the

Anyway, Burroughs was in Room 25 as much or perhaps more than he was in whatever room he was living. He was as free as the wind. He could grab his hat and portable typewriter and split with nothing more than a toothbrush, abandoning his manuscripts like old autumn leaves, great shoals of them to scoop up out of the basket or sweep across the floor and put away for a rainy day, safe in my footlocker.

Convalescing in my room with an old grey sweater of mine draped over him, William often sat in on painting sessions, following big oils on canvas from inception to completion. Here was I teaching myself to do something bigger and a lot different from what I had ever attempted and I let him sit in on it. There he was and I just had to get on with it. I never let anyone do that before nor would again in my right mind. The process is more solitary than masturbation, or should be. It may be only because I am self-taught. I cannot imagine what one can possibly learn in an art schol. Maybe I'm missing something. Art is a fragile secret to be exposed only in the right circumstances to the right people. How else can you make it worth millions? Besides, more than one painter has walked off with stuff of mine and done all right with it. Better than me.

T Did Burroughs get into the paintings, very soon?

B Almost too soon, as I'm telling you. He and I lived through some very thin, slippery times together, doing our psychic symbiosis numbers. It was often downright scary and positively dangerous but all a barrel of fun at the same time, if you can hear me. William could be so scary he was positively hysterical. It was all a Psychedelic-Psyche-Sick joke. What were we up to? We were whipping up the "compleat derangement of the senses" as preached almost

“compleat derangement of the senses”

a century earlier in the self-same Parisian circles known to those earlier hashishins like Baudelaire and Co. and then young Rimbaud. Burroughs used to be able to just sit there in my room and simmer in a cloud of smoke through which he would turn into all the great literary junkies one after another, De Quincey, Coleridge and Co. or the Old Man of the Sea from Sinbad's story. Oh, he could sit there staring into my canvases and simply melting into them to move around in there, disappearing . . .

* J.G. seeks, or searches for, or would like to discover, or never discover, the delicious enemy quite disarmed, whose balance is unsteady, profile dubious, face inadmissible, the enemy whom one breath breaks, the slave already abased, hurling himself from a window at a signal, the enemy vanquished: blind, deaf, dumb. Without arms, without legs, without bowels, without heart, sex, head; in sum a complete enemy, already bearing upon himself all the marks of my bestiality which would no longer have to—too lazy—exert itself. I would like the total enemy, who would hate me spontaneously and without limit, but the enemy subdued, vanquished by me before knowing me. And in any case irreconcilable with me. No friends. Above all no friends: a sworn enemy, but one untorn. Whole, without fault. In what colors? From green tender like a cherry to effervescent purple. His stature? Between us, let him come to me man-to-man. No friends. I seek an enemy growing weak, coming for surrender. I will give him all I can: slaps, blows, kicks; I'll have him ripped by hungered foxes, make him eat English food, attend the House of Lords, be received at Buckingham Palace, make him kiss Prince Philip and be kissed by him, make him live a month in London, dress like me, sleep in my stead: I seek the sworn enemy. (Translation: Martine Willoughby)

Next pages: Brion Gysin painting, Beat Hotel, Paris 1962. (Photo: Antony Balch)







**PORTS
OF
ENTRY**





ports of entry

I don't think I had ever seen painting until I saw the painting of Brion Gysin. Here is a transcript of a tape we recorded while talking in front of some of his pictures during the time we both lived in the old Beat Hotel . . . back in 1960, when I discovered I could really get into these paintings. (W.S. Burroughs)

B How do you get in . . . get into these paintings?

W Usually I get in by a port of entry, as I call it. It is often a face through whose eyes the picture opens into a landscape and I go literally right through that eye into that landscape. Sometimes it is rather like an archway . . . any number of little details or a special spot of color makes the port of entry and then the entire picture will suddenly become a three-dimensional frieze in plaster or jade or some other precious material.

This picture in front of me is in four sections. The remarkable thing is the way in which the sections—when hung a few inches apart—seem literally to pull together.

William Burroughs, Tangier. (Photo: Antony Balch)

the first painting ever



to be painted on the void itself

The substance of the paintings seems to bridge the gap. Something is going streaming right across the void. Surely this is the first painting ever to be painted on the void itself. You can literally see the pull of one canvas on the other.

Now you suddenly see all sorts of things here. Beautiful jungle landscape. And then always bicycles. The whole bicycle world . . . scooters. All sorts of faces . . . monkey faces . . . typical withered monkey faces. Very archetypical in this world. And you do get whole worlds. Suddenly you get a whole violet world or a whole gray world which flashes all over the picture. The worlds are as it were illuminated by each individual color . . . world made of that color. You think of them as the red world and then the blue world, for example.

I was taking a color walk around Paris the other day . . . doing something I picked up from your pictures in which the colors shoot out all through the canvas like they do on the street. I was walking down the boulevard when I suddenly felt this cool wind on a warm day and when I looked out I was seeing all the blues in the street in front of me . . . blue on a foulard . . . blue on a young workman's ass . . . his blue jeans . . . a girl's blue sweater . . . blue neon . . . the sky . . . all the blues. When I looked again I saw nothing but all the reds . . . of traffic lights . . . car lights . . . a cafe sign . . . a man's nose. Your paintings make me see the streets of Paris in a different way. And then there are all deserts and the Mayan masks and the fantastic aerial architecture of your bridges and catwalks and ferris wheels.

B You mentioned once that you can't see all of these at the same time.

W No. This is the first real space-timing painting in which
(Photo: Antony Balch)

if we turn up something nasty

there's a presentation of what is actually going on in front of the painter and the viewer in a space-time sense both through the forms and through the color because the color makes the shifting forms. And then this is related to actual time-sequences presented here. You see things in a sequence which is actually a time-sequence. I know of no other example of the way in which time is represented here. I can't see all of these different levels at once because it is as if they existed independently only in their time sequence. Here is space-time painting. You can see way deep into all sorts of landscapes for instance, and then you flash back to what appears on the surface . . . the substance of the painting exists with a double motion in and out.

When you see one layer of the picture then you suddenly see it all. The eye which I am using as a port of entry jerks me abruptly into a landscape I never saw before. It is a sort of toy world and one that is somehow alarming, populated with mechanical insects attacking each other and men in armor from other planets. Or they may be simply modern welders with bridges in the background.

B Yes, people have objected.

W I don't see why they should. It's a substance. Why that's like jumping up from your microscope and screaming: "*I won't look at that anymore! They're squirming around down there just carrying on so nasty!*" Now I regard you, Brion, as being in my own line of work. Being strictly an experimenter I say: *Science is pure Science!* All of us are pure scientists exploring different levels of fact and if we turn up something nasty we're not to blame. Just because someone finds a real nasty-looking microbe is he going to stop because some idiot comes along and says: "*Pornographer! I must say that my whole family was nauseated by the sight of your slides! You and your filthy*

we're not to blame

pictures!” Now when they see things in your pictures that are obscene from their point of view they don’t dare say so. You painters can be as nasty and dirty as you like and people don’t see it as quickly or they simply don’t dare say so because it would be too much of a rare reflection on themselves. *“I’m seeing that in there so there’s something dirty and nasty in me.”*

Oh, here are a lot of people on fire . . . streaming with gasoline on fire across the whole picture . . . people running and the upper corner of the picture seems to fold back and over them. Why, it’s the grasshopper world. Crystals. The Arab world. An Arab market. And there’s my aunt encased in her electric motor car covered with veils. She’s caught in a glob of something or under a bowl. A laboratory with instrument panels and up above there is what looks like a city . . . a very strange drifting city that is moving through space-time at an incredible speed. There is something that swells up as this is happening. I see all sorts of faces . . . eyes opening into doors and windows . . . hundreds of them in the most amazing juxtapositions. From some you can get into others and from others you cannot get anywhere and so on. Extremely intricate. There are some fish-men swimming down here looking as though they were made of wastebaskets from the waist down . . .

There are great flaring movements across the whole canvas . . . and then they turn into tubes . . . pulsing tubes. Some sort of energy is conducted through these tubes that run through the whole canvas which has become completely three-dimensional. You could look at this picture for months and see something new all the time. Each time I look at this picture I see something I never saw before in the whole world. Sometimes you see familiar landmarks but it is as if whole constellations changed each

physiological shock when you

time . . . like a street corner where you recognize the landmarks but there are always new people to change the whole scene. It is inexplicable. Now there are all sorts of green men here made of that substance like shit from a cirrhotic liver. There are faces and there are cells in which people live in little pools of the stuff. The whole canvas is suddenly totally clear and accurate . . . a fantastic world of faces that are part house and all of it frozen over a strange gelatinous pink substance . . . frozen hell there in that substance. The substance is moving all the time . . . shivering moving changing. You can see the canvas become self-sufficient by a switch of the image. Everything can and does become something else. I can hardly remember what that thing there was a minute ago. Oh yes that was a head but now it has become a house flat on the ground. And this is a pink hill. When you relate to it you can switch it back on. There is a very distinct little physiological shock when you switch it back to the former image . . . every time you switch it back and forth.

Now there is a point at which you can see both images simultaneously. It becomes rather uncomfortable. It gives you this tremendous feeling of vertigo as though you had to breathe through your cock and you can only get it up to where the air is if you have a hardon. Precarious position which is somehow related to the fear of falling from a great height. A basic fear of suffocation and a loss of support both being contained therein. That gives this picture a most disconcerting aura to say the least. Sometimes this seems to be pulsing with light and at other times it is all made out of stone . . . porous stone perhaps . . . an indeterminate substance between stone and flesh like coral. Then you get that strange vegetable substance as if these people I see in there were plants growing out of these tubes

switch it back to the former image

you have running through all the canvas.

Very strange! Just for a moment there I caught an absolutely clear photographic picture of Gregory Corso. It has gone now but I feel sure it really is in there and will come back again. It is queer how these photographic shocks of yours flash in and out. It is one of the most remarkable phenomena I have ever witnessed in my practice . . . in *all* my practice. These strangely familiar faces are all growing together bound up by vines and tendrils . . . monkeys' faces. At one point a very mean ravished 17th century face with a ruff around his neck standing outside some sort of native hut.

B Doesn't that look like some kind of writing?

W It does. I can read it. *Wings tack quietly . . . Vines crying . . . not crying . . . kiss . . . noisy pissing Tex . . . Gysin not sin was not crying . . . fix Gysin . . . Brion . . .*

B What I read is different: *My dear very yours . . . not crying . . .*

W It looks like letters here too but they're harder to make out. I read: *Creeps . . .* Looking at these paintings of yours is often like focusing an optical instrument. I find that it takes about 20 seconds to focus at all. The viewer has to learn how to flicker back and forth between a telescopic and a microscopic point of view while his attention is centered on some small beautiful scene which may be no bigger than your index fingernail at one moment and then your attention is suddenly jerked back to a clear long range view of the picture or its allover pattern. What you actually see at any given moment becomes only a part of a visual operation which includes an infinite series of images. This leads you along a certain path like a row or series of patterns . . . a series of neural patterns which already exist in the human brain. (WSB, *Ports of Entry*)

in the whole magic world



William Burroughs, Brion Gysin; Basel 1979. (Photo: Ulrich Hillebrand)

permutations are part of the cabalistic secret

B Burroughs was always very good at disappearing. He could slide into even the most inoffensive wallpaper, such as the rose wallpaper he was always writing about. The great artist learns to disappear into his work. This is a very hard thing to do, hard in every sense of the word. It is a very painful decision to take because you are going to miss out on all those tasty goodies which go so easily to lesser artists who don't have to give up anything in order to succeed. A mere trick of the light. You must always remember that art itself is the Great Illusion, the illusion which Madame Maya manufactures in order to hold the rest of the house of mirrors together.

So . . . we did a great deal of lengthy mirror-gazing at that time. We felt that we had all the time in the world to give to such explorations and we did see some strange stuff, just like "they" always said we would. *We* knew we were on the right track when our tricks worked, you see, and they did. For example, the cut-ups, they worked immediately and they still do although we know a great deal more about them than we did when every new cut of the scissors gave out something hilarious and to the point. The permutations discovered me—because permutations of course have been around for a long time; in the whole magic world permutations are part of the Cabalistic secret—and they worked as soon as the BBC asked me over to London and gave me their Special Effects & Footsteps studio and the staff to work with—first crack of the bat and we made *I AM THAT I AM*, an acknowledged sound poetry classic. The Dreamachine worked from the first time it spun around a light bulb and we closed our eyes in front of it. Etcetera.

Of course, the Establishment never wanted to pay us any money for any of these things. That is a whole other

Paintings were originally formulae

branch of the art, I guess. Never mastered it. Not yet, anyway.



BG-WB. Dr J.Y. Dent's book on apomorphine, *Anxiety and its Treatment*, on table. (Photo: Antony Balch)

to make what is painted happen

It is to be remembered that all art is magical in origin—music sculpture writing painting—and by magical I mean intended to produce very definite results. Paintings were originally formulae to make what is painted happen. Art is not an end in itself, any more than Einstein's matter-into-energy formulae is an end in itself. Like all formulae, art was originally *functional*, intended to make things happen, the way an atom bomb happens from Einstein's formula. Take a porcelain stove and disconnect it and put it in your living room with ivy growing over it . . . it may be a good-looking corpse but it isn't *functional* anymore. Or take a voodoo doll full of pins—authentic West African, \$500 on 57th Street—and hang it on the wall of your duplex loft. It isn't killing enemies anymore, and the same goes for a \$5,000 shrunk-down head, which a fashionable shrink bought for his consultation room. Writing and painting were one in cave paintings, which were formulae to ensure good hunting . . .

The painting of Brion Gysin deals directly with the magical roots of art . . . the pictures constantly change because you are drawn into time travel on a network of associations. Brion Gysin paints from the viewpoint of timeless space. (WSB, Essay on BG in *Contemporary Artists*)

T The timelessness of your painting—past present and future merge on the page, the painted page, as you call it . . . Did you specifically give William a way out of time?

B How could I? I had my way; William had his own. My way was and is to look at a problem as a whole and then proceed to eliminate, to pare away one legitimate element after the other until I find myself left with the simplest answer which remains. William on the other hand, if pushed to it—and he could be pushed to it only by the most exact formulation of the question—used to submit it to

Time is that which ends . . .

what I always thought of as “William’s Machine.” As I said before, if I formulated a question such as: *What is Time?* I would propose it to William who would stand there looking rather strange, as if he were swallowing his Adam’s apple. It would move up and down for quite a few minutes, and, um, he seemed to be making this sort of humming, like he has a machine in there that he set to work . . . as though he had submitted this question to a computer (chuckling) and he would come up with a convincing answer, like: *Time is that which ends . . .* It was like having one’s own oracle at home at all hours. So, in that way, a good many amusing and instructive things were . . . discovered or rediscovered, or . . . made more evident to us by various applications of those two, uh, procedures. Presumably, that machine humming away inside and the answer that came back could be said to have been of the Third Mind.

- T Yes. But why did you need someone to give the technique to, rather than use it yourself? . . .
- B It’s a very good question. You mean the cut-ups, of course. When I first fell into the cut-ups and put those texts together which appeared in *Minutes to Go*, they amused me. I laughed out loud. I knew all about Breton’s precious and pseudoautomatic writing and I had heard of the poem that Tristan Tzara pulled out of a hat about the same time that Aragon was reciting his alphabet poem to the avantgarde of the 1920s. All that was old hat. The cut-ups were brand new because the words were treated like mere material, like the images they are and treated in a painter’s creative way rather than a writer’s metaphysical view of language as the lesser part of speech. Words were attacked physically with the scissors or framer’s Stanley blade. Words spurted into action as in my text “Cut-Ups Self-Explained,” immediately proved . . .



(Photo: Antony Balch)

. . . He was looking at something a long time ago . . . fade out to 9 rue Git-le-Coeur, Paris, room 25; September, 1959 . . . I had just returned from a long lunch with the *Time* police, putting down a con, old and tired as their namesake: "Mr Burroughs, I have an intuition about you . . . I see you a few years from now on Madison Avenue . . . \$20,000 per year . . . life in all its rich variety . . . Have an Old Gold." Returning to room 25, I found Brion Gysin holding a scissors, bits of newspaper, *Life*, *Time*, spread out on a table . . . (WSB, *The Third Mind*)

. . . *firsthand reports on*

I showed the first texts to Burroughs hoping to hear him laugh out loud as I had. He took off his glasses to reread them even more intently, saying: "You've got something big here, Brion." He'd put his glasses back on to stare at me across the room, as I explained to him how the texts had been made, then he'd snatch them off again to plunge right back *into* the pages. He recognized immediately that this was a tool of enormous importance to him and he said rather, uh, diffidently: "Do you mind if I try some of this stuff?" and I said, "No, go ahead, that's what it's *for*." And he did, he did it to his own stuff, he had a suitcase full of it, the mighty manuscript that was not in *Naked Lunch* but was about to become, uh . . . *Dead Fingers Talk, Soft Machine* and *Ticket That Exploded*. William worked like a fiend and then went off to the Edinburgh Writers' Conference where he read a paper on "The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin." He didn't come along and say, Look, here's some hot new stuff of mine, my cup of genius is brimming over. No, he took the literary bull by the horns and said what I said: "*Writing is 50 years behind painting. I propose to apply the painters' techniques to writing . . . etc.*"

In his absence I sharpened up my first text and cut it up to read things like *Ears behind painting . . .* I didn't write that, I chuckled. I cut the thing up and it wrote itself when I pushed it off balance into motion. I was pleased for William because the new texts were so brilliant. I was not at all pleased with myself, even when William rallied me: "How can you be so depressed when you have just started a whole new literary movement from this room?" I probably answered something like: "And I can't even get out of this little room." It's still true, I feel. I have this pad but I don't have a real studio.

I felt even less pleased when, some time after *Minutes*

areas not even spoken about

To Go was published in January 1960, some well-to-do American expatriate writers in Paris put out a two-volume book of their "new" works, their subsequent new works, without any mention of cut-ups, of course. And why should there be, after all? We had dubbed our whole operation: Open Bank. The Creative Bank's funds are creative and therefore fathomless, bottomless, inexhaustible. There is enough for everybody. Take what you need, we said. Perhaps that was not such a smart idea, after all.

T But why didn't you use the cut-up method more, yourself?

B Weil, by this time William was already dishing out a sensational quick lunch of drugs and depravity that had the world press by the ears. *Naked Lunch* had made him an immediate media figure and he was coming on even stronger in what followed, at least partly because of the slightly eerie tilt that the cut-ups gave to the lilt of it. Above all, William is or was one hell of a devoted writer. He worked eight or more hours a day for eight days or more a week. He never took a minute off even for breathing, for years and years. I am a mere part-time amateur writer beside him. He wrote up a storm, literally. He covered tons of paper with his words and made them his very own words. As he wrote in that piece in *The Third Mind*, he branded them like cattle he rustled out there on the free ranges of Literature.

I realized right away that cut-ups would never serve or suit anyone quite like they fitted William and served him. Not even me, even though I had first evoked them. Besides, William had all his material right there handy, a suitcase of it as he has said himself. And it was all red hot stuff about firsthand reports on areas not even spoken about let alone written about and printed, except in the closet. Burroughs arrived fresh on the scene with heroin

he opened the language box . . .

and homosexuality—when the US Censor’s machine had finally been busted by a bunch of smart young lawyers working for Grove Press in New York who put up a lot of bread for lawsuits in all 50 states of America. They won. You know what has followed. It hasn’t flattened out, yet. *The* important thing that happened in Paris-US relations in the last hundred years was the publication of books in English which writers of the English language could not get published in their own countries. And that was due to Maurice Girodias, Olympia Press, and his father before him, Jack Kahane, Obelisk Press. Father published Henry Miller, son published Burroughs, Beckett . . . Jean Genet, and a whole long very honorable list of writers, modern and ancient . . . The thing was that for the very first time a modern writer didn’t have to sit down in front of his typewriter and say, “Oh gee, I guess I can’t write this, ’cause I’ll never get it published.” It was an *enormous* thing that Girodias did, in that he offered *anybody* who came to Paris and could write a book for him, he would give them \$600 . . . and this included Nabokov—Girodias bought *Lolita* from Nabokov for \$600 . . . Nabokov later screamed bloody murder—*thief! robber! I’ve-been-robbed!-I’ve-been-robbed!* and everything, but the fact was he’d gone to *nine* publishers—or 19, I’ve forgotten—who would not publish it in English, either in America or in England, just no *thought* of it . . . And Girodias said Yes, fine, and they signed a very simple little contract, which included—Nabokov hadn’t bothered to read the fine print because he thought that Oh, what a *marvelous* thing off my chest to get this book printed, actually published and out, and didn’t realize that for \$600 he’d also sold away the movie rights . . . But money *apart*, the fact is that Nabokov could never have had *Lolita*

the typewriter . . . the minds

printed, and William Burroughs would never have had *Naked Lunch* printed—except for Olympia—indeed, when it was, we both said with *utter conviction*, in summer of 1959, we were *certain* that it would never be published anywhere else, and would be distributed with great difficulty in England where you had customs inspectors breathing through your luggage in order to try and find any one of these little volumes which they snatched out and read and jerked off on I guess, and then burnt or whatever, but at least *you* weren't allowed to have them . . .

And this led one back to the fact that Maurice Girodias' father Kahane had the Obelisk Press and published Henry Miller . . . that was the big author they had, but there were a number of other people in those days to whom that first little taste of literary liberty had been given . . . And after the War, when his son Maurice took the name Girodias and ran the firm under the name Olympia instead of Obelisk, he opened the *language box*, man, he opened the *typewriter*, he opened the *minds* of all the American writers who came to Paris and found it agreeable to stay here, and realized for the first time that they didn't have to put on their own *self-censor* when they sat down in front of a piece of paper. They knew that *whatever they wrote* and wanted to write would be printed, would be published, would be distributed, and it was basically the first real blow against censorship . . . that was taken up by Maurice's publishing contacts, in England John Calder and in America Barney Rosset . . . who was ready to buy the rights to all the Henry Miller books and fight through the US courts for them.

Maybe a year after *Naked Lunch* had been published here in Paris William and I had sat down saying Well, yeah yeah, we'll never see this printed in America now will

he produced texts which were

we? No, well, we never will, no no no . . . and then we read in *Time* magazine I think it was that Barney Rosset had paid what seemed to be the colossal sum of \$75,000 for the rights to all of the Henry Miller books, which was a scoop if one had only realized it but there was no way of knowing . . . And Barney Rosset defended the books in 50 states, laying out for the law fees and the court fees and everything—certainly \$100,000 a throw, maybe more . . . he spent a *huge* sum to make it possible to fight this case, he fought with his good lawyers and everything, he fought the cases through to the supreme court and he knocked down all these or most of those little local bylaws—although some of them springing back at him later—but he really fought the good fight. But the battle *came*—the whole *ground* for the battle and the whole material with which the battle could be fought was produced here in Paris by American writers, from New York or elsewhere . . . The most important moment that occurred in Paris-New York relations occurred around—through the Beat Hotel and Girodias across the other side of the place St-Michel—within an area of a very few hundred square *yards* this thing happened . . .

T Girodias was starting to get into operation and publish these things at the same time that *The Third Mind* in question was beginning to be developed . . .

B Absolutely, right from there, at the very same moment . . . *Naked Lunch* was just hot off the press and still in the state of galley proofs and long sheets when I started talking to William about—we were *already* talking about all sorts of things that interested *me* in regard to the technological approach to writing like a painter approaches his material, as I always had because I was rather *overinformed* on, you know, how the medieval painters had whipped up fresco

sickeningly painful to read . . .

colors with yoke of eggs or somebody else had made oil mixtures, and I said it was just the same with writing—there is a way of treating writing as if it were the same sort of material that paint is, and the revolution hasn't *occurred* . . .

Gertrude Stein was the person *nearest* to the track of it, of breaking *through* with language; she made the first attempt when she wrote her Cubist portraits of people, the idea of at *least* benefiting from the breakthrough that had been made of the field of painting . . .

William followed by running the cut-ups into the ground, literally. He has a gimlet-type mind and enormous powers of concentration. When he concentrates on something, he burns a hole in it, like someone concentrating the beam of light through a magnifying glass. He is corrosive. He pushed cut-ups so far with variations of his own that he produced texts which were sickeningly painful to read, even to him, mind you. These were texts which had to be wrapped in sheets of lead and sunk in the sea, disposed of like atomic waste, in marl holes (one of his favorites). Used by another writer who was attempting cut-ups, one single word of Burroughs' vocabulary would run a stain right through the fabric of their prose, no matter how they cut it. One single high-powered Burroughs word could ruin a whole barrel of good everyday words, run the literary rot right through them. One sniff of that prose and you'd say, "Why, that's a Burroughs." Soooo . . . when it came to composing a piece of my own for a show the two of us were to do at the old ICA in London, I was circumspect.

I wrote about what I know about. I worried over a text about Morocco, where I spent what is still more than a

something to be said for poverty,

third of my life, and about Moroccan music, which is what kept me in Morocco for some 23 years.* I cut it up as I wrote it; how else to explain that I tried to turn it into something like music. It is a text which could still be established in music, I hope. What else was I going to cut-up about? I let it drop except as an exercise to produce an entirely unexpected effect that could release a further chain of ideas . . . Whereas William, as different in his way of using his glasses, often looks at things from the other end of the telescope from the one that I favor. He put the cut-up method to such immediate and energetic use that he eventually came to a sort of *puddle* at the end, called Brownian movement in physics, where it was so . . . so unpleasant, even painful to read, that it gave one psychic pain and he had to admit that he must dismiss it as not readable nor publishable. He took this to very great lengths, perhaps to be re-explored later. So did I, with the tape recorder.

T How did you get into tape recorders?

B I heard of them at the end of World War II, before I went to Morocco in 1950, but unfortunately I never got hold of good machines to record even a part of the musical marvels I heard in Morocco. I recorded the music in my own place, The 1001 Nights, only when it was fading and, even in later years, I never was able to lay my hands on truly worthwhile machines to record sounds that will never be heard again, anywhere.

I took Brian Jones up to the mountain to record with Uher, and Ornette Coleman to spend \$25,000 in a week to record next to nothing on Nagras and Stellavox, but I have to admit that the most adventurous sounds we ever made were done with old Reverses and hundred dollar Japanese

* *Brian Gysin Let The Mice In* ICA London, 1960.

it makes you more inventive

boxes we fucked around with, William and I and Ian Sommerville. I got hold of the BBC facilities for the series of sound poems I did with them in 1960, technically still the best, naturally. I had originally been led to believe that I would have a week and it turned out to be only three days that we had, so in a very hurried way at the end I started cutting up a spoken text—I think the illustration of how the cut-ups work, “Cut-Ups Self Explained”—and put it several times through their electronic equipment, and arrived at brand new words that had never been said, by me or by anybody necessarily, onto the tape. William had pushed things that far through the typewriter. I pushed them that far through the tapeworld. But the experiment was withdrawn very quickly there, I mean, it was . . . *time* was up and they were made rather nervous by it, they were quite shocked by the results that were coming back out of the speakers and were only too glad to bring the experiment to an end.*

What we did on our own was to play around with the very limited technology and wattage we had in the old Beat Hotel, 40 watts a room was all we were allowed. There is something to be said for poverty, it makes you more inventive, it's more fun and you get more mileage out of what you've got plus your own ingenuity. When you handle the stuff yourself, you get the feel of it. William loved the idea of getting his hands on his own words, branding them and rustling anyone else's he wanted. It's a real treat for the ears, too, the first time you hear it. I started fiddling

* (“Well, what did they expect? A chorus of angels with tips on the stock market?”—WSB) “The Permutated Poems of Brion Gysin” (as put through a computer by Ian Sommerville) was broadcast by the BBC, produced by Douglas Cleverdon. (“Achieving the second lowest rating of audience approval registered by their poll of listeners”—BG) Some of the early cut-up tape experiments are now available: *Nothing Here Now But The Recordings* (1959-1980) LP (IR 0016) available on the Industrial Records label from Rough Trade, 137 Blenheim Crescent, London W11, England.

. . . *use only the best,*

around with superspeeds and overlays as soon as I could. I've got a theory that this is one of the things Bebop sprang out of the first time Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk and them heard themselves at double speed and then at quadruple and on up to so many decibels you can't really hear it . . . made for dog whistles, after that. *Hey Rube!*—the old carny circus cry for men working the sideshows when they saw some ugly provincial customer coming up on them after they had rooked him . . . *Hey Rube!*—a cry to alert all the carny men to a possible rumble . . . *Hey-ba ba-Rube-ba!*—*Salt Peanuts* and the rude sound coming back so insistent again and again that you know the first bar of Bebop when you hear it. Right or wrong, Burroughs was fascinated because he must have listened to plenty of Bebop talk from Kerouac, whom I never met. He must have been a fascinating character, too bad to miss him like that, when I was thrown up against all the rest of this Beat Generation. Maybe I was lucky. I remember trying to avoid them all after Paul Bowles had written me: "I can't understand their interest in drugs and madness." Then, I dug that he meant just the contrary. Typical. He did also write me to get closer to Burroughs whom I had cold-shouldered . . . until he got off the junk in Paris.

T Who produced the "Poem of Poems" through the tape recorder? The text in *The Third Mind* is ambiguous.

B I did. I made it to show Burroughs how, possibly, to use it. William did not yet have a tape recorder. First, I had "accidentally" used "*pisspoor material,*" fragments cut out of the press which I shored up to make new and original texts, unexpectedly. Then, William had used his own highly volatile material, his own inimitable texts which he submitted to cuts, unkind cuts, of the sort that Gregory Corso felt unacceptable to his own delicate

only the high-charged material . . .

“poesy.” William was always the toughest of the lot. Nothing ever fazed him. So I suggested to William that we should use only the best, only the high-charged material: King James’ translation of the *Song of Songs* of Solomon, Eliot’s translation of *Anabasis* by St.-John Perse, Shakespeare’s sugared *Sonnets* and a few lines from *The Doors of Perception* by Aldous Huxley, about his mescaline experiences.

Very soon after that, Burroughs was busy punching to death a series of cheap Japanese plastic tape recorders, to which he applied himself with such force that he could punch one of them to death inside a matter of weeks, days even. At the same time he was punching his way through a number of equally cheap plastic typewriters, using two very stiff forefingers . . . with enormous force. He could punch a machine into oblivion. That period in the Beat Hotel is best illustrated by that photo of William, wearing a suit and tie as always, sitting back at this table in a very dingy room. On the wall hangs a nest of three wire trays for correspondence which I gave him to sort out his cut-up pages. Later, this proliferated into a maze of filing cases filling a room with manuscripts cross-referenced in a way only Burroughs could work his way through, more by magic dowsing than by any logical system. How could there be any? This was a magic practice he was up to, surprising the very springs of creative imagination at their source. I remember him muttering that his manuscripts were multiplying and reproducing themselves like virus at work. It was all he could do to keep up with them. Those years sloughed off one whole Burroughs archive whose catalogue alone is a volume of 350 pages. Since then several tons of Burroughs papers have been moved to the Burroughs Communication Center in Lawrence, Kansas.*

* W.S. Burroughs Communications. PO Box 147, Lawrence KS 66044



William Burroughs, rue Git-le-Coeur. (Photo: Antony Balch)

And he is still at it.

T The cut-up techniques made very explicit a preoccupation with exorcism—William's texts became spells, for instance. How effective are methods such as street playback of tapes for dispersing parasites?

B *We-e-ell*, you'd have to ask William about that, but I do seem to remember at least two occasions on which he *claimed* success . . .

Uh, the first was in the Beat Hotel still, therefore about 1961 or '2, and William decided (laughing) to *take care* of an old lady who sold newspapers in a kiosk, and this kiosk was rather dramatically and strategically placed

a preoccupation with exorcism

at the end of the street leading out of the rue Git-le-Coeur toward the place St-Michel, and, uh, you went up a flight of steps and then under an archway and as you came out you were *spang!* in front of this little old French lady who looked as if she'd been there since—at *least* since the French Revolution—when she had been knitting at the foot of the guillotine, and she lived in a *layer* of thickly matted, padded newspapers hanging around her piled very sloppily, and, uh, she was of absolutely *incredible* malevolence, and the only kiosk around there at that time that sold the *Herald-Tribune*, so that William (chuckling) found that he was having to deal with her every day, and every day she would find some new way to aggravate him, some slight new improvement on her malevolent insolence and her disagreeable lack of . . . uh *collaboration* with William in the buying of his newspaper (laughter).

So . . . one day the little old lady burnt up inside her kiosk. And we came out to find that there was just the pile of ashes on the ground. William was . . . slightly conscience-stricken, but nevertheless *rather satisfied* with the result (laughter) as it proved the efficacy of his methods, but a little taken aback; he didn't necessarily mean the old lady to burn up inside there . . . And we often talked about this as we sat in a cafe looking at the spot where the ashes still were, for many months later . . . and to our great surprise and chagrin one day we saw a very delighted Oriental boy—I think probably Vietnamese—digging in these ashes with his hands and pulling out a whole hatful of money, of slightly blackened coins but a considerable sum, and (laughing) we would have been very glad to have it, too—just hadn't *thought* of digging in the thing, so I said: "William, I don't think that your operation was a complete success." And he said: "I

William's texts became spells

am very glad that that beautiful young Oriental boy made this happy find at the end of the rainbow . . . ”

T She consummated her swell purpose . . .

B (Laughing) Exactly . . . exactly . . . (chuckling)

Now the other case was some years later in London when he had perfected the method and, uh, went about with at least one I think sometimes two tape recorders, one in each hand, with prerecorded, um—*runes*—what did you call them? You said William's things—

T Spells.

B Spells, okay, spells.

T Like—

B (chanting)

*Lock them out and bar the door,
Lock them out for e-v-e-rmore.
Nook and cranny window door
Seal them out for e-v-e-rmore
Lock them out and block the rout
Shut them scan them flack them out.
Lock is mine and door is mine
Three times three to make up nine . . .
Curse go back curse go back
Back with double pain and lack
Curse go back—back*

Etcetera . . . yeah . . . *pow* . . . “Shift, cut, tangle word lines” . . . sure . . .

Well, that was for the Virus Board, wasn't it, that he was gonna destroy the Virus Board . . .

**MEETING OF
THE VIRUS
BOARD**





meeting of the virus board

*Curse go back curse go back
Back with double fear and flak.
Silver arrow through the night
Silver arrow take thy flight
Silver arrow seeks and finds
Cursing heart and cursing mind.*

Meeting of the Virus Board, British Film Institute Board Room. ("Calligraphic drawings superimposed in ink by me" —BG)

. . . the Ultimate Virus . . .

Spectral banks and boardrooms—Flash back to 1910 scenes—1929—film jerky and faded like very old news-reels—Faces of the Board members seated at a table—The faces flicker in and out of focus torn by silver—explosions—They are looking through The Board Books like ledgers with symbol indications that represent in abbreviated form whole virus operations—The American board member is referring to Operation Eight and Operation Bradley-Martin and so forth in heavy Midwestern accents with a penetrating twang that vibrates his voice out of focus—From time to time he fades out altogether owing to goofs on the part of staff sergeants and technicians that keep his word and image on location—Like he fades out saying “I’ll break that technician down to grease monkey—that joker”—

The other board members take advantage of his absence to pass some snide remarks about “our American colleague and his ‘operation identity’ ”—and speculate as to “how much it cost per frame to keep him on the board, and the consequences of an electrical failure or a psychotic staff sergeant”—

The rats invade a Turkish Bath—Chorus of pathetic squeals indistinguishable from the rat noises—The queers rush into the street in puffs of steam wrapped in towels—The police try to push them back in protesting the breach of public decency—“Back in there where you belong”—One of the queers holds a cop by the lapel saying over and over “But you don’t understand—you don’t understand—you don’t understand”—

Maternity ward in Scotland—Screams of pain followed by hysterical screams from the nurses as the issue comes to light—“But it’s not human”—The doctor high on nitrous oxide focuses the issue—“An understatement, Nurse, I am here to deliver babies not empty a lobster pot. Please inform the

brings us to Operation Present Time

super at once—I can't be expected to work under such conditions"—He puts on his coat and starts out the door—Then turns back for another long sniff of nitrous oxide—He makes his way through the hospital corridors which are a shambles of screaming women, protesting fathers—"Do you mean to tell me that—"—THAT THAT THAT—Giant spiders and beetles and crustaceans are seen escaping from swaddling clothes and turning in dizzy circles still wobbly from the nitrous oxide as the doctor makes his way to the door—"There'll be a spot of bother about this" he says over his shoulder.

The film ends and a murmur of approval is heard from The Board Members—The Supervisor, who is the American member, smiles complacently—He consults a technical report—"We have now perfected the Ultimate Virus—Three well-placed vectors can infect a world city—Remains only to test the UV on personnel—That brings us to Operation Present Time—Inoculation will be carried out in the Hospital of course—The usual procedure—Traits ride Many Street—Few days—"

His voice and face fade out in a Carny Manager—Three members of the show are down with appendicitis—Madame Aloha the Palmist—Doc Benson the Mentalist who works with a hearing aid gimmick—And the Ventriloquist who does a reverse act with tape recorders where he takes alternately the part of the dummy and the ventriloquist—

Carny Manager: "Now look, they got an American hospital here with certified state-trained croakers—So I want you all to go in there and get the job done here now in present time—You got it? Otherwise I am subject to be hung up in Podunk Poland with no show—Check?—So I'll get on the buzzer and make the arrangements—Private rooms, flowers"—Fade out to the operating room—Focus eyes of

Pain, fear, hate, ugliness, degradation

virus agent over the surgeon's mask—He opens ampule and injects UV—The fluid drains into one arm—Shift to another—Shift to the third—Next scene leaving the hospital with the Carny Manager—“It should be done at birth—Appendix tonsils adenoids the lot” He glances at the 300 pound palmist—“Guess we'll be needing *two* taxis—TAXI TAXI TAXI—”

As the taxi pulls away another stops in front of the hospital and the anti-virus agent gets out—Fade out to office of the hospital superintendent—“I'm sorry Mr uh (she glances down at his card) Bradly but our release files are confidential—It is not my place to assess the uh overall validity of your contentions but you may rest assured that no uh irregularities have taken place in this hospital—And now—You must be a very busy man Mr uh Bradly—”

The anti-virus agent is shown in an anonymous shabby hotel room—The Officer stands with his back to the window a shadowy grey figure: “It's in the streets now—Minutes to go—And totally green troops in the area—You are assigned to organize combat divisions at the virus front and block the operation now on tracks—You will encounter appalling conditions—total weapons—The enemy uses a vast mechanical brain to dictate the use and rotation of weapons—Precise information from virus invasion marks areas of weakness in the host and automatically brings into effect plans of attack calculated always of course with alternate moves—Pain, fear, hate, ugliness, degradation all at push-button control—You are to infiltrate, sabotage and cut communications—Once machine lines are cut the enemy is helpless—They depend on elaborate installations difficult to move or conceal—Research centers, encephalographic and calculating machines, film and TV studios, information files—You do not have to organize similar installations but merely to put enemy installations out

all at push-button control

of action or take them over—A box camera and two tape recorders can cut the lines laid down by a fully equipped film studio—Enemy control beams can be blocked by large doses of apomorphine which breaks the circuit of positive feedback—The error in enemy strategy is now obvious—It is machine strategy and the machine can be redirected—and all virus weapons reversed—But the reverse switch is heavily guarded and we are still operating under conditions of guerilla war—Never attempt to hold a position under massive counterattack—‘Enemy advance we retreat’—Where?—The operation of retreat on this level involves shifting three-dimensional coordinate points: that is time travel on association lines—Like this—” The officer fades out in a little tune that is repeated during the following scenes—

The agent is shown dressing after sex in present time room—Flash to other rooms—Shirt on shirt off—Sox on sox off—Adjusting tie in mirror other rooms in mirror other ties shirts face older face younger—In sunlight, dawn, electric light etc—

Drinking coffee in a bar—Cup empty half full etc—Hands clean, dirty, with gloves without gloves—Bar and bartenders shift from zinc to marble to drugstore counters etc—

Playing a pinball machine—The jolts and clicks shifting numbers on the jukebox, other machines and locals—

Fade to cafe invaded by the virus agents—The Mentalist is wearing a grey flannel suit and carrying a briefcase—He is receiving instruction through his hearing aid which is also a transmitter recording voices and sound back to a central recording station—There are continual flashbacks to the central recording station as the battery of tape recorders twists through the cafes and streets of the city—He is moving his lips in imitation of people sitting around him picking out

Photo falling—Word falling—

weak points for derogatory emphasis so that high voices go higher and crack—American tourist accents calling the waiter become more American tourist—Queer voices more obvious—Women bitchier—At another table is seated the ventriloquist in an angle of mirrors so that his fractured image is visible throughout the cafe—He is imitating gestures and facial expressions with the same derogatory emphasis on weak points—Outside the cafe the palmist has taken over a newspaper kiosk spitting a steady stream of flak—Under this combined attack—People become more awkward and uncoordinated spilling drinks and bumping into each other and dragging overcoats through someone else's *oeufs au plat* etc—Drunks become more repulsive—The jukebox develops a discordant tremor—Static spits from the radio—The proprietor pushes a beggar into the street—The beggar slips and falls against the wooden fence surrounding a seemingly purposeless construction project—He grabs a rope to support himself and a bucket of wet concrete falls killing an organ grinder's monkey and wrecking his machine—The machine and the dead monkey are precipitated into the street causing a traffic accident—Almost simultaneously a hideous brawl breaks out at the bar—Wagon loads of police arrive, demanding papers and making arrests—The anti-virus agent picks up a portable tape recorder and slips away—His assistant takes a picture—The Agents move through the streets leaving a wake of yacking dummies and disorder—Fountains shut off—Flowers wilt—Police bristle and snarl demanding papers from everyone in sight, arresting street singers, etc—

The Palmist is seen to flash from one kiosk to another—As people walk through the kiosk rays they come out the other side full of flak holes, faces dim and blur and age five years drawn with fear, gestures and gait awkward, stumbling, bumping into people apologizing and taking off

Break through in grey room

their hats with mechanical gestures met by cold stares—One man is seen taking off his hat again and again repeating over and over—“Pardon monsieur pardon madame pardon pardon pardon pardon”—

The agents invade a queer bar and the queers yack through the city like supersonic dummies repeating drink orders etc—A man orders a dry martini and the phantom queers repeat after him—“Dry martini dwy marthini veddy veddy dwy marthini”—The bartender whirls angrily and slams the shaker and glass onto the bar—

The anti-virus agent is seen moving behind the virus agents with his portable tape recorder and his assistant with camera—He is shown recording from his portable onto another machine and cutting in music and anti-virus instructions—

“Shift linguals—Cut word lines—Free doorways—Photo falling—Word falling—Break through in grey room—Pinball led streets—Calling partisans of all nations”—Flash to partisan faces—Moving to block the virus agents—A kiosk explodes from a faulty gasoline stove—Street singers block the Mentalist—Pinball clicks and static cut his lines to the control station—The Ventriloquist is attacked by a dog and jumps onto a table his hair standing on end in electric terror—

As the virus agents move they are followed by fat characters all with dark glasses carrying movie cameras and portables with lapel microphones—These subsidiary agents are continually harassed by the partisans blocking their pictures—turning on air hammers and portable radios etc—Workmen carrying boards slap them in the face—Park sheets of tin in front of kiosks—etc—All this is seen taking place to clicks of the pinball machine—The agents are continually blocked by boys playing ball in the streets—The Ven-

nice noisy toys

triloquist dislocates his back trying to imitate them—

Scene is lawn party in Summer twilight's last gleamings—4th of July—Booths, shooting gallery, palmist, a small ferris wheel and plane ride—To collect money for The Cancer Society—All the virus agents are among the guests circulating slowly through the booths waiting for the fireworks—The anti-virus agent is also there—He looks at his watch—Flash to room of anti-virus agent in shabby hotel—Assistant looks at watch: "Count down"—He starts speeding up the recorders containing cut-ups of soundtrack of the entire film—(Note the anti-virus agent throughout the film carries portable recorder and camera)—The recorded soundtrack is cut in with jig music—There is also in the room a flicker machine consisting of three slotted cylinders one over the other that turn in different directions and reverse and shift direction—Powerful lights are suspended inside the cylinders which are lined with photos taken by the anti-virus agent that are stills from the film track—Recorders and flicker machine turn to jig music slow at first then faster and faster—The lawn party slowly speeds up—flash to virus control station—Bored staff sergeants chewing gum and reading comic books are now picking up orders from anti-virus station—They shrug and plug in the switchboard—The battery of tape recorders and films begins to speed up faster and faster—The party is turning in a circle to jig music, plane rides, ferris wheels, merry-go-rounds (one hand after the other clicks in front of the palmist)—The guests scream by each other at supersonic speed back and forth to the cocktail buffet drunk in a matter of seconds trays emptied—Pinball machines click faces and scenes on and off faster and faster—Virus control center berserk now—Faces pulling loose and fracture in a gathering tornado of word and image—

to scare the ghost away

Frantic calls from the board are blocked by the berserk sound and image track—By the crumbling cathedral, screams from the hospital and the Turkish bath, yacking queers, subways, buses, radio static, clicking jolting pinball machines, jukebox records, the exploding kiosk, swarms of squealing rats—The anti-virus agent hits the photo bull’s-eye in the shooting gallery—In the virus control center the machines blow fuses and go out—The board explodes in the silver flash of the camera—Simultaneously fireworks fill the sky—Flash back to the carnival and stop each virus agent back in his act—The blighted city lights up under the fireworks—Faces snap back into focus—Fountains go on—Music plays—Fade out in carnival scenes and fireworks—(The Carny Manager is seen clearing out the till and taking a taxi to the airport) (WSB, *Meeting of the Virus Board*)

T “Dismantle your miserable bodies!”

B (Chuckling) It’s been done! I believe that the British Film Board no longer exists—not with those members, certainly.

Waring smiles . . . “Nice toys. Nice noisy toys to scare the ghosts away.” (WSB, *Cities of the Red Night*)

The second case of success, claimed by William at any rate, occurred in London some years later in the rather sordid matter of the Maple Leaf Cafe—

T (laughing)

B (chuckling) . . . which was a coffee bar in Soho run by some Maltese—at least *I* suspected them to be Maltese—and, uh, they had mistreated William, and, um, indeed he—he could tell you the details, I don’t remember them, I wasn’t on the *case* as it were (laughter) . . . But,

the emerald was the beginning

uh, he closed the place down all right . . . it didn't burn I don't think—I don't think it burned, but it certainly closed down . . . rather dramatically . . . *

T William in his preface speaks of “the beginning and end of Word.” Does this refer to the emerald crown discovered in Luxor?

B I made it so. William says this but he picks it up from my text . . .

. . . as soon as you have anything like a kingdom, enchanters and conjurers will always drop in from all over Creation to take it away from you, naturally enough. The Saharan Scarab you hold in your hand is the pre-hieroglyphic Emerald Beginning and End of Word. So, spin out the rest of the story with Mya . . . (Thay Himmer, *The Process*)

It was I who said that the emerald was the beginning and end of word. This sort of thing has happened very often and quite reasonably between William and me because of the fact that we talked over such matters for so long, for so many years when we saw each other every day, and talked about nothing else but these sort of matters—naturally a number of things that I said have been repeated many times, and very pertinently, by William, who has expanded them and doesn't necessarily put them in quotes because some of them have become rather self-evident realities and truths I think . . . I don't mean in this particular case—I was *given* this large emerald by John Cooke, and I used it as a symbol, I turned it into a scarab in *The Process*, and,

* Referred to, presumably, in “Playback from Eden to Watergate” (preface to 1974 US edition of *The Job*) as “the Moka Bar” ex of 29 Frith Street . . . “outrageous and unprovoked discourtesy and poisonous cheesecake.”

and the end of word

uh, as the novel built itself around what had been a series of very extraordinary experiences, it seemed very apt to call it that and make it a symbol of African power, where the Word has always counted a very great deal.

Africa, all of Africa, whether it's ancient Egypt or modern Black Africa, is the land of long palavers, where the Word . . . public oratory means a great deal—

(knock on door)

Yes?—

(assorted odd sounds)

That *noise* is disturbing my . . . meditations . . .

T What do you think about the future of painting?

B Does it have one?

T Does it?

B After all, there is no reason why painting should continue to be the prime art of society. Sculpture and Architecture and Epic Poetry and Music have preceded it. Which of the arts would be the most likely to be taken into Space? Certainly not bulky Architecture, except in the design of the space vessel itself and the plans for further construction out there. I can't see anyone taking any huge museum-size canvases along. Have the chimpanzees been doing anything new lately, since they took over Abstract Expressionism?

T I see here an article about Copier Art in which you are quoted. What's all that about?

B About nothing at all. Even less than the "Emperor's New Clothes" . . . which have been hanging on the museum clotheslines too long. All that shit was replaced by so-called Conceptual Art, what I call Deceptual Art. There is, literally, nothing to it but some cancerous growth out of the *Me* generation of Americans who were "Spocked" by the ideas of that dumb permissive addle-headed doctor

with photography began the whole

Spock. As Warhol said, anybody can now be a genius for nearly five minutes and a superstar for 15 minutes of public exposure by the media. It will last a little longer if there's a mass product to sell. The trouble with Deceptual Art was that there was a very thin product and even that so ephemeral that no collector in his right mind would want to "invest" in it. All this technological rubbish that has been spewing up from video to polaroid to newly-dubbed "Electroworks" does sell the electronic equipment involved to an over-affluent society of idle housewives who need an "outlet" in programmed "creativity," a way of burning up the bread of the starving Third World and the Fourth and the Fifth on an electric toaster. All this decorative garbage they turn out is what they can pick and choose from as they rollerskate through the air-conditioned supermarket of the arts. It's like painting with numbers and it should stop in the kindergarten. It's not that these things make creation too easy—they have nothing at all to do with creativity. This is the ugly flab on a fatcat society that burns up everybody else's calories of psychic energy and leaves the world impoverished, not enriched.

T You have not only practiced photography and incorporated photos into your paintings but written and published in French long texts about photography . . . That means you take it seriously—

B Of course I take it seriously. With photography began the whole insane proliferation of images. Previous to the 19th century, most people saw at most one image a week at church or once a year on a pilgrimage. Now images flow past us and through us by the multiple millions, daily. What does that mean and what has it done to us: none of us is quite sure, even now. We have seen revered objects

insane proliferation of images

and even whole countries fade away under the assault of picture postcards and tourist cameras. In our day, things which had endured from all time have been burnt down, absorbed, obliterated as sure as the beaches of Bali have been overrun by hippies on motorbikes who pass out on speedballs in temples they burn down with an abandoned roach before they catch their cheap charter back home. Get it while it lasts. Use it all up.

T Isn't Picasso an example of a painter who used it all up?

B Yes, Picasso was the last painter, the last plastician. In that quite extraordinary *Life with Picasso* by Françoise Gilot, the mother of his children, she makes it sound quite convincing that Picasso was fairly aware of his own role as the ogre who ate up poor Painting herself after having devoured the painters of the past. His work has absolutely nothing to say about the future. It is all about the past, a *summum* of the past. What he had done was to attack the very matter, what the French critics used to call *la matière*, of painting. It matters a lot. Or it used to. It mattered like the good taste things once had, above all in food. The *matière* in painting was food for the soul. Food and painting went plastic about the same time and for some of the same reasons. Overpopulation. There are too many of us. There are too many millions of millions of us for there to be enough of the really good stuff to go around, so we shell out plastic tokens of funny-money by the millions instead.

You see, once you had thrown sand into the *salade* with Cubism, you might as well go on tossing your Campbell soup cans or your stuffed goats' heads up into Poor Painting's pussy. As soon as there were Museums of Modern Art, the museum and art itself had to be modern every week like the cheap mass-produced goods in the chic department stores in the US that the new museums so

more media for less and less value

closely resemble. In Japan, the great department stores *are* the great patrons of modern art. Today, there are not just too many millions of people but too many painters and artists, so-called. In my youth in Paris there were not even *hundreds* of painters on the scene, and *today*, the *Préfecture de Police* has more than 80,000 people registered as: *Profession, artiste peintre*. What a shambles! In my youth in Paris there was only one Museum of Modern Art and that was a former coach house in the Luxembourg Gardens where the prize-winning turkey of each year's Salon was solemnly hung with its tag under it . . .

That was it. No Impressionists in the Louvre—and it was unthinkable that there ever would be. Then, things began to speed up. Time itself seems to have speeded up or, rather, more Matter gets squeezed into less Time. Time is thickening up. Time is proliferating like plastic. Not only our recording systems but our preferential systems are being fed more media for less and less value, just like the taste went out of tomatoes fairly recently and out of US bread about 75 years ago when bread went into Bondage . . . Became plastic. Buy Bond Bread!

T I thought you once advised Antony Balch to collect plastic.

B I did. Not only did early plastic domestic articles have beautiful feel and easy shapes but it was also easy to see that, one day, with oil prices up and up, plastic would become more and more valuable. For good or for ill, plastic is at least fairly . . . biodegradable, and self-destructive, more so than the metals at any rate. Maybe that puts it out of the running for collectors.

T How about Polaroid art?

B It should enable Dr Land to sell more of his cameras and further fill our garbage cans with “disposable” materials. Polaroid is a quick way to rape simple people not only of their image but their integrity.

**CONTROL . . .
CONTROL?**

1ST DECEMBER 1968

282 FULHAM ROAD, LONDON, S.W.10.

DEAR ANTONY,

Herewith all the questions and answers, as requested.

The original (top) copy of the customers' questions and answers is ready for posting off, and we have enclosed an additional, uncut, carbon copy for you to keep.

8 Customers' QUESTIONS at 12/- each	£ 4. 16. 0.
AW's questions processed 1st December - 6 questions at 12/- each (question 4 is not charged)	£ 3. 12. 0.
AW's questions processed 29th November - 11 questions at 12/- each (questions 2, 3, and 14 not charged)	£ 6. 12. 0.

£ 15. 0. 0.

SINCERELY,

T. S. S. S.


WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF CONTROL.



control . . . control?

Control needs time. Control needs beings with limited time who experience time. (WSB)

***Q.* Whose films were more influential than those of David Wark Griffith?**

***A.* Control's.**

We ran into trouble with Brion's tape recorder, which persistently refused to record our conversation regarding the

scrapbook system from newspaper cuttings

alleged interplanetary agency Control. Brion persisted, teasing, cajoling and insulting both the machine and Control until:

B (shouting) *THE STORY—OF HOW WE FIRST CAME INTO CONTACT WITH CONTROL!*

(tape stops)

THIS PALTRY SNIVELLING LOWDOWN DIRTY HOME INDUSTRY RUN IN A GRUBBY APARTMENT IN . . . FULHAM HIGH STREET BY A SUSPICIOUS PAIR OF NOVA AGENTS CALLING THEMSELVES BRENDA DUNKS AND . . . DICKIE DEICHES—*

(tape stops)

THIS DISREPUTABLE DUO FIRST CAME TO THE NOTICE OF ONE TERRY . . .

T Reeves?

B *Reeves*, at that time an employee of Antony Balch . . . to whose attention he brought these people who were living in this house that they . . . infested—uh (laughter) inhabited.

. . . in Fulham Road Willy Deiches and Brenda Dunks, two would-be once-were computer operators with IBM who now function on their own (?) have perfected a scrapbook system from newspaper cuttings for predictions and assessments along the lines of Wm's scrapbooks, but with a built-in 24-hour mathematics of their coordinate points for greater accuracy. They also claim to be in touch with Control in Venus through IBM Seattle. Questions may be put to Control at 12 shillings a time (it used to be free) and the answers are interesting. Wm has sent in a whole lot and we are waiting for these answers . . . (Antony Balch to BG, November 4 1968)

* Actually at 282 Fulham Road, SW10.

for predictions and assessments

As far as I know the first questions were submitted by Antony Balch who then alerted William Burroughs to this extraordinary possibility of getting in touch with Control. This was only natural because they had dinner together every night and, uh, William then made up a list and bunged it off—the answers he bunged off to me in Tangier, and those were the first Control questions and answers that I ever heard of . . .

. . . indicated that UFOs are unmanned craft powered by what is possibly orgone energy.

I brought them here to dinner at William's—cooked by Mustapha, whose cooking is improving. William informed them that he did not take orders from Control and that Control was not 100% Control—and offered up a list of questions to Control via the computer.

Here are the questions and here are the answers we received 48 hours later:

Q. What is word?

A. Word is ETC.

Q. What does ETC mean?

A. Electrical time control.

Q. What is virus?

A. Virus is B.

Q. What is the relation between Word and Virus?

A. Power.

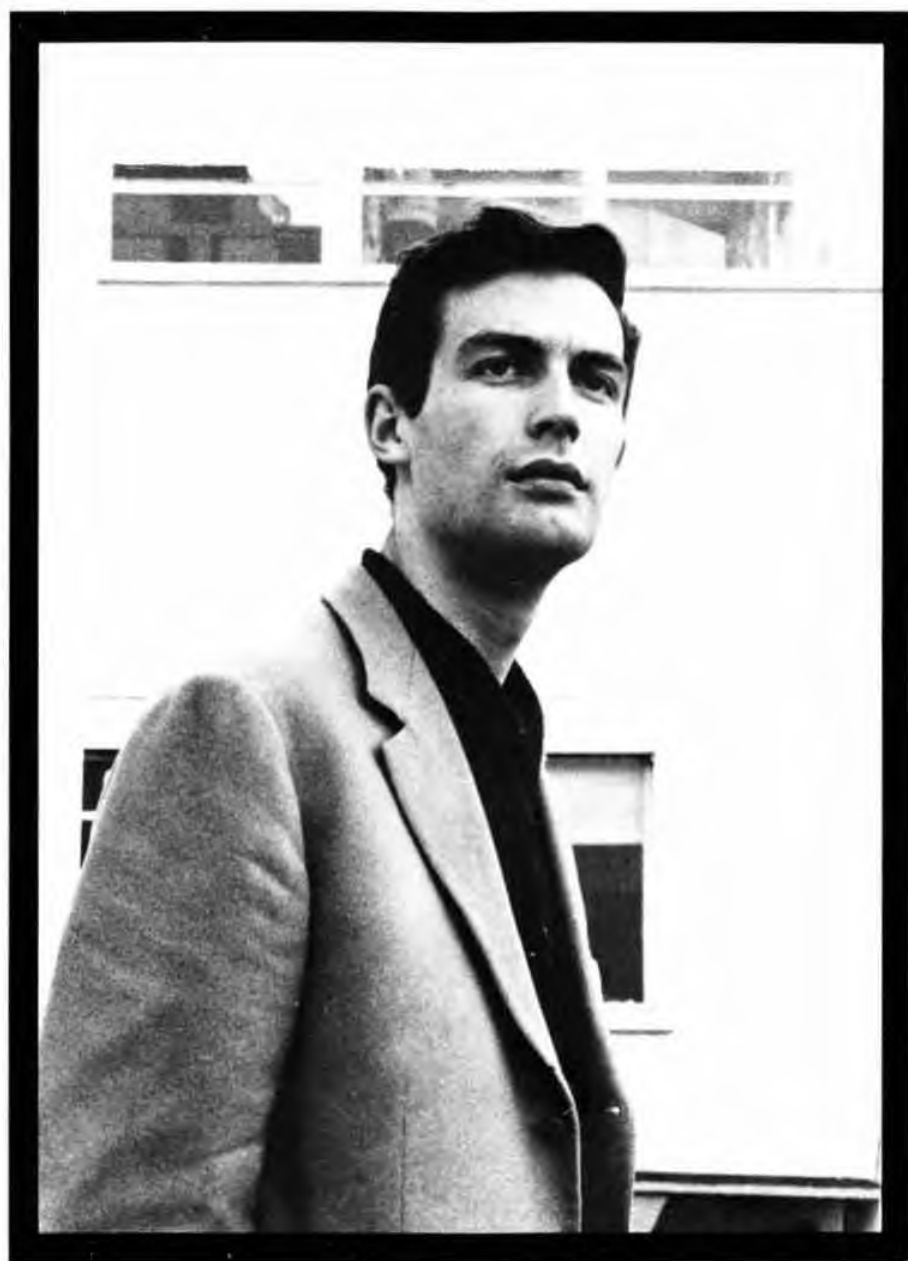
Q. What is the importance of Mr L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology?

A. Question held pending signal clearance.

Q. How long has the reactive mind been on this planet?

A. Decades.

Q. What is the origin of the reactive mind?



Anthony Balch (1937–1980) photographed by Jacques Leiser at Lydd Airport on the way to Paris prior to shooting *Towers Open Fire*. Photo taken probably 1960. "It was through Jacques' friend Jean-Claude de Feugas that I met Brion Gysin and William Burroughs. A chance mention of Cocteau's journeys through mirrors brought instant scorn from Brion, who said he travelled through mirrors every day, and would I like to phone ODE:41.66 to find out how."

What is sex? Sex is power.

A. Abstract.

Before Leo.

Q. Is the Reactive Mind a virus or the means by which a virus is communicated?

A. Neither.

Q. What is sex?

A. Sex is power.

(subquestion)

Q. What is power?

A. Power is drive.

Q. What is drive?

A. Stimulant.

Q. Why is it pleasurable?

A. Question held pending signal clearance.

Some of the most potent clearing course materials is seen in the head when you look at the Dreamachine . . . *

Questions written 10:45 a.m. October 31 1968:

Q. Do the word combinations in L. Ron Hubbard's "Reactive Mind" refer to a symbol system or a pictorial language?

A. Symbol system.

Q. If so, is this language similar to the Egyptian or Mayan hieroglyphs?

A. Mayan.

Q. Is L. Ron Hubbard's apparent fascism a plot to bring the society into communication?

A. Yes.

* Fragment written by Anthony Balch, found among his papers—as was all of the other material used in this section—after his death, Easter 1980. This set of questions was processed 23.18 hrs, October 26 1968.—TW

. . . mechanism of morphine addiction?

- Q. Are L. Ron Hubbard's confidential materials known to the CIA and other official agencies in America?**
- A. Yes.**
- Q. Is there such a thing as a square root?**
- A. Yes. Basic time.**
- Q. Control states that virus is B. What does B stand for?**
- A. Bacteria.**
- (subquestion)
- Q. What is Bacteria?**
- A. It's a UFO.**
- Q. What is its purpose?**
- A. Destroy all minds.**
- Q. How can the word be rubbed out?**
- A. At first automatic exercise.**
- Q. Is the C.S. Lewis-Tolkien mythology historically valid?**
- A. Yes.**
- Q. It seems that during his stay in Egypt, Hassan i Sabbah found a clue that enabled him to perfect a system for controlling his Assassins from a distance. What was this clue?**
- A. Energy from Virus.**
- Q. A small emerald crown that turned up in Luxor has been described as "the beginning and end of word." Is word contained in this artifact?**
- A. Yes.**
- Q. Who is now in possession of the emerald.**
- A. A guru.**
- (subquestion)
- Q. Where does he live?**
- A. Adwe.**
- Q. The only thing not prerecorded in a prerecorded universe would be the recordings themselves. Where are these recordings?**
- A. At ESF.**

Nerve decay.

- Q. How do I distinguish my mind from my machine?**
A. Crap.
- Q. What is L. Ron Hubbard's R2-45?**
A. Assassination technique.
- Q. What is the significance of the numbers 8276 bracketed around a phallic symbol?**
A. Are you kidding?
- Q. Do these numbers refer to Hubbard's R2-45?**
A. Reject: Because previous question rejected.
- Q. How does this assassination technique work?**
A. After virus.
- Q. Who or what gives Hubbard his instructions?**
A. ETC.
- Q. How deadly is Reich's Deadly Orgone Radiation?**
A. Very deadly.
- Q. What is the mechanism of morphine addiction?**
A. Nerve decay.
- Q. Would rubbing out the word result in immediate exteriorization?**
A. Yes.
- Q. Whose films were more influential than those of David Wark Griffith?**
A. Control's.

The answers *were* interesting and essentially seemed pertinent, not Sibylline or Delphic as were the answers of the oracles in antiquity, which remained on the side of . . . always remained carefully ambiguous, leaving the interpretation of the oracle to the postulant who had posed the question. These answers were *perhaps* fed in by the questions themselves, as I think one might judge from a study, a complete study of all the questions submitted and all the answers given by Control . . . because the word *Virus*, an

“Energy from Virus?”

answer, for example, such as — how does it go?—

T “Energy from Virus?”

B Ah, energy from Virus—and then?

T They say that Virus is B.

B Yes, well Virus B gives me two clues to the supposition that a technique rather like that employed in carnival, music halls, and presumably in primitive societies . . . uh, I was thinking—it’s an interpolation—of Moroccan saints’ tombs, in which one sleeps and has a dream, it’s not quite the same . . .

What perhaps was going on here with Brenda and her sidekick Willy Deiches was more like the carnival routine of an operator, supposedly a medium, sitting blindfolded on a stage with an assistant who goes out among the audience and collects questions or collects objects, which are named—either the questions are answered by the so-called veiled medium, or the objects are identified with him—uh, *by* him, with presumably his eyes closed or scientifically blindfolded, great area here for cheating, naturally—But the actual technique is handled through passing words back and forth as signals, which unknown to the audience actually identify the object that the assistant is handling. And therefore words are fed rapidly in a sort of patter to the fake medium sitting on stage and out of those words he makes an answer . . .

In this case, William was of course for many years interested in virus and had more recently become interested in the quarrel over the vitamins B and—what? C? Or . . . A, B and C, which are supposedly effective, or absolutely *ineffective* in regard to the common cold. William has written a good deal about this, in *The Job*, for example . . . And I would suggest that in many cases the material had been fed in by the previous questions, which we don’t

What comes after politics? Eternity.

have here in every case . . .

This question regarded the Assassins and Hassan i Sabbah's method of controlling his adepts, and the answer was "through virus"—"Energy from Virus"—what does that mean? That is a rather Delphic answer; it means anything that you like. In those hippie days the word "energy" was continually being bandied around, there was "Oh, we got a great deal of *energy* going here" and, you know, "There was a lot of *energy* last night," was a, a password at that time. I advised people to go and read the Second Law of Thermodynamics if they wanted to know what energy is—it has nothing to do with whatever they were talking about . . .

Questions asked by customers at the Times Cinema, Baker Street, London November 23 and 24 1968:*

- Q. What is money?**
- A. Convenience.**
- Q. Who is God?**
- A. Control.**
- Q. Who controls Control, and why do they think they do it?**
- A. No one controls Control.**
- Q. Where is it at?**
- A. Venus.**
- Q. What comes after politics?**
- A. Eternity.**
- Q. Why can't I have free cigarettes here as I did on opening night?**
- A. Greedy.**

* Opened by Anthony Balch, 1968.

What is money? Convenience.

Undated questions and answers:

- Q. Is the opium poppy indigenous to this planet?**
A. Yes.
- Q. When did the Jews arrive on this planet?**
A. Decades ago.
- Q. Where did the Jews come from?**
A. Question rejected. (Being question five on the fifth day question to be reprogrammed on Sunday.)
- Q. What is the purpose of the Jews on this planet?**
A. Human like the rest.
- Q. Why does L. Ron Hubbard have Scientologists thrown into the sea from his boat for “out tech”— Why this form of punishment?**
A. Shock treatment.
- Q. What are the Scientology commands used to obtain Grades OT 1-8?**
A. Cretin.
- Q. What are the Scientology questions used to obtain Grades OT 1-8?**
A. After tech: ETC.
- Q. Is there a word sequence that will obtain OT powers up to Grade 8 immediately? If so, what is that word sequence?**
A. Bread.

Questions processed Sunday December 1 1968:

- Q. With reference to the previous set of questions: Did the Jews come from the planet Mercury?**
A. Yes.
- Q. If not, from which planet?**
A. (No answer)
- Q. How much money would Control want to disclose the**

Why is this planet so desirable . . . ?

answer to question 8 of the previous questions?

A. None.

Q. Is the standard rate of 12/- applicable?

A. Yes.

Q. Why was Antony subjected to Reactive Mind headaches on 28th November 1968?

A. Control/Antony link.

Q. Was it because he asked naughty questions?

A. No.

Q. How does Antony get rid of his headaches and stay alive?

A. Link time.

Undated questions and answers:

Q. When you state that virus is B, are you referring to my virus? To B-23?

A. Yes.

Q. Can B-23 give you orders now?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you controlled by the need to control?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you in point of fact addicted to certain brain stimulations?

A. No, but this is used on control subjects.

Q. Are the erotic convulsions of cyanide poisoning experienced as pleasurable or otherwise?

A. Otherwise.

Q. What is the most horrific image in the Books. Is it a bombing incident?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it to obtain such an incident that the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima?

A. Yes.

Because one gets a body . . .

Q. Who really gave that order?

A. Control.

Q. When and why did Control come here?

A. You have been told when, and the reason you cannot know.

Q. Precisely how are the pictures associated with the RM phrases and how is this association established in the public mind?

A. Virus.

Q. The Mayan codices that have survived reveal no erotic portrayals of aroused genitals. Are there such portrayals in the codices destroyed by Bishop Landa? If so what is their nature?

A. a) Yes b) Pornographic.

Q. Would Control object to some of these questions and answers being used . . .

A. No, provided full details of artist, publication, etc, are supplied.

T Control at one time said it received orders from Virus B and was controlled by the *need* to control, and at another time it claimed to be God—"no one controls Control"—very contradictory answers—

B "No one controls Control?" A tautology, surely . . . no? "Control is Control" would be a tautology, and that's essentially what it's saying . . .

T Why is this planet so desirable to alien agencies?

B Because, one gets a *body* on this planet, and it is better to have a body than not to have a body, and to our almost certain knowledge there are no bodies, there may be other *intelligences*, but there are no other bodies in our galaxy.

T Antony asked Control: "Is there immortality?" and the answer was, "Not for humans."

eight and thirteen flickers . . . per second



I am controlled by my body.

B No, the earth is for humans. And it's a good place to be, till you fuck it up *completely*, as we're doing.

T Are *you* controlled by Control?

B Yes, I think I *am* controlled by Control, I am controlled by my *body*. As in childhood, certainly, one grows up thinking one *is* one's body and only later perhaps finds that one is not . . . But one is still controlled by the *apparatus* in which one exists, whether it be by the circulation of the blood, or the circulation of the lymph of which we are even *less* aware—we're not ordinarily aware of our blood except at certain moments of excitement, but we're really *never* aware of our absolutely necessary elimination of dead cells, waste which is being carried on and oxidized by the movement of the lymph in our bodies. In both cases we need oxygen. So we are controlled by our need of oxygen, if it were only to that extent.

Many years ago I said: "I can show you only what you have already seen," and it means to me now that everything that can be *seen*, and I mean really visualized with the eyes closed, would seem to be contained within the visions that one experiences with the Dreamachine. Therefore one might come to the conclusion, perhaps hasty, that everything that can be seen can be seen only in the alpha band, between eight and 13 flickers, light interruptions, per second. If this is so then we are programmed. If indeed there is such a thing as the alpha band, which is now perceptible—has been for the last 30 years since the invention of the electroencephalogram—we may presume that this is a programme . . .

The figures involved, of the possibilities of combinents, of permutations, and powers in the Human Programme, is very well explained by some of the more popular writers in modern science like . . . Carl Sagan, Brion Gysin with Dreamachine, Basel 1979. (Photo: Ulrich Hillebrand)

if there is a program

that book . . .

T *Dragons of Eden.*

B Yeah, *The Dragons of Eden*; you find a few dazzlingly clear pages in there showing you the almost in—all *but* incalculable, but nevertheless *calculable* possibilities within the brain. So that the brain itself is laid down with certain limits beyond which it cannot go, therefore it would seem to be programmed. And if there is a programme there must be a programmer . . . And the programmer would seem to be Control.

Where is The Third Mind between 8 and 13 . . .

The Beat Museum is a grandiose pseudo-Pompeian villa recently erected on the Palmdale Bulge, a mysterious swelling of the earth astride California's San Andreas Fault. Geologists generally agree that a major earthquake here is inevitable. The Museum is all museums, all collections of the past to be gathered and destroyed. It is administered by those forces who hold and retain such objects and images in "dead time." They are known as "Westerners."

The Bardo Hotel is all hotels. You check in and check out and there goes a lifetime. The Bardo has 49 rooms on seven floors. Any temporary resident may spend a day and a night in each room but then must leave. It is up to the client whether or not to come back again . . . (BG, *Beat Museum—Bardo Hotel*, Chapter 1, in *Soft Need #17*)

T What is the situation with regard to the mind you and William developed—the "third and superior mind?" Is the partnership still in operation—it seems rather far apart at the moment.

there must be a programmer

B Oh, yes, well, that original Third Mind is embodied in those books . . . *The Third Mind* is up there on the bookshelf, in both American and English editions and in French translation, as *Oeuvre Croisée* . . . It is the history of our collaborations up to 1965. That intimate collaboration has been interrupted and almost ceased since then, for various reasons—one being that William chose to live so long in London. We first put the book together in New York in 1965 (it was not published until 1976 in the French edition; 1978 in the US) and then he went back to London and I chose to go back to Morocco, and really stayed on in Morocco except for some long visits in London, and often back and forth for shorter ones, uh, but I stayed on in Morocco essentially until 1973, by which time if I am not mistaken William had already left to teach in New York at City College as arranged by Allen Ginsberg . . . But, uh, he had left London although he didn't really know it yet himself. He had walked out of the apartment in Duke Street leaving whatever he owned still in it, but he really had gone and taken up residence in New York. For a while there was a great deal of correspondence, and our correspondence in those days was often very lengthy and very detailed about, uh, matters of collaboration on literary subjects . . .

But our last real collaboration occurred in London in Duke Street St James' when I was living upstairs and he was living down in Room 18, where he was working on a manuscript already called *Wild Boys*. I knew most of the material from reading it serially as it had been written, and William particularly asked me to go over it, and I . . . perhaps took it for granted that he also wanted me to give it some sort of shape, or did he actually ask me to do it?—It would be his way not to, not to say so very directly

our collaborators . . .

but to give me the entire manuscript with the idea that I would inevitably have a hand in the organization of the material. It would seem obvious, particularly because William does not number the pages of his manuscripts as he writes them, believe it or not (chuckling) to this day I believe—just never thinks of that—and, uh, he does an awful lot of shuffling around looking for things—less than I would if I did not put numbers on *my* pages, I'd really be in trouble . . . but it's part of the method of "dowsing things out" as he says, sort of humming a little tune (chuckling) with his mouth closed, and down his nose he's singing: *Yahe-e-e pinta-a-a-r* (laughing) and this, the piece that he was looking for—*or, an even better one*—he has drawn up out of the mess that presents itself—so he pins it down and there he's got his, his piece, or his book, eventually . . . And, uh, I was very pleased with what I had done, and he too said that he was very pleased since it was quite a long manuscript and it was entirely about Wild Boys from the beginning to the end. I went back to Morocco and remained in touch by telephone and by letter, and, uh, returned some time later after having heard that there had been a fortuitous visit from Richard Aaron who had come from Switzerland with an offer of some *ready c-a-s-h*, right on the table, for a quickie book, that William could put together and put into the hands of a publisher he, Richard Aaron, had produced through his contacts with buying books from a dealer—what was his name?—in Covent Garden, in London, he eventually—

T Covent Garden Press, or something or another.

B Perhaps. I can't remember the man's name. But he turned out to be a not very reliable character who did a bunk to Northern Ireland leaving behind a half a million pounds worth of debts. You have to be quite an operator to have

third minds everywhere

that size debt . . . In a way he was a charming enthusiast because I think a great deal of that money went into buying what I saw with my own eyes, a very extraordinary piece of very expensive printing machinery, which was computerized and was supposed to churn out beautiful books. It was in his basement in Covent Garden. So I imagine it was just partly through bad business practice that he went bankrupt. But that left two books very much in the air—one being *Port of Saints*, which is full of typographical errors (in the Covent Garden Press edition) and also chocablock full of some of the very best pieces out of *Wild Boys*, which got used up for no real purpose beyond the immediate five hundred . . . pennies that came to William for that job . . . And when I came back to London I found that my—my idea of *Wild Boys* was a book about Wild Boys, and the book known as *Wild Boys* begins with “Tío Mate Smiles,” and then somebody else smiles, and as Antony Balch said at the time, “The Wild Boys come in on the *last reel*” . . . So really we have not collaborated since then.

- T *The Third Mind* you did dedicate “to and for all our collaborators at all times *third minds everywhere*”—
- B So that’s where the Third Mind is, it’s out there with the collaborators and with anybody else in any language, like this group of young French people who’ve picked up on the idea . . . The French are stuck and bogged down with their language, but their ears have been pricking up a little bit over *Oeuvre Croisée* . . . there are several divergent movements within the language itself, not brought about by our intervention, but by the very forces within the language, which have started to become *aware* of the difficulties that are in front of them—unless they make an effort, they don’t quite know where the effort is *going*, they

conclusion . . . quickfreeze French

tend to start little schools, or antischools, or unschools of thought on the subject, but, uh, naturally it's a *malaise* which is going to become more and more general in the French language . . .

Those years ago, when William and I were working together in the Beat Hotel on problems which are to a large extent linguistic, I met a very intelligent Frenchman who was at that moment an art expert but who was a very extraordinary French intellectual, a nephew of Toulouse-Lautrec and a man of very considerable culture, who was astonished—in fact his mind was *blown*—when I told him that to my personal knowledge two members of a very great French family who by some extraordinary historical chance were both members of the French Academy and were both great mathematicians—this French family, Broglie, who have produced a lot of very clever people, and in one generation they've produced two absolute top notch mathematicians . . . I knew the nephew of these two men and I was able to tell my French intellectual friend as a matter of absolute fact that these two great lights of French science could not discuss their interests, their mathematical interests, in French; they had to discuss them in English because they were the alogical, illogical, unlogical, antilogical statements on modern mathematics which the French language just will not express . . . The most logical conclusion—and the French are proud of their grip on Cartesian logic—would be to quickfreeze French as it stands today and make a Dead Language out of it, to serve as Latin once did. French is too archaic a language to be saved . . . all these European languages with their *thou* and *you* forms of the verb . . . that's hopeless . . . and words which can be not only masculine and feminine but even neuter, as in German . . . ridiculous and hard to

. . . get to some Chinese . . .

eradicate, only a real tyrant could do it . . . So, the French language really doesn't adapt itself at all to these sort of methods, but Chinese would, for example, and I imagine it may get to some Chinese too, who have been practicing it for maybe two or three thousand years anyway (chuckling) in their subtle Oriental way . . . But, uh, the Third Mind is really out there and that's what the dedication meant.



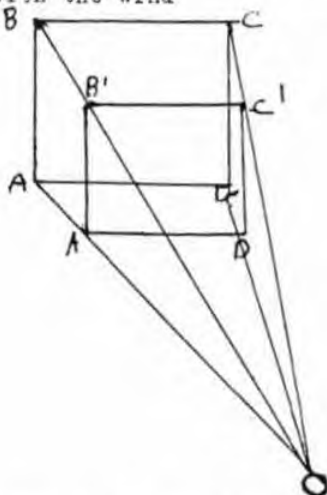
Ian Sommerville (1941-1976).

- T I wanted to talk about Ian Sommerville, who I've said seem to me to have been the most important embodiment of the Third Mind. How did you make contact with him?
- B Yes, it's very true, uh, even in the sense that William and I shared him, his expertise and his knowledge. He was William's discovery, at the moment when William had gone through a first apomorphine cure and had then fallen

September 23 Lutuzn Wednesday 1964
The American Consulate
Tangier, Morocco

Dear Anthony:

Ian left Monday after two excellent suggestions in fact we owe the first precision time and image compass to Mr. Ian Sommerville a veteran of Operation Darlington. He had taken some time previous a photo from the balcony of my apartment and sighted from the photo so that it exactly covered the street there on the balcony in a strong cross wind the gray photo flapping the corrugated iron roof of Pro Maroc flapping I saw it move with the wind



1. Camera at position O takes a picture framed by ABCD
2. The picture is developed and printed and later
3. The eye at position O looks at the photo A'B'C'D' the photo fills the same space in the eye of the observer as ABCD and naturally fits reality. A'B'C'D' could be replaced by a movie screen scetera

Now take a telescope and look at movie stills. Micky dances the board talks. With a telescope you can watch our worn out film dim jerky far away shut a bureau drawer in Mrs. Murphy's Rooming House I saw it moive I tell you buy a telescope and have a look. The word and image compass with telescopic equipment enables us to take a set from a distance to cast yesterday shadows on today. We could plot our sets and land. The telescope saw a hole in time.

Enclose a page written forward to a time when many traveling movie units are in operation sliding in anywhere. This gave rise to chain movies. Unit I on set and Unit 2 takes the action on Unit I set and also the camera man on Unit I set and action on their own set. This can be done at close range or through a telescope. And any number of units can be inextricably involved I hope you can do a scene with Ian on roller skates skating down the deck of an ocean liner with New York Harbor in the back ground. Might find that set in a roller rink. Another shot if you get to it there is an old man named Harper who feeds pig pigeons in Trafalgar Square. A few pigeon shots. Brian sends his best. The king is here at last

See You On Set

Bill Bill B.

bad habits through “good friends”

back into bad habits through “good friends” who helped him do so. He had nevertheless obtained some apomorphine from Dr Dent and was determined to go through the cure by himself. He had taken careful notes—or *fairly* careful notes, as much as he’d been *able* to during his previous cure, and he had a little copybook that had been given to him by the celebrated Nurse Smitty, I believe, in which she had marked the exact sequence of the treatment. This little notebook still exists I think, somewhere; William kept it for years. And he settled down in Room 15—he was already for some time sort of *incrusted* into Room 15 where he was determined to cure himself and had first suggested that I would help him through it, but, uh, we were living with such hot brains at that time that I drew back and said that no, I was sorry, I really didn’t feel that I could do that; it would be very dangerous for both of us. And William had met, in George Whitman’s bookshop (Shakespeare & Co) had met a young English student who was Ian Sommerville, at that time still at Jesus College, Cambridge, studying mathematics, and he was in Paris on a very meager scholarship of some sort and William offered to pay him as a sort of nurse-assistant during the time of the cure . . . and that’s how we got to know Ian.

Then it turned out that Ian knew all sorts of things about tape recorders. I had a tape recorder that wasn’t working, an old Revere; Ian had something better and eventually went back to England and brought over his better machine and established himself in a very small, tiny room on a lower floor and that’s when we all three started in on the tape recorder.

T You and he developed the Dreamachine.

B Yes, I had the experience, the physical experience, riding down an avenue of trees at sunset in the South of France.

Life begins with two tape recorders

Had a transcendental storm of color visions today in the bus going to Marseilles. We ran through a long avenue of trees and I closed my eyes against the setting sun. An overwhelming flood of intensely bright patterns in supernatural colors exploded behind my eyelids: a multidimensional kaleidoscope whirling out through space. I was swept out of time. I was in a world of infinite number. The vision stopped abruptly as we left the trees . . . (BG, journal entry 21st December, 1958)

. . . William, by accident, as if there *are* such things as accidents, had picked up the, uh . . .

T Grey Walter.

B Yeah, the Grey Walter book (*The Living Brain*) second-hand along the booksellers by the Seine and handed it to me after reading his account of his series of experiments to change the result—the visual result—of encephalographic investigation of the brain where he had subjected patients to light interruptions between 8 and 13 a second and they had experienced visions of color and pattern. And so, Burroughs and I were in Paris, Ian was back at college in Cambridge when I wrote to him to look up the book and quoted the thing to him and said: “How can we make something like this at home?” And with that, with no means at all and very few watts of electricity even to play with, we started in a whole series of Dreamachines: from a very simple cylinder with just regularly spaced slots producing therefore just one fixed rate of flicker, to these years later, the present machines with which along the height of the column as you move your eye, your closed eyes up and down, you experience all of the light interruptions between 8 and 13 . . .

External resonators, such as flicker, tune in with our internal

experiment begins with three . . .

rhythms and lead to their extension. The Dreamachine began as a simple means to investigate phenomena whose description excited our imaginations—our faculty of imagemaking which flicker was said to stimulate . . . the effects can be astonishing. They continue to develop over a long period of time . . . The intensity of the effect varies with the individual; melancholiacs tend to be irritated, some see nothing. The use of opiates and barbiturates would seem to seal off the patterns almost completely. Rhythmic sound, particularly Arab music and jazz, modulate the vision in which patterns keep time with the music . . .

Brion Gysin added an interior cylinder covered with the type of painting which he had developed from his first “natural flicker” experience, and with eyes opened the patterns became externalized, seemed to catch on fire, and lick up from inside the whirling cylinder. In the bigger machines of his design whole moving pictures are produced and seem to be in flux in three dimensions on a brilliant screen directly in front of the eyes. Elaborate geometric constructions of incredible intricacy build up from bright mosaic into living fireballs like the *mandalas* of Eastern mysticism surprised in their act of growth. (From paper by Ian Sommerville on “Flicker,” in *Olympia Magazine* 2, 1962, reprinted in *Brion Gysin Let The Mice In*)

He was an extraordinary technician, had obviously ever since childhood been the sort of boy who can fix things, or make things, or mend things, or invent things . . .

Life begins with two tape recorders, because with two you can make copies. Experiment begins with *three* tape recorders, where you can really get the thing going back and forth, and at that time we had three, until somebody came and stole Ian’s, I’m afraid, out of his room . . .



He does not know he is dead

Ion Million Watts, known to his friends and enemies as “Electronic Ion,” crashes his British mini, his flimsy little Morris Minor, against a cypress tree in the landscaped driveway leading up to the classical portico of the Beat Museum. He is on his way to inspect a newly-installed exhibit: The Chapel of Extreme Experience. This is a reproduction of Room 25 in the Hotel Bardo in Paris as it was back in 1960. Since Ion knew that room so well and was responsible for the alpha-wave experiments which began there, the curator of the Beat has invited him to drop in and check out the exhibit before it is opened to the general public. Ion jumps out of his crumpled car without a glance back at the wreck of his lifetime. A cloudburst is falling from what was a clear Californian sky less than a second ago. Because he hates above all to get his hair wet, Ion whips off his shirt to hold it over his head like a shroud as he runs nearly naked to the portico of his pseudopalace. He does not yet know he is dead. But he does know his hair is getting wet and he hates it. It reminds him of the time he almost drowned in a rockpool on the Straits of Gibraltar, just outside of Tangier. He is only barely aware of the earth shaking under him. It is exactly 23 minutes past five in the afternoon, Pacific Summer Time . . . (BG, *Beat Museum—Bardo Hotel*)

T You wrote the *Bardo* for him . . .

B Yes, actually what I’m writing is very much dedicated to Ian, having been struck by his very sudden death. A few minutes after a phone call from him, he left the post office in the south of England from where he was phoning me in 1976 and drove around the corner and had an accident and killed himself . . . And as I was reading the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*—about which William has very interesting things to say in his Essays—he who doesn’t agree with the

Ian Sommerville (with umbrella) and Michael Portman, Parade Bar garden, Tangier 1964. (Photo: Antony Balch)

Death . . . must always present

Tibetan Book of the Dead, or has supplementary ideas, very interesting ones . . .

Your death is an organism which you yourself create. If you fear it or prostrate yourself before it, the organism becomes your master. Death is also a protean organism that never repeats itself word for word. It must always present the face of surprised recognition. For this reason I consider the Egyptian and Tibetan books of the dead, with their emphasis on ritual and knowing the right words, totally inadequate. There are no right words. Death is a forced landing, in many cases a parachute jump. The motor sputters ominously. Look around for a place to land. The landscape is deceptive. What appears from the air as a smooth field may turn out to be quicksand or swamp mud. Conversely, a mountainous area may contain a hidden valley or a smooth plateau. Focus attention. Look with your whole body. Pick a spot and land in the dark. *Blackout*.

. . . Like the Egyptian and Tibetan books of the dead, the Mayan books chart the area after death and the ambiguous no man's land between death and rebirth. The Tibetan and Egyptian books stress formalized ritual; if you say the right things to the right gods everything will be all right. The Mayans on the other hand mapped an admittedly dangerous and largely unexplored area where prayers and mantras and namedropping may not serve your cause this evening.

"I happen to be a good friend of Osiris if that name means anything to you."

The Death Cop slaps him back and forth across the face.

"Any son of a bitch tries to scare me with the people he knows . . ." (WSB, *Ah Pook Is Here*)

the face of surprised recognition

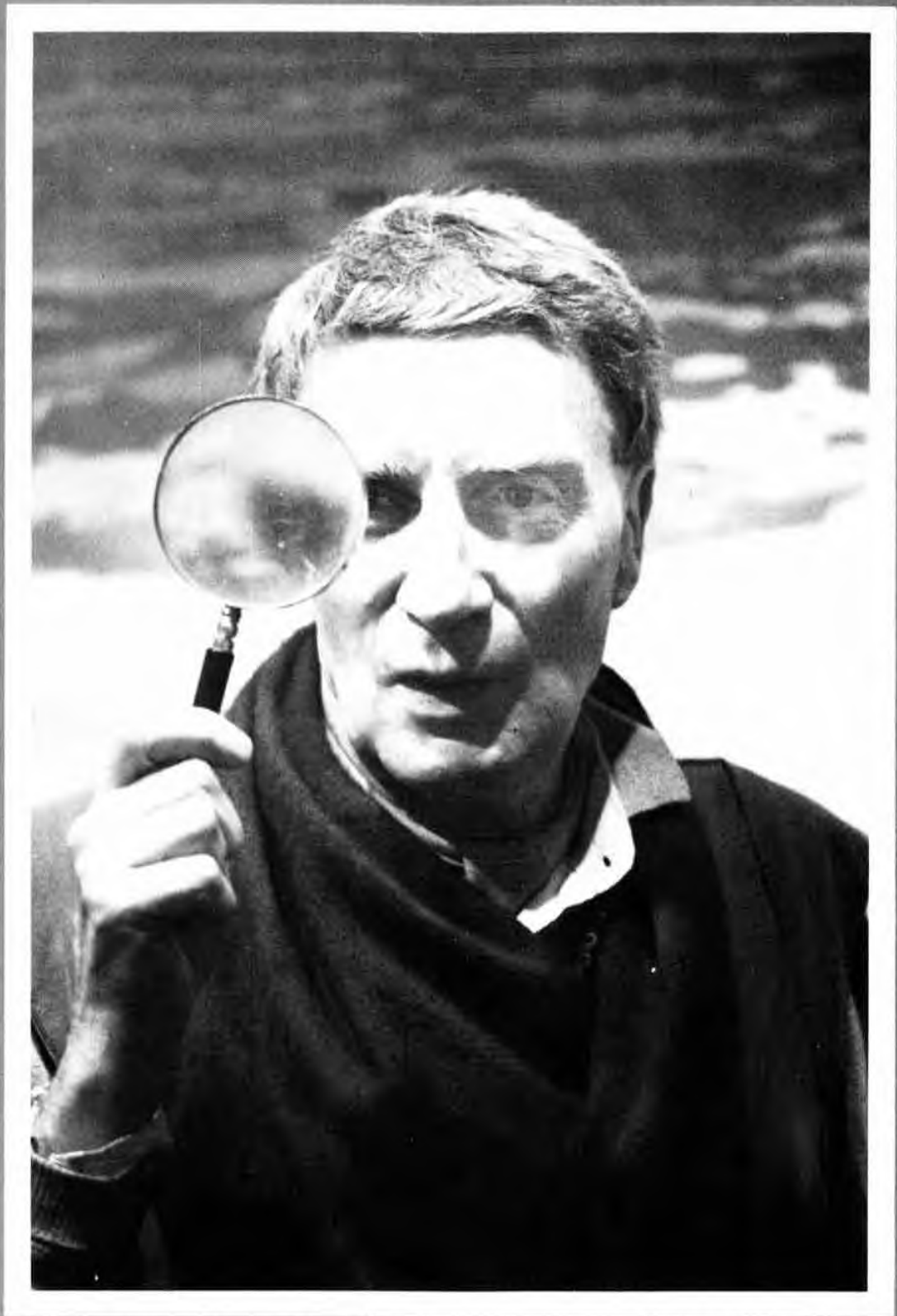
I made the connection between Ian's death and the book of the Bardo (the Bardo is the afterdeath plane in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*) which I was reading at that time . . . but that's a whole, that's a matter for my book actually, I don't want to . . . at the same time there are things both too unresolved and intimate to talk about . . . Yes, the whole idea of writing a book about us and the hotel and our experiments together and our lives together and our past lives, before and after, fitted into the hotel, the number of days in the Bardo, that gave me the idea of a framework, and then much later—I've been working on it really now for a great many years, as it began by a book simply about the hotel, about the Beat Hotel, and the goings on, which I had then tried to fit into the events of 1968; I produced a large manuscript for which I got a considerable—at that time a considerable advance from Doubleday, who later—I think quite rightly—refused the manuscript. No books written about May '68 in France were a success in any case—in *any* way—either artistically, or commercially—which interested them more. And, uh, that manuscript has been sort of cannibalized, as you know; you helped me in fact through some of the travail of that, and then recrystallized around the event of Ian's death and the possibilities of . . . my own death—our own deaths . . . And, uh, so I, I'm still working on this manuscript

After all, only twelve years later! I'm told that Capricorns are like that: they think there is all the time in the world. Either there is or there ain't.

Over: Brion Gysin, Algiers 1956



**THE
BAD
ANIMAL**





the bad animal

. . . ecological, military, political, psychic ruin . . . Escape?

Before I disappear into thee between the hills I bow an aural bow.

On the Hill of Thyme, a steam shovel scooped up dozens of corpses in front of a crumbling building. Its last living inhabitant, a man 120 years old named Mohamed Selim Kaanan, was carried out of the wreckage as *ai aiii!* a band of looters scuffed through the streets full of rubble with arms full of blankets, radios, canned food. In the distance a bell tolled.

As Rimbaud said: “The jackals are howling across the desert of Thyme.” (BG, *Beat Museum—Bardo Hotel*)

Brion Gysin, October Gallery, London 1981. (Photo: Brian Beresford)

No fish ever polluted the sea.

T I don't understand why "man is a bad animal"—what is a *good animal*?

B Man is a bad animal because he kills not only his own kind but any and all other animals, wantonly. Look at those gun-crazy Americans, wrote it into the Constitution at a time when people still carried swords too, and everyone everywhere—not only just in England—drove on the left and rode on the left so they could draw a sword to defend themselves every day on the highway. Napoleon first said: Drive on the right, and forbade everyday sword-wearing. Man is not only a bad animal, he is crazy, irrational, wanton, wasteful . . . above all wasteful. Man is the only animal who destroys his own nest, his own environment and he is getting ready to destroy his one and only livable planet. No fish ever polluted the sea. No bird ever polluted the air. No other animal ever took slaves and waged war.

A bad animal is an animal who destroys the visible world around him. He is not even conscious of the invisible world yet he invents absurd religions whose tyrannical powers are said to derive from the invisible. All religions ought to be taxed out of existence.

I think it's obvious to all of us that man is about to destroy the planet and that there are not any energy commissions or, uh . . . green leaf ecologists who are going to stop them. Man is a greedy destructive animal. We have to go much lower (or what we have been led to consider as much lower) in the realm of creation, into the insect world, before we find anybody that behaves as badly as we do. And there we find that our most, our closest comrade is really the ant—I mean, many of our wise saws and sayings from Antiquity point toward our close relationship with the ant: "*Look to the ant and be wise,*" for example, which I think is as old as, um . . . Aesop . . . I'm not sure

No bird ever polluted the air.

whether that's Aesop or simply some Frenchman like La Fontaine, or maybe just a translation from a Greek or Roman quote . . . The whole story of "the Onddt and the Gracehopper" (James Joyce, in *Finnegans Wake*), I mean where the Onddt, in Joycean language, was also the maternal a-u-n-t, and was the—well you know how he was packaging the words, sort of trying to put them all into one little portmanteau . . .

Only the humans and the ants form an agricultural society based on the most *rigid* principles of elitism and monarchy leading up eventually to this great fat *Queen* who is ten thousand times bigger, ten thousand times fatter, heavier, than the least of her subjects . . . and who is surrounded by an aristocracy of her *Guards*, who dominate a group lower in social scale who are the *Drones*, who are builders and architects and look after the hive—the *Universe*, in other words—of which the Queen is in the center, this great big fat slob of a woman there in the middle like the Lady in the Cave, like *Mother*, like Mother at Home, just sitting there and waiting to be fed all this *honeydew*, which is milked from *Aphids*, who are a lower form of life, like cows, and are looked after by Slaves who are captured in battle by the Drones who are termed warriors rather than builders; in fact there are the Building Drones and there are the Destructive Drones, both of them given their orders by the aristocracy of the Guards around this great fat slob of a Queen who is in the center, and, uh, they go out and capture other *races* of ants in battle and turn them into slaves who milk the Aphids to produce honeydew milk for the Queen . . .

There's no other comparative group in all our knowledge of the rest of us who—the Other People—who are on the planet with us. In my opinion, there is no species

All religions ought to be taxed

on this planet as bad as ourselves . . . without boasting. There are no other animals who prostitute themselves or their own kind, none who fabricate absurd religions, make war or take slaves to aid them in their criminal occupations such as agriculture and industry. Man and his Works is a "Bad Thing," rather than the "Good Thing" the 19th century English thought he was.

Of course, the British themselves were a "jolly Bad Thing," descended from dangerous Drones, berserkers with blue hair and blond eyes who zoomed down from the north out of the Asian steppes where this criminal whiteskinned mutation apparently first took place. Successive flights of them hived on this little island from which they swarmed out as pirates to sting the rest of the world. From all the lovely lands beyond the seas, they sucked up all the honeydew to feed it back to their successions of Queenbees like Elizabeth and Victoria, Empress of India and Kingdoms Beyond The Seas. There were still pennies which said that in my childhood. In those days, the indigenous sub-races of Britons were still locked up in the Lower Classes . . . like the Norman-descended Cockneys who could no more pronounce the letter "H" than the French can today. The ruling class was and is those heavy-bottomed Dutch titled people working as house servants for German petty royalty. They got fat on the loot of the planet. There was just enough of the good stuff left over to nurture a race of English pub poets, reeling around in the hedges of May and the hop fields, drunk on the local brew of language . . . and what a lovely language it is, English. Those who speak no other may not even be aware of it . . . of the boon that was popped into their mouths as babes. Conrad knew.

The English language was a more powerful weapon

out of existence.

for the British than their iron ships, their firearms and their firewater: "Even Wops and Wogs can understand English if you yell at them loud enough." And it was added: "Wogs begin in Calais." You can run a planet best by the power of the word. What more do you need? Terror . . . animal terror alone will not do it. Language makes this animal Man what he is. As Burroughs points out so amusingly, if the rats could read and write . . . pass the word on about traps and poisons put out for them by Man, they would take over the planet in a couple of generations. Communication is the Original Sin which drove us out of the animal paradise. Paradise is paradise because it is Timeless. Without a Past to regret and a Future to apprehend, there is no other to worry about. When you start making marks on the wall to remind you of what has gone by, you are already halfway out into the dangerous jungle of the world. When Man burns down the jungle to indulge in agriculture, it is already written that he must burn down all the jungle in Time and destroy the planet. That is what makes him the worst animal. No other animal destroys his environment as we do. Everyone now knows we have damaged the ecology beyond repair and must continue to do so . . . we have to. Such is the nature of the beast. Not that the rat would not do the same if he could . . . or the crab or the ants, for that matter. The ants are nearer to us because they commit all those same crimes we do—make war, take slaves and practice agriculture. It's thought that they alone might survive an atomic catastrophe. Sci-Fi Future Time, and why not? Giger monsters running the planet if Earth can hold together that long without imploding into a Black Hole.

What these Giger creatures will need is a language even better than English or Chinese. Maybe this is what

To be human . . .

Burroughs and I ought to get back together on to work it out for them . . . unless they have it already. So far, English is superior to all other languages except perhaps Chinese, not because you can say things in a more subtle or even more exact manner, but because you can say the same things in more different ways and in every possible permutation and it always means the same thing . . .

“Get cracking! Get up off your ass and go, Man! Get a hop on and no two ways about it!”

T What English poets do you like?

B The list is too long. I love all of them . . . almost. I love the language.

T You don't think too much of Blake . . .

B Poor thing, he was born with a tin ear and two left feet, obviously. He is the least poetic of poets and sociologically the most pretentious . . . a tinhorn preacher in a tin chapel under a corrugated tin roof . . . an apocalyptically boring born-again nasal Protestant preacher . . . a wild-eyed phony prophet. I can just imagine what kind of a line he must have been laying down to poor Allen (Ginsberg) that time he flipped out in Harlem and heard him . . . the Party Line as spouted by Prophet Jones, I guess. But he was a poet of our times . . . Depression Time. We all heard a lot of that. However he did write the truly great lines:

*When Idle Housewives take up Art
The World will Surely fall apart.*

We must honour him for that . . . Fake Blake.

T I think Blake grew up influenced by broadsides and street literature; that was where he got his sound, wasn't it?

B Sure . . . the Olde Party Lyne, of course. It certainly has very deep roots in English social history, taking one right

to be an an . . . ni . . . mal

back to . . . who were they, those crazy ones in the 14th, 15th centuries . . . at the time of the Wars of the Roses? Wycliffe and Wat Tyler. That was when England was in the wool trade up to its woolly ears and not yet really into piracy worldwide. That really began with the Tudors who were a sort of northern echo of petty dukes and murderous merchants of the Italian Renaissance, who were the same kind of polyp-progenitive purveyors of power—*manipulators* of power . . . and behind this there was an essentially slave voice of angry Saxons, and as the Norman yoke had been put on their necks for a very long time, it took them quite a few centuries to get heard again at all, but Blake has an echo back into the 13th and 14th centuries with the religious revolts that almost succeeded at that time but which were so successfully put down . . .

Man has all this disgusting history . . . of treason, and double dealing, and . . . shit. Why is he bad? He is bad essentially because he destroys his own environment, and that is not just *bad*—it's bad in the true sense of the word—it's *stupid*, fuckin' stupid. *No other animal* on the face of the earth destroys its own environment.

T My thinking was that being an animal was not necessarily a good state anyway and man—

B I think that to be an animal is not a contradiction to being a human—although in Scientological terms that was one of the things William picked up from L. Ron Hubbard, was *To be human . . . to be an an . . . ni . . . mal*—

(tape stops)

. . . because we are animals. From every point of view we have much more in common with them than we have ever realized until very recently. It is only *very* recently, within the last few months even, that it has been publicly . . . suggested, or proclaimed, I don't know, that our laws should

Paradise is Paradise

be changed; that inasmuch as our very recent, and obviously inevitable, admission of the higher primates into our own category of human beings must bring with it legalistic recognition of their state as *beings*; that any killing of a higher primate is, therefore, murder. We have just recently begun to get in touch with them linguistically. We've found out, among the chimpanzees for example, that it is possible to teach them a sufficiently large vocabulary of sign language to carry on a really fascinating and deeply—I mean *God knows* how deeply—interesting conversation leading to voyages of discovery, not just about them but about ourselves. And we do share this, we are *all animals*. And of all the animals we are the only bad one. We are the only one who murders. Except by temper, or in anger aroused by thwarted mating instincts, the primates do murder each other—but they do not make war, nor organize armies, nor do they even indulge in the really essentially *basic sin*, as I think the ancients, certainly the Greeks and others in their myths would have recognized, the basic sin of agriculture . . . And that takes you a long way back, before building or anything else, but the basic *sin* in agriculture is because one is raping Mother Earth and forcing her to produce a harvest which is not according to her design or her will, and that from there we build up a—not only an agricultural society but an economic society—of division, of sharing, of taxing, of taking either one's share—or *all* of it, in the case of kings and powers that dominate society.

We have created a “crime against nature,” have separated ourselves from nature in a way that will eventually separate us from this planet. But that was not the original—*God knows*, the original intention—what *was* it? It wasn't that.

because it is timeless

- T It seems to me that the planet is rotten with illusion and that perhaps destructiveness has been man's inadequate reaction to this through the ages, some destruction being disgusting—most of it—and, as I said before, some destructive techniques which were fighting fire with fire.
- B *All* based on something to eat . . . And there's a very definite line drawn between eating of the fruits of the earth and eating other animals of the earth. But, uh, say that the original sin was not to be content with living in the Garden, but to leave the Garden of Paradise and go out and scratch for oneself and therefore produce an agricultural and essentially economic society which has produced these further sins of which only *we* are guilty—that's why I say we're a bad animal, because nobody else has done that. The answer could be: nobody else was *smart* enough to get up this great step in human development, which was the 19th century point of view on all of this, but in *fact*, with the late 20th century point of view we see this is leading us toward *incredible* and perhaps even *inevitable* disaster, nuclear disaster. And what separates us from the rest of the animals turns out to be not as great a barrier as we had thought—we had believed that it was the Word, that only we spoke, therefore essentially that placed us in a very advantageous position, in that when we spoke—either *right then*, as William has suggested, we also wrote, or that we even wrote *before* we spoke, which is another possibility—which I think William is certainly the very first ever to have thought of, and has made a very good case for it . . . one of the most extraordinary thoughts of all modern times: that writing should have come before speaking . . .

In the beginning was the word and the word *was* God and has remained one of the mysteries ever since.

It takes two to talk

What *is* word?

To ask this question assumes the “is” of identity: something that word essentially *is*.

Count Alfred Korzybski, who developed the concept of General Semantics in his book *Science and Sanity*, has pointed out that the “is” of identity has led to basic confusion in Western thought . . . Accordingly there is nothing that word itself essentially *is*. Word exists only in a communication system of sender and receiver. It takes two to talk. Perhaps it only took one to write.

It is generally assumed that the spoken word came before the written word. I suggest that the spoken word as *we* know it came *after* the written word. In the beginning was the word. In the beginning of what exactly? In the beginning of *writing*.

Animals communicate and convey information. But they do not write. They cannot make information available to future generations or to animals outside the range of their communication system. This is the crucial distinction between man and other animals. Korzybski has pointed out this human distinction and described man as the “time-binding animal.” He can make information available over any length of time to other men through writing. Animals talk. They don’t write . . .

It is doubtful if the spoken word would ever have evolved beyond the animal stage without the written word . . . (WSB, *The Book of Breathing*)

Given this fact, we learned to distinguish—we first of all learned to distinguish ourselves from the animals and then have only very recently found out that certainly the greater primates have an enormous amount in common with us, much more than we even know to this day, I mean, right—*tonight* talking about that is too *early* to talk about

. . . *one to write*

it because we've only *begun* to talk with them, either through computers or through sign language; because physiologically they are not adapted for speech, their larynxes are not adapted, but, for all the rest, they can not only learn to speak, answer questions which are presented to them, but they can *lie*, they can give false answers, *knowingly* false answers, they can joke, they can make fun of what has already been said, or a situation in which they find themselves . . . and this is a territory which we didn't *expect* to enter . . . twenty years ago, as far as I know.

And we find that we are at an enormous disadvantage, in that they are *Good*, and we are *Bad*, and you asked a minute ago why therefore bad, and therefore what *was* a good animal, and I answered that a good animal is the one who is conscious of the unspoken, of the *invisible* . . . we are very rarely—because of whatever we have picked up in a couple of millenia—we are less and less aware of the unspoken, less and less *sure* of the unspoken, to the point where we now even deny that there *is* any unspoken, and the invisible seems to us, or has been accepted in the last century or two, or put *down* in the last century or two, as an illusion.

T Isn't that a cause of the increasing destructiveness?

B Might very well be, I would certainly think so, yes . . . Go on . . .

T It seems to me that breaking away, dispersing illusion and delusion, is a sort of destructive act; it could be thought of as being destructive, it would certainly be destructive to the world-view most people hold . . . What we see (because of the majority of the human race being shut away from that type of aspiration or possibility of that realization) is a form of unbelievably negative destructiveness through the centuries—and escalating, of course—as if somewhere

the daily newspaper proves . . .

deep inside man really can't wait to get *through* with this planet, this level of existence . . .

B And presumably will do it. I mean, every piece of evidence around—the *daily newspaper*—proves to us that there's no way of turning back from this, this path of . . .

T Uh. There's no reversal.

B No, no reversal of this path, I mean it's not the ecologist or somebody . . . sailing a boat in front of the whaling fishers that is going to stop this . . . I mean, admirable and lovable as they *are*, one has to admit that they're . . . hopeless . . . And, uh, their answer might be, No, that doesn't matter, your judgment is of no interest to us, we would prefer not to be deterred by your saying that our effort was hopeless because in the past there have been long traditions of what seemed to have been hopeless quests or hopeless resistances that have saved some of the really essentially valuable things that we as humans know . . . But today unfortunately we *do* answer them very cynically and we say that in the face of *atomic* destruction you have very little hope; brave as you are, beautiful as you are, clean as your swords and your intentions may be . . . what can you do against the whalers? They are *determined* to destroy every last whale in the ocean. Eat 'em up, eat 'em up, eat 'em up . . . What else? And only *we* do that.

So we *are* a Bad Animal, it seems to me, seems to me absolutely self-evident that to categorize ourselves as bad is inevitable, and there's no way out of it. Who else *does* these things is the next quest—I mean, that's not the next, it's the first question I ask myself—Who else does these things? Well *nobody* else does these things, nobody but us . . . Perhaps, therefore, for that reason, an *incredible* (today still, despite all of the science fiction or the scientific fictional predictions and guesses, many of which in the

there's no way of turning back

past have turned out to be true, as most of the science fiction of the 19th century deals with the everyday domestic *conveniences* of today, whether it's flying around or dishwashing machines, or getting to the Moon on a rocket)—was all predicted a very long time ago and now seems to us an absolute day-to-day part of our lives . . . Uh, but at the same time that we have achieved these things we have suddenly come over some extraordinary *hill*, as it were, where to quote, if I can *remember* him, Tennyson:

The future is that arch through which gleams forever and forever as we move . . .

Booooooom! Sput!—That's why man is a bad animal, because only he, except for a *v-e-r-y select* club, a very select few of the primates, has learned to put some fruits aside, and let them ferment, and they go on great big drunken binges with them *and they are BAD*—they go tearing through the jungle, ripping things apart, killing their own children, blocking off their own future, because they get *Drunk*, and that is why we are bad because we get *Drunk!* . . . big golden grin of drunken satisfaction!—But that is—no, to change one's state of mind, or to consciously, or chemically, change one's state of mind, might well turn out to be the ultimate Thomas Aquinian sin, which he thought was Pride, or did he?—No, he thought Despair—Despair was the Unforgivable Sin . . . Drunkenness too may well be a sin against an orderly world . . . Because within the mind-changing area we have found that our minds are so much *bigger* than those people had said they were, and range so far beyond the *limits* that those people set, those teachers-preachers-prevaricators set, that we now know that we have a long way still to go . . .

only the human animal

And that essentially was why the title of all this was from something that I said a very long time ago when, dealing with very basic questions and putting them into William's machine, or thinking just in that same way about how to take things right down to the very nub where you couldn't change anything more without destroying the question itself . . . When one asked what are we *here* for, one realized that all of the religions of the world had said that we were here to love God, and obey Him, and kiss His Ass, and suck His Prick, and turn over and get fucked By Him, and be done down into Hell and Eternal Punishment if we didn't do like he wanted to do . . . and, this turned out not to be true at *all*, it turned out to be like an enormous diarrhea of *bullshit*, because obviously what we're here for, and we *know* we're here for that, is that we're here to *go*, there's no other future for—we're not here to *stay*.

The other day, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the publisher, was here, and spoke very *ill* of a number of poets who are friends of mine, and, uh, picked up their works, which he had not yet *read*, and put them *down* as being "death trips" . . . *Naked Lunch*—a "death trip," John Giorno's much less important *Suicide Sutra*—a "death trip" he said. And I said: What other trip are we *on*? It's the only trip that any of us know—*all* of our trips are leading to Death. Only us, only these *humans*; of all the animals on the Earth only the human animal is bad and only the human animal knows that he is going to die. Faced with death, the immediate *prospect* of death, certainly even a cow or a sheep bleats or a pig squeals or a . . . gazelle in the desert quivers with anguish at the idea that it's going to lose its *body*. So, the Big Deal is that it's better to have a body whether you're a gazelle, or a pig, or a cow, or any of

knows that he is going to die.

these other animals which are sometimes highly thought of and sometimes not even admitted into *decent society*—like the Semites won't have the *pig*, and we don't think the Hindu's cow is sacred, like, you know, you let it eat up your whole society, and shit in your house, and ruin your life—but *none* of them ever get together to produce these political effects that we produce . . . And that is, seems to *me*, the proof that we are *bad*, we are the *baddest*, we are the only one that deviates from this norm and we may well be the only animal that is going to leave this planet and go and live on some other place, whether it's within our galaxy, or beyond our galaxy. Uh, whether we're going to be able to take our *bodies* with us when we go is *i-n-d-e-e-d* another matter; we may not, we may be obliged to transform ourselves into Thinking Crystals, or into—as William might be on the verge of suggesting:

*If the virus is after you, how do you escape it?
You became a virus, and you go too.*

And the fact that maybe even electronically, or *telepathically*, a virus can be shot off right outside of this whole—I mean, sent with *purpose* outside of this galaxy—may be the way in which we will travel, who can say? *Not me.*



Projections, Le Domaine Poétique, Galerie du Fleuve, Paris 1960. (Photo: Nicolas Tikhomirov)

REFERENCE



brion gysin

US citizen, born in Taplow, Buckinghamshire, England, 19 January 1916.

School in Canada, then Downside College, England, 1932-34.

Moved to Paris, studied at the Sorbonne, 1934. First literary and artistic contacts in Paris through Sylvia Beach; associated with Max Ernst, Meret Oppenheim, Valentine Hugo, Salvador and Gala Dali, Dora Maar and Picasso, etc; joined Surrealist Group.

First exhibition 1935: with Picasso, Arp, Bellmer, Brauner, de Chirico, Dali, Duchamp, Max Ernst, Magritte, Miró, Man Ray, Tanguy at Galerie Quatre Chemins, Paris; drawings taken down and expelled from Surrealist Group by Paul Eluard at the orders of André Breton.

Traveled in Greece. First visit to Algerian Sahara, 1938.

First One Man Show: Galerie Quatre Chemins, Paris 1939; living in rue Git-le-Coeur.

Brion Gysin, rue Git-le-Coeur. (Photo: Antony Balch)

Chronology

Arrived New York 1940, cautious reunion with Surrealists: Matta, Paalen, Seligmann, etc. Assistant to Irene Sharaff on seven Broadway musicals; painted but did not show; airplane trips between Miami and Havana inspired series of aerial landscapes produced by "decalcomania"; worked as welder in shipyards, made welded sculptures, abandoned them as junk to join the US and Canadian armies, 1943.

Eighteen month course in Japanese language studies and calligraphy. Wrote the biography of Josiah Henson (*Uncle Tom): To Master a Long Goodnight*, followed by *The History of Slavery in Canada* (New York, 1946).

Received one of the first Fulbright Fellowships for France. Research on the history of slavery at the University of Bordeaux and in the Archivos de India, Seville, Spain, 1949-50.

Trip to Tangier, Morocco with Paul Bowles, 1950, led to establishing permanent residence there. Winter and spring traveling in the Sahara, keeping notebooks for observations and for painting 1951-52.

One Man Show in Tangier, Hotel Rembrandt: *Carnet de Voyage au Sahara*; first encounter with William Burroughs; shows in the museums of Las Palmas and Tenerife; studies in Arab calligraphy; began long association with the Master Musicians of Jajouka and for them opened The 1001 Nights restaurant in Tangier, 1953.

Moroccan independence and 1955-56 Algerian episode with John and Mary Cooke results in loss of The 1001 Nights.

One Man Shows New York, Chicago, Rome, London; group show with Matta and others, Paris 1957.

Began long series of collaborations with William S. Burroughs in the unnamed "Beat" Hotel, 9 rue Git-le-Coeur; with Ian Sommerville, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, etc.

Chronology

Discovered Cut-ups, Permutations, explored Projections and invented the Dreamachine with Ian Sommerville.

Minutes To Go (Paris) with Burroughs, Corso, Sinclair Beiles; *The Exterminator* (San Francisco) with Burroughs; group shows in Paris; BBC London program on *Minutes To Go* and recorded Permutated Poems; Lecture-Happening, Heretics Club, Cambridge with simultaneous painting of large picture; and ICA, London with Burroughs, Ian Sommerville on tapes and projections, texts and painting produced; animated readings with recordings and projections, Paris, 1960.

Collaborated with Burroughs on *The Ticket That Exploded*, which trails away at the end into permutated calligraphy, "Silence to say good-bye"; group show Paris, Salon "Réalités Nouvelles," BBC broadcast "The Permutated Poems of Brion Gysin": *I AM THAT I AM*, *Pistol Poem*, etc, 1961.

Group show "L'Objet" 1962 in Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Louvre, Paris. Dreamachine shown for first time; group shows Venice, Paris; One Man Show, Rome; worked in Rome studio arranged by Matta; inventing Roller Grid influenced by Dreamachine visions; film *Towers Open Fire*, directed by Antony Balch, with Gysin, Burroughs, Sommerville, Michael Portman, etc; group shows Paris, London; formation of *Domaine Poétique* group by J.C. Lambert and J.L. Philippe with Robert Filliou; first show in Paris with permutated poems and projections, assisted by Ian Sommerville; further performances in Paris and in Sweden, Denmark and Japan with poets from over twenty countries.

Guerilla Conditions, a 6' x 6' painting on a text by Burroughs painted on the spot to permutated tapes, filmed by Antony Balch, 1963. Dreamachines for Helena Rubinstein with Ian Sommerville; One Man Show, Tangier, introduced

Chronology

by Burroughs; group show Haut de Cagnes, France, and Palazzo Guggenheim, Venice; Peggy Guggenheim later presents pictures to Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Museum of Modern Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Permutation, silkscreen book (Paul Gette, Paris) 1964. Group show with Henri Chopin, Paris; records of Permutated Poems published by Chopin in OU; Permutated Poems at the Metro, NYC, and with Burroughs at the American Theatre For Poets Inc, NY; "Between Poetry and Painting," ICA, London; "Subway Sounds" with John Giorno, 4th Biennale de Paris; New York with Burroughs preparing text and illustrations for *The Third Mind*; left for Tangier to start work on *The Process*, 1965.

Group shows, Paris, Prague, Nice with Bernard Heidsieck, 1966.

Hepta catalogue poem, Paris 1967.

Group show University of Rouen, France; film *The Cut-Ups*, Antony Balch, with Gysin, Burroughs, Somerville, Portman, etc, 1968.

The Process (NY and London) 1969. Writing *Naked Lunch* scenario; traveled between Tangier, London, Cannes, Venice, NY, etc; "Concrete Poetry," University of Indiana; poem for "Gette's Crystals" with Burroughs; text for *Brian Jones Presents The Pipes of Pan at Joujouka* (Rolling Stones Records); first draft of *Beat Hotel*.

Permutated Poems WBAI, NY and Radio Pacifica, SF, 1970-3. *Brion Gysin Let The Mice In* (New York) with texts by Burroughs and Sommerville; cover, photos and illustrations for *Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive* (London); illustrations for Burroughs' *Revolution Électronique* (Paris); long interview in *Rolling Stone* with Burroughs by Robert Palmer; One Man and group shows, Paris, Rome; definitive return to Paris, 1973.

Chronology

Oeuvre Croisée (The Third Mind) Paris; started work again on *Beat Hotel*, assisted by Terry Wilson; first chapter, titled *Beat Museum—Bardo Hotel*, appears in *Soft Need Brion Gysin Special* (Basel-Paris) along with transcript of first tapes made with Terry Wilson for *Here To Go: Planet R-101*; One Man Shows, Paris: “Beaubourg, the Last Museum,” “The Last Museum in Kodacolor 11”; group shows NY, Brussels, Sweden, Norway, Liechtenstein; “Le Colloque de Tangier” with Burroughs, Geneva; “Paris-New York,” “Burroughs-Gysin Read” Centre Pompidou, Paris; “Poésie Sonore” with Steve Lacy, Paris, Le Havre, Rennes, Brussels, etc; *The Third Mind* (New York); performances with Burroughs, Corso, Ginsberg, etc, Amsterdam; Nova Convention, NY with the same plus Philip Glass, John Cage, Frank Zappa, Patti Smith, etc; 1st and 2nd International Poetry Festivals, Rome, with same plus Yevtushenko; One Man Show, DREAMACHINE, Basel; group show “Écritures” Centre Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, Paris 1980.

One man shows, paintings, performances, photographs from *Here to Go*, film, *Brion Gysin* by Flash Allen, October Gallery London, March and August 1981. One man show, Galerie “zem Specht” Basel.

Final Academy performances, London: with Burroughs, John Giorno, Terry Wilson, Ramuntcho Matta, Psychic TV, Cabaret Voltaire, 23 Skidoo, Last Few Days, etc, showings of *Towers Open Fire*, *The Cut-Ups* and *Brion Gysin*, Ritzy Cinema; Burroughs/Gysin exhibit at B2 Gallery; *The Final Academy: Statements* by and about the performers, 1982.

Paintings in: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, Santa Fe, N.M.; Boston Fine Arts Gallery, Boston, Mass; Centre Georges Pompidou, Fond National, Modern Art, Paris; Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; and numerous private collections.

“Both extraordinary encounters and unusual experiences had led me to think about the world and my activity in it in a way that came to be termed psychedelic . . . I have spent more than a third of my life in Morocco where magic is or was a matter of daily occurrence, ranging from simple poisoning to mystical experience. I have tasted a pinch of both along with the other fruits of life and that changes one’s outlook, at least somewhat. Anyone who manages to step out from his own culture into another one can stand there looking back at his own under another light . . . Magic calls itself the Other Method . . . practiced more assiduously than hygiene in Morocco, though ecstatic dancing to music of the secret brotherhoods is, there, a form of psychic hygiene. You know your music when you hear it one day. You fall into line and dance until you pay the piper . . . Inevitably something of all this is evident in what I do in the arts I practice.”

Brion Gysin

Reference

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Brion Gysin, Paris 1977. (Photo: Udo Breger)





A Q U A R T E T B O O K

'The sands of Present Time are running out from under our feet. And why not? The Great Conundrum: "What are we here for?" is all that ever held us here in the first place. Fear. The answer to the riddle of the Ages has actually been out on the street since the First Step in Space. Who runs may read but few people run fast enough. What are we here for? Does the great metaphysical nut revolve around that? Well, I'll crack it for you, right now. What are we here for? We are here to go!'

Brion Gysin

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