Introduction:

The Beat Era:

A new post war era 'movement' formed by Jack Kerovac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and an inspired group including Neal Cassady raised its voice during the fifties, and left its recognizable impact on the sixties. This coherent literary group developed as a result of a mythic outlook on their lives and interactions. Particularly, their open revelation of private matters went against the spirit of the age but led to aesthetic and intellectual discoveries. The Beat-movement was a crystallization of a sweeping discontent with American transcendentalism also gave way to the Beats' romantic militancy with their spiritual ancestors like Thoreau, Melville or Whitman to serve them as their beacon lights.

The shocking experiences elevated the Beat vision enabling them to realize the risky aspects of American life. The common image used by all the three Beat-writers mentioned above is the expression of
of nakedness with varied outlook which develops into a symbolic term. In brief, nakedness signified rebirth, the recovery of identity.

The Beat writers looked upon themselves as outcasts and believed themselves to be the angels of holocaust. The angel-image appeared frequently in the works of all the Beat writers.

The post-war era was a time of extraordinary insecurity, of profound powerlessness as far as individual effort was concerned, when personal responsibility was being abdicated in favour of corporate largeness. The nuclear blasts in Japan had created new sources of terror, and the ideology of technology became paramount. Science came to be seen as dominating power over the whole mankind and received great respect, for it became the media of massconditioning. "An internal freeze gripped America, an irrational hatred that created intense fear and repression," during the forties. Allen Ginsberg discusses in his Paris Review Interview the contamination caused by the psychic and moral rigidity:
The Cold War is the imposition of a vast mental barrier on everybody, a vast anti-natural psyche. A hardening, a shutting off of the perception of desire and tenderness which everybody knows . . . (creating) a self-consciousness which is a substitute for communication with the outside. This consciousness pushed back into the self and thinking of how it will hold its face and eyes and hands in order to make a mask to hide the flow that is going on. Which it's aware of, which everybody is aware of, really! So let's say shyness. Fear. Fear of total feeling, really, total being is what it is.²

Unlike during other periods, it was only during the civil-war period, that the sense of hopefulness associated with the American experience was lost. The late forties and early fifties saw America with belief in God, family and benevolent international ambitions of the nation. They continued to conceive of themselves as innocent dramatic warriors and protectors of technological progress, cleanliness and
order. "Susan Sontag views fascism, not as a monstrosely sudden growth excised by the war, but the normal condition of the modern industrial state...

The 'war on communism' created an atmosphere of coercion and conspiracy. The nation's legacy of individuality had been changed to a more standardized expectation of what constituted 'Americanism'.

The Beats were part of this besieged generation. The carelessness, deliberate ignorance and uninvolve ment resulted in violence, tyranny and corruption of world leaders in accordance with the explanation maintained by the Buddhist notion of karma. John Clellon Holmes, a friend to Kerouac and a novelist reflected on the late thirties and early forties, that, both because of the Depression and the anticipations of war - a great fissure had occurred in the American psyche, uprooting family relationships, of the sense of place and community compounded by a fear of imminent devastation. It was a shared premonition that the entire society was going to be changed in a major way at the altar of young men's sacrifice. The image of a broken circuit offered by Holmes suggested the lack of
connection with the immediate present felt by the members of his generation. The philosophical cause did not much vest with the factual war but led to the sudden extinguish of the buoyantly American character of the lost generation of the twenties. Man was accepted as a victim of circumstances and was not regarded the agency of his own destiny.

This further resulted in bitterness and idealism giving rise to Existentialism in Europe. Similar to the Beats, the Existentialists started negating and refusing to accept the social given (i.e.; values and circumstances which were laid on the people after the war) or (the new post-war values). Both the literary groups agreed with the fact of 'Karma' and shared expectation of the total breakdown of Western Culture.

It is thus clear that during the forties and fifties, the Beats were operating on a definition of sanity that defied the expectations of their time, but proved prophetic. As Longfellow once remarked about the transcendentalist utopians, it was a "divine insanity of noble minds."

Before the apathetic conditions of the fifties, the Beats enacted their desires, seeking a restoration
of innocence by purging guilt and shame. The Beats were then regarded as madmen and were made suffer the consequences like: the insane asylum, public ridicule, censorship, even prison for being reformatory. In the fifties, the Beats were still not quite as overtly political as the Surrealists had been, but they certainly paid for whatever self-assertions they managed at great psychic costs.

Three works — *Naked Lunch*, *Howl*, and *On The Road*, can be seen as an expression of a collective breakdown that America was suffering from during the fifties. These works provide the key to the cultural disorder of an era. The *Naked Lunch* is a depiction of the hallucinatory vision of the worst expectations of the fifties. Allen Ginsberg holds the view that an American drug-addict is to be compared to a Jew in Nazi Germany whereas Burroughs projects in *Junkie* the idea of fascist-control. His fiction defines a purgatory of endless suffering — Beat in the sense of beaten, oppressed and dehumanized. Burroughs' affinity with Eliot's objectivity and impersonality raises an aesthetic issue that is crucial for the Beats; for this reason, he once denied belonging to the Beat movement.
In the fifties, when the voice of personality seemed so endangered by an anonymity and monotony of sameness, the Beats discovered a natural counter for the silence of the day in a new sense of self, a renaissance of the romantic impulse to combat unbelievably superior forces.

The Beats' denial of the artistic mask had extraordinary implication for the nature of language in literary art and the quality of experience to be expressed. They raised their standard of honesty without considering artistic consequences.

The idea of self is the Beat focal point, which represents only a beginning, an involvement to be transcended. Ginsberg believed that consciousness is infinite, and that modern man has been taught to suppress much of his potential awareness. The shame, guilt and fear are barriers to self-realization and total-being. When the "rebellious imperatives of the self" were being sought, the hipster rejected the conformity of American life, and spread a "disbelief in the words of men who had too much money and controlled too many things." Burroughs noted that the hip sensibility was in a process of constant mutation. Kerouac defined Hipster in terms of the ability to procure drugs at any time. Ginsberg called the
pursuit of drugs as the "ancient heavenly connection."

As a matter of fact, the Hip mentality became integral to Beat consciousness—whose seeds surprised the sixties. The books came out with the description of the degraded world seeking for pleasure and peace through the use of various drugs.

Buddhism became a form of psychic ballast for many of the Beat writers and their study of various schools of Eastern thought became both a means of deconditioning themselves from Western habits of mind and feeling, and away out of the morass of self into which they had so angrily plunged. Their emphasis on sympathy and compassion served a lot to balance with the Beats' vitriolic condemnation of American materialism.

The Beats', antihierarchical, antielitist, were concerned with removing artificial barriers between their lives and art, so they were naturally ready to accept an ethic without an orthodoxy, without dogma, and one whose goal was the discovery of a state in which all differences and separations (from man to man or man to nature) were dissolved.
The Beats were uninspired by the wordy, speculative and metaphysical interpretations of some Buddhist scholars, tended to accept the tougher dialectics of Zen. They responded to the crabbed stuffiness of postwar verse with its emphasis on a futility and despair that may have been sublime with Eliot, but was often mawkish in his imitators.

By introducing new literary techniques, the Beats were flaunting their own raw personalities and rude vigour as subject matter, using a speech that employed obscenity as well as humour, ideologically responding to forces like Surrealism and Buddhism, and functioning generally on an entirely different idea of sanity from their critics.

The Beat artists continued working in obscurity by ignoring the hostility of the critics and hence, were the creative soul of the fifties.

Among the Beat artists, William Burroughs is known today as the founder as well as the leader of the Beat Generation whose work can be considered as Beat literature exposing the beaten values of the society.
WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS (1914—)

Life and Works:

William S. Burroughs, poet and novelist, a legendary figure of the Beat Generation was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on 5 Feb 1914, in a moderately wealthy family. Burroughs' mother, Laura Lee was a direct descendant of Robert E. Lee, and his father, Perry Mortimer Burroughs was the son of an industrialist, the inventor of the cylinder which made the modern adding machine possible. His mother's obsessive Victorian prudery was the cause of William's restless childhood haunted by horrible nightmares. Burroughs went to a progressive school with the well-known citizens, lawyers, doctors and businessmen of a large Midwestern town. When he was seven, his parents moved to the suburbs and lived in a beautiful house surrounded by natural beauty as well as cut off from contact with the city life. There he went to a private suburban high school. He was not good at sports but avoided the competitive team games. Apart from being a mediocre student, fishing, hunting and hiking were his other interests.
Though the family ran into difficulties during the depression, the industrial machine provided enough to manage to attend the private schools at the age of fifteen. He was sent to an all-male academy in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Simultaneously, he developed interest in two different areas: literature and crime. He found himself interested in reading Baudelaire, Wilde and Mark Twain.

Even as a young child, Burroughs wanted to become a writer for the simple reason that they were rich and famous. This sub-conscious urge to become rich and famous worked on the childhood mind of Burroughs and gradually shaped him into a writer. It is not easy to trace any definite formative influences on the growth of Burroughs as a writer from his first literary endeavour - *The Autobiography of a Wolf* to the maturity and complexity of his novels like *Naked Lunch* and such others. Burroughs has been writing since his early childhood although his early stories were mostly pieces of plagiarism. In this phase of his career, Burroughs confesses "I also wrote western gangster stories and haunted houses as quite sure that I wanted to be a writer."

Elaborating on his interests and obsessions when he was in his teens Burroughs adds:
When I was twelve we moved to a five-acre place on Price Road and I attended the John Burroughs School which is just down the road. This period was mostly crime and gangster stories. I was fascinated by gangsters and like most boys at that time I wanted to be one because I would feel so much safer with my loyal guns around me. I never quite found the sensitive old lady English teacher who molded my future career. I wrote at that time Edgar Allan Poe things, like old men in forgotten places, very flowery and sentimental too, that flavor of high school prose. I can taste it still, like chicken croquettes and canned peas in the school dining room. I wrote bloody westerns too, and would leave enigmatic skeletons lying around in barns for me to muse over... Mysterious stories with haunted houses and uncanny weird experiences interested him most in the
early phase of his evolution as a writer. When he was fourteen, Burroughs happened to read a book—You Can't Win—which he describes as the "life-story of a second-story man." He was deeply impressed with the unconventional and almost exotic way of life of the characters in the book. It is full of people with outlandish habits and violent turns of mind:

"a world of hobo jungles, usually by the river where the bums and hobos and rode-riding pate men gathered to cook meals, drink a can of heat, and shoot the snow... black smoke on the hip behind a chink laundry in Montana."

You Can't Win was a novel by Jack Black published in 1924. It narrates the life-story of a burrler. Burroughs read it as a boy and was greatly fascinated by the dark furtive purposeful world which the book portrayed. His childhood memories of experience of reading the book tempted him to re-read it at a later stage in his life. He managed to get a copy of the book and read it again in 1945 with poignant nostalgia.
The crime element in the book inspired Burroughs to write some crime stories as well.

Speaking of one of such writings, Burroughs says:

This inspired me to write some crime stories . . . Here's to crime!

he shouted and raised a glass of champagne, but he crumpled like a pricked balloon as the heavy hand of Detective Sergeant Murphy fell on his shoulder . . . 'Joe Maguire regarded the flushed face of the dealer with disfavor. "A coke bird", he decided. "Better cut him off the payroll; get coked up and shoot a good client."

I did a short story too, with a trick ending about this gangster who goes to a fortune teller . . .

'This man is a criminal', she thought shrewdly, 'a gangster, perhaps . . . he must have made enemies.' 'I see danger', she said. The man's face twitched — he needed to know. 'I see
a man approaching... he has a gun...
he lifts the gun... he — with an
articulate cry the man leapt to his feet
and whipped out an automatic, spitting
death at the fortune-teller... blood
on the crystal ball, and on the table
a severed human hand.10

The obsession with crime, murder and deaths
persisted for sometime after reading Eugene Aron's
Dream which he had committed to memory and recited
in the class, Burroughs wrote about murderers who all
died of brain-fever and suffered from a delirium of
repentence. Burroughs calls this period rather
"noisous-one." This period came to a close with his
story the Vultures of Gold.

When he was fifteen, Burroughs was sent to Los
Alamos Ranch School where he was forced to become a
scout and undergo the rigours of discipline associated
with scout life. It was an unpleasant experience to
work with scout leaders who made life hell for everybody.
To escape the monotony of disciplined living, Burroughs
did unconventional things and read tabooed writers.
"that I like to do was get in my room against the radiator and play records and read the Little Blow Books put out by Haldeman Julius, free thinker and benevolent annastic ... Remy De Gourmont, Baudelaire, Guy De Maupassant, Anatole France.""}11

Having come under the influence of the writers, Burroughs started writing stories and allegories in oriental setting, with jewel thieves engaged in philosophical discussions over sessions of wine drinking.

When the period of French Revolution was over, Burroughs came under the spell of English writers and read about English gentlemen adventures. Of all the English writers, Oscar Wilde seems to have amused him and influenced him most.

Thus we can see Burroughs’ reading was wild, unsystematic and haphazard. In a kind of hit and run style he read everything that came his way. That he was greatly influenced by every book that he read suggests his sensitive and sensible approach to writers.
Eventually, he completed his graduation in literature from Harvard University in 1936. His keen interest was in literature and his other primary interest was the study of anthropology. During his studies at Harvard, the teaching of T.S. Eliot fascinated him and influenced his style, method and subject-matter in his writings. He did his post-graduation in ethnology and archaeology.

After a visit to Europe in the thirties, which depressed him considerably, at home, he returned to the academy to study psychology, and also became involved in martial sports and self-defence.

After briefly studying medicine in Vienna, he returned to the United States and joined the Office of Strategic Services. But after deliberately cutting off the first joint of his little finger, he was rejected.

In 1938, he returned to Harvard with the intention to study anthropology, which was shattered due to the conviction against his academic career, full of a series of intrigues. As a result, he was led to New York City where he worked for an advertising agency for a year and underwent psychoanalysis. Then in 1942, he entered the army but was discharged after six months due to psychological reasons.
Ultimately, he took a series of various odd jobs like private detective, exterminator (of cockroaches), factory and office worker as well as bartender in Chicago.

In 1943, Burroughs moved to New York City where he became acquainted with Joan Vollmer Adams (a young pregnant woman) who was a student of journalism at Columbia University. He married her on 17th Jan 1945, who had left her husband to share an apartment with Burroughs after the birth of her daughter. In 1944, a lady named Edie Parker, Joan’s room-mate started living with Jack Kerouac. Both these ladies met occasionally and hence maintained their friendship. Burroughs then became interested in Jack Kerouac (who had been a former seaman) by hearing to Jean. Later, Kerouac introduced Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg. Both of them, in turn were introduced to the writings of Shakespeare, Blake, Rimbaud, Hart Cane and Auden by him (Burroughs). As a result, the three men began meeting frequently in Burroughs’ apartment to discuss books. Thus, the Beat Generation came into existence, and Burroughs, Kerouac and Ginsberg came to be known as its leaders.
It was then that Burroughs and his friends came in contact with Herbert Huncke, a Time Square Hustler as well as a drug-user. No sooner had they met him, than were initiated into the use of morphine and its derivatives in late 1944. Since then, until the late '50s, Burroughs had been a steady drug user. It was during this period that he started writing his first novel *Junkie* where he characterizes Herbert Huncke (the initiator of drug using) as Herman. The same character is said to have been described in the later works like Elmo-Hassell in *On The Road* and Huck in *Visions of Cody* by Jack Kerouac. Moreover, Ginsberg has termed him a *Beat Mephisto in his Hand*:

*Walked all night with shoes full of blood on the snowbanks waiting for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steamheat and opium.*

In order to escape from the police-pressure which had grown intense in New York in 1946, Burroughs left with Joan Adams and her infant to settle in New Waverly, fifty miles north of Houston. With the intention to become a farmer, he also bought some land in Texas. Here Joan became addicted to Benzedrine and
and during those days she was also pregnant with William Burroughs, Jr., and Burroughs was injecting heroin three times a day. In Summer 1947, Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassady also paid a visit and found Burroughs busy in shooting at the side of a barn. Herbert Huncke reports that by this kind of act that happened often, the neighbours feared that a group of gangsters were living on his farm. Ginsberg and Cassady spent their days at swimming, walking in the woods, trying to build a fence, and talking. Burroughs was successful in growing marijuana instead of opium-poppies. Later they filled the jeep with mason jars of marijuana and drove to New York with the intention to sell.

In February of 1949, he voluntarily committed himself to the drug-rehabilitation centre at Lexington, Kentucky. But by Spring, he returned to New Waverly, being pre-occupied with drugs. Using his old car had become the cause for the police to harass him and later arrest him for drunken-driving as a result of which his license was suspended. Finally, he decided to leave Texas and moved to Algiers with his wife Joan and children. But once again, Burroughs was in the grip of police pressure, when in the spring of 1949, the police illegally invaded his farm and discovered his
collections of fire-arms and drugs. To avoid the police harassment, he moved to Mexico City and attended Mexico City College to study archaeology with his central interest on the Mayan codices.

In the meantime, he was caught-up in the street terror, a part of the Aleman regime. At first, he felt the city was quite suitable to his free life with non-interference of the police, but later experiences changed his attitude towards the city. In one of his letters to Jack Kerouac he said, "Mexico was an Oriental Country that reflects 2000 years of disease and poverty and degradation and stupidity and slavery and brutality and psychic and physical terrorism."

He could easily get the drugs but always carried a gun with him everywhere. On the night of the 7th Sep '51, Burroughs accidentally shot his wife through the head and killed her. The reports said that his wife had tempted him into a version of the William Tell game, but unfortunately the game turned out into a tragedy. But later Burroughs termed this account as "absurd and false". He claimed that the loaded gun had dropped on the kitchen table and misfired, while he was checking it over to sell it to a friend.
Burroughs' version of the event is questionable. He might have killed his wife by mistake and basically due to his drug addiction and the terrifying chaos of flat nightmares. To escape from law authorities for his drug possession, he could not confess and give any statement which would provide substantial information. Mexican authorities who were impressed by his habit of punctuality dropped the matter. He was only declared a "pernicious-foreigner." Consequently his use of drugs, joining up the criminals' gang and finally his shooting Joan—all these were instrumental in turning him into an 'untouchable.' The mention of Joan's brittle nervousness accounts that the relationship among them were not very peaceful and happy.

William Burroughs wrote Queer in 1952 which remained unpublished then because "it wasn't publishable 30 years ago." A.A. Wims of ACE Books said, "I would be in jail if I published this." That shows you the change since the book is very mild indeed. No, it wasn't publishable at that time, and then it was in an archive or left in a trunk somewhere. It was a fragment, I wasn't too anxious to publish it. But then the current publisher looked at it and said that he was impressed,
and if I would write an introduction, he would a issue.

That was how it came about, in 1965, "and the reason for the delay." This book was about homosexuality after the death of Joan and was reported to be well-sold by the book-sellers in New York.

It was during the period of writing Queer that he had also begun recording his experiences as a drug-addict and relating this to Allen Ginsberg through his letters. Allen Ginsberg became so excited that whatever chapters were being sent by Burroughs, he showed them to his friend -- Carl Solomon, a nephew of A.A. Chan who later published it as Junky under Burroughs' pseudonym William Lee in 1953. It is a graphic account of the easy betrayals, the casual violence, the hustlers and thieves of the drug world. Junkie being the most confessional as well as conventional of all Burroughs works, also holds importance which enables us to understand his later works. This tale of addiction receives more significance than it deserves due to the author's literal description of scenes which would eventually be inflated to abstract images, ultimately becoming part of the allegorical war of control in later novels.

In fact, the book received little critical notice, if any, as it was the first novel issued by a rather inconspicuous paperback line.
As soon as Junky was accepted, Burroughs had left Mexico in the winter of 1952, and then after a brief stay in Tangier, he went to South America in search of the legendary hallucinogen, yage in the forests of Columbia. The psychological reason behind the trip was to get rid of the memory of Joan and the dark past. He had also been able to formulate the new aesthetic perspective of *Naked Lunch*, (his next book published in Paris in 1959) due to the hallucinatory experiences he had during the voyage.

Burroughs had to travel a lot in Colombia by various means like bus, truck, etc. in order to pursue his contacts for yage. Owing to Guerrilla revolution activities, a provincial governor checked Burroughs' tourist card too, and found an error of the date 1952 which should have been 1953. As a result, this had become a testimonial to bureaucratic inefficiency.

Hence, Burroughs was arrested in Puerto Asís, a town on the Putumayo River in spite of the validity of his passport, plane-tickets and other required documents. After being detained for five days, he was escorted by police to another town for a night and was released all of a sudden the next day.
A series of absurd encounters and incongruities had also taken him into its grip.

Several Indians who prepared and administered the yage vine had become the source of success for Burroughs. This intense hallucinatory experience has left a remarkable impact on Burroughs' work especially Naked Lunch. In late spring he went to Peru where he again voyaged into the countryside, living with Indians and sampling yage and other local drugs through July.

Then Burroughs returned to New York City in the fall of 1953 for the first time in six years. While he lived with Allen Ginsberg on the Lower East Side, B Burroughs had been described by him in a letter to Neal Cassady:

I haven't seen him for six years.

Peculiar how my memory served me well - he is really exciting to talk to, more so for me than ever. His new loquaciousness is something I never had the advantage of. I am older now and the emotional relationship and conflict of will and mutual digging are very intense,
continuous, exhausting and fertile. He creates small usable literary symbolic psychic fantasies daily. One of the deepest people, He is staying with me, I come home from work at 4:45 and we talk until one AM or later. I hardly get enough sleep, can't think about work seriously, am all hung up in a great psychic marriage with him for the month — amazing also his outwardness and confidence, he is very personal now, and gives me the impression of suffering terribly and continuously. I am persuading him to write a great sincere novel. By sincere I mean pour himself forth and use his mind fully and create an enduring story of truth and life.14

Burroughs returned to Tangier and remained there for sometime. After that, followed a short visit to Ginsberg in 1954 in San Francisco to maintain a more binding physical and emotional relationship. In 1955,
he again settled in Tangier in the Villa Muniria (Villa Delirium). It was then that he started assembling and writing the fragments which we get today in the form of *Naked Lunch*. He continued writing till 1956 and by this time his addiction reached great heights. He became so addicted that for a year he had lived in one room in Tangier without having bath or changing his clothes. The only ambition "was to stick a needle every hour in the fibrous grey wooden flesh of terminal addiction. Somehow it came to his mind to get rid of this addiction, that had made him useless, who always kept staring at his toe continuously. Hence, he went for treatment to an English physician, John Yerby Dent who used the drug aposmorphine to induce a metabolic balance, and he was cured. The letters he wrote frequently to Allen Ginsberg during 1950s account for his various diseases like, uremic poisoning in 1951, liver disease in 1952, then jaundice, rheumatic fever along with ankle infection in 1954, several bouts of viral hepatitis, and the constant sickness caused by attempts to withdraw from drugs.

**After the Summer of 1956, Burroughs added to his growing manuscript — *The Naked Lunch* by writing**
and eating majoun, a hashish candy prepared with honey and spices, at the same time. In 1957, Kerouac and Ginsberg visited Burroughs and helped him with the manuscript, whose pages had spread all over his little room and the garden. Ginsberg, at this time was Burroughs' intellectual antagonist and both of them argued over aesthetics during nights. After typing some portions of the manuscript, Kerouac claimed that it was so vivid and horrifying that his sleep was upset by nightmares. He compared Burroughs to some furious Dr. Mabuse scribbling changes in his "strange Etruscan script", and felt Burroughs as an aristocratic master of language who would not be published because of his uninhibited frankness. Of course, one can say that he has mastered a very powerful language to express his strong feelings and thoughts.

In 1958, Burroughs moved to a hotel in Paris at 9 Rue Git le Cœur along with his manuscript and showed to Maurice Girodias, publisher of Olympia Press. Girodias became interested after sections of the manuscript caused a censorship controversy in Chicago. Ginsberg had arranged to have excerpts appear in a magazine sponsored by the University of Chicago, but university authorities found the material offensive.
Rather than publish an innocuous issue, the editors formed a new magazine called Big Table whose first issue featured Burroughs' writing. Girodias gave Burroughs only two weeks to present a final version. Working under considerable pressure, he was assisted by two friends, Sinclair Beiles (one of Girodias' editors) and the painter, Brion Gysin. The individual sections of Naked Lunch were selected from a huge collection of materials, and piled in a stack on a table. Burroughs planned to re-read what he had chosen to determine an appropriate order, but Beiles suggested that the accidental order then on the table might be better than any that Burroughs could invent. Burroughs accepted the advice.

But after its being published in Paris by Olympia Press, it reached the United States "carrying a heavier burden of literary laudations than any piece of fiction since Ulysses", as Newsweek proclaimed. All of a sudden, Burroughs was elevated to membership in the literary elite, with British Critic Kenneth Allsop claiming him to be "Rimbaud in a raincoat", and Norman Mailer saying he was possibly "the only American novelist living today who may conceivably be possessed by genius."
Beginning with its publication in U.S.A. in 1962, Burroughs' literary reputation was made. But despite Mary McCarthy’s and Norman Mailer’s claims at the 1962 International Writers’ Conference in Edinburgh that Burroughs was an outstanding American writer, there were dissenters. An anonymous reviewer in Time (30 Nov 1962) stated that Burroughs “cannot sustain his nightworld” in Naked Lunch because he is “never in control for longer than a paragraph or two.” John Kein scathingly attacked Burroughs for his “owlish seriousness” and lack of “wit and irony” in the New Republic (1 Dec 62). Donald Malcolm adjudged Burroughs’ satire “poor” because “he is so emphatically bent on making horror stark upon the page that he accomplished very little else.”

The three novels which immediately followed the publication of Naked Lunch might reasonably be grouped into one block called “Naked Lunch Redivirus” or as one critic termed the four novels including Naked Lunch, “a Doomsday Quartet”, because it is a certainty that the material Burroughs used for these books was produced from the same suitcase from which Naked Lunch was selected.
In his review of *The Soft Machine* published in 1961 by Olympia Press of Paris, Stephen Koch states that Burroughs' "books are without meaning just as they have no stories and are not imitations of life. They are unphrasable experiences . . . The reader's mind plays over their broken surfaces at liberty, discovering correspondences, making associations, experiencing images of the impossible, accepting, rejecting—creating the work himself." Significantly, it should not be denied that they are without meaning or story or that they are not imitations of life.

*Both The Soft Machine (1961) and The Ticket That Exploded (1962) were published in Paris by Olympia Press. They drew a somewhat baffled, if not negative, critical response. In reviewing the former, Stephen Koch suggested that Burroughs was writing to replace meaning with "meaninglessness" since the experiences of language he recorded were largely of "language without content"; and Herbert Gold noted that Burroughs' new techniques are the fimmcrs of "arty fashion" grasping a "rabid imagination." These pieces of criticism were carried over into notices of *The Ticket That Exploded*, with an anonymous *Time* reviewer rationalizing the incoherence by concluding*
that "Burroughs' work adds up to the world's greatest put-on." However, Theodore Solataroff used the publication of The Ticket to proclaim in the New Republic that Burroughs was a "vital and complex" writer whose work was closely related to both T.S. Eliot and Lenny Bruce.

The next two books, *In Search of Yage* and the *Yage Letters* were published by City Lights Books, California in 1963. In 1964, came out the *Nova Express* published by Grove Press in New York. The novel relied heavily on the cut-up technique, so William James Smith suggested that such techniques are "no substitute for talent or for suffering", and Granville Hicks comparing *Nova Express* unfavourably to Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn* finds the former a "fantasy" written "to puzzle the reader."

In 1976, the Grove Press of New York published *The Job*, a book which contains the collection of interviews by Daniel Odier. It was originally conceived as a series of interviews which Michael Goodman claims to have already answered questions in various books, articles and short pieces. Another book of the same year is *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz* published by Cape Goliard Press in London.
The following year (ie, 1971) produced The Wild Boys known in other words as A Book of the Dead. Grove Press, New York was the first to publish it.

All Burroughs' novels The Wild Boys received better reviews than any other of his works since Naked Lunch, with Josephine Hondin claiming that Burroughs "has never written better" and Alfred Kazin calling it a "reverie in which different items suddenly get animated with a marvellously unexpected profusion of animation and disorder."

Viking Press of New York published Burroughs' Exterminator in 1972; which however was viewed less favourably. An anonymous critic labelled it as a latest novel and "the diatribe of an aging homosexual who would destroy the world because his own life is less than gay than it used to be"; and Andrew C.J. Bermant called it "a disappointing novel of uneven parts."

The other books that followed were Cities of The Red Nights (1971, published in New York); Letters to Allen Ginsberg (1982, published in New York) Full Court Press); The Place of Dead Roads (1973- published in Great Britain); The Burroughs' File (1984, published in San Francisco by City Lights Books) and finally Queer
published in 1963 which had already been mentioned in the beginning. These remain some of his significant works apart from the other unnoticed ones which are in the form of a mimeographed booklet, transcripts, short stories, etc. *White Subway* - a collection of short stories including two short biographical essays about his life in Tangier and experiments by Burroughs can be found in *The Burroughs' File* also.

Despite the underground popularity, Burroughs has enjoyed in The United States since the early 1960s, only two of his novels - *Naked Lunch* and *The Wild Boys* have received good reviews; the rest have remained the "objects of praise in an underground cult which enjoys Burroughs' style and sympathize with his message. It is for this cult that Burroughs continues to write"15 as a full-time writer.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid., (P.6)
3. Ibid., (P.7)
4. Ibid., (P.9)
5. Ibid., (P.14)
6. Ibid., (P.20)
8. Ibid., (P.3)
9. Ibid., (P.3 & 4)
10. Ibid., (P.4 & 5)
11. Ibid., (P.6)
13. Ibid., (P.45)
14. Ibid., (P.48)