

Censorship

WILLIAM BURROUGHS



What I am saying has already been better said by Mr Henry Miller in his essay "Obscenity And The Law Of Reflection" — Censorship is the presumed right of governmental agencies to decide what words and images the citizen is permitted to see: that is thought control since thought consists largely of word and image — What is considered harmful and therefore censored will of course depend on the government exercising censorship — In The Middle Ages, when the church controlled censoring agencies, the emphasis was on heretical doctrines — In Communist countries censorship is close in the area of politics — In English-speaking countries the weight of censorship falls on sexual word and image as dangerous to an economic system depending on mass production and a large public of more or less uncritical consumers — In any form censorship presupposes the right of the government to decide what people will think, what thought material of word and image will be presented to their minds — I am precisely suggesting that the right to exercise such control is called in question.

The excuse usually given for censorship is the necessity to protect children, impressionable, unstable and stupid individuals — However, this impressionable being is already subjected to a daily barrage of word and image much of it deliberately calculated to arouse sexual desires without satisfying them — That's what advertising is all about as anyone on Madison Avenue will tell you, and much popular fiction falls into the same category — And he is continually subjected to word and image deliberately calculated to arouse aggressive impulses on TV and radio, in movies and comic strips — I can not see how he would be harmed by reading the work of Rabelais, Petronius, De Sade, Henry Miller, Jean Genêt or my own work (unlikely that he would read these works if they were available to him being in many cases virtually illiterate).

What would happen if all censorship were removed? — Not much — Perhaps books would then be judged more on literary merit and a dull, poorly written book on sexual subjects would find few readers — As to whether people will be sexually stimulated by reading a book? — We know from Pavlov's conditioned reflex that people can be sexually stimulated by almost anything through association — I think that if censorship were removed fewer people would be so stimulated by the mere sight of four-letter words on a printed page —

The anxiety of which censorship is the overt expression has so far prevented any scientific investigation of sexual phenomena — Few investigators have asked the question: What is sex? — and taken the necessary steps to find the answers — So far as i know the only scientific work on this subject was done by Doctor Wilhelm Reick — As a result he was expelled from a number of countries before he took refuge in America where he died in a federal prison — His experiments indicate that sex is in all likelihood an electromagnetic phenomena, that physicists and mathematicians could discover precise formulae of sexual energy and contact leading to a physics of sexual behavior — It would then be possible, on the basis of precise knowledge, to determine what sexual practices were healthy and what practices were not healthy with reference to function of the human organism.

The Future of the Novel

In my writing i am acting as a map maker, an explorer of psychic areas, to use the phrase of Mr Alexander Trocchi, as a cosmonaut of inner space, and i see no point in exploring areas that have already been thoroughly surveyed — A Russian scientist has said: “We will travel not only in space but in time as well — “That is to travel in space is to travel in time — If writers are to travel in space time and explore areas opened by the space age, i think they must develope techniques quite as new and definite as the techniques of physical space travel — Certainly if writing is to have a future it must at least catch up with the past and learn to use techniques that have been used for some time past in painting, music and film — Mr Laurence Durrell has led the way in developing a new form of writing with time and space shifts as we see events from different viewpoints and realize that so seen they are literally not the same events, and that the old concepts of time and reality are no longer valid — Brion Gysin, an American painter living in Paris, has used what he calls ‘the cut up method’ to place at the disposal of writers the collage used in painting for fifty years — Pages of text are cut and rearranged to form new combinations of word and image — In writing my last two novels, *Nova Express* and *The Ticket That Exploded*, i have used an extension of the cut up method i call ‘the fold in method’ — A page of text — my own or some one elses — is folded down the middle and placed on another page — The composite text is then read across half one text and half the other — The fold in method extends to writing the flash back used in films, enabling the writer to move backwards and forwards on his time track — For example i take page one and fold it into page one hundred — I insert the resulting composite as page ten — When the reader reads page

ten he is flashing forwards in time to page one hundred and back in time to page one — The *deja vue* phenomena can so be produced to order — (This method is of course used in music where we are continually moved backwards and forward on the time track by repetition and rearrangements of musical themes —

In using the fold in method i edit delete and rearrange as in any other method of composition — I have frequently had the experience of writing some pages of straight narrative text which were then folded in with other pages and found that the fold ins were clearer and more comprehensible than the original texts — Perfectly clear narrative prose can be produced using the fold in method — Best results are usually obtained by placing pages dealing with similar subjects in juxtaposition —

What does any writer do but choose, edit and rearrange material at his disposal? — The fold in method gives the writer literally infinite extension of choice — Take for example a page of Rimbaud folded into a page of St John Perse — (two poets who have much in common) — From two pages an infinite number of combinations and images are possible — The method could also lead to a collaboration between writers on an unprecedented scale to produce works that were the composite effort of any number of writers living and dead — This happens in fact as soon as any writer starts using the fold in method — I have made and used fold ins from Shakespeare, Rimbaud, from newspapers, magazines, conversations and letters so that the novels i have written using this method are in fact composites of many writers —

I would like to emphasize that this is a technique and like any technique will, of course, be useful to some writers and not to others — In any case a matter for experimentation not argument — The conferring writers have been accused by the press of not paying sufficient attention to the question of human survival — In *Nova Express* — (reference is to an exploding planet) and my latest novel *The Ticket That Exploded* i am primarily concerned with the question of survival —, with nova conspiracies, nova criminals, and nova police — A new mythology is possible in the space age where we will again have heroes and villains with respect to intentions towards this planet —

Notes on these pages

To show ‘the fold in method’ in operation i have taken the two texts i read at The Writer’s Conference and folded them into newspaper articles on *The Conference*, *The Conference Folder*, typed out selections from

various writers, some of whom were present and some of whom were not, to form a composite of many writers living and dead: Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Golding, Alexander Trocchi, Norman Mailer, Colin MacInnes, Hugh Macdiarmid.

Mr Bradley-Mr Martin, in my mythology, is a God that failed, a God of Conflict in two parts so created to keep a tired old show on the road, The God of Arbitrary Power and Restraint, Of Prison and Pressure, who needs subordinates, who needs what he calls 'his human dogs' while treating them with the contempt a con man feels for his victims - But remember the con man needs the mark - The Mark does not need the con man - Mr Bradley - Mr Martin needs his 'dogs' his 'errand boys' his 'human animals' He needs them because he is literally blind. They do not need him. In my mythological system he is overthrown in a revolution of his 'dogs' - "Dogs that were his eyes shut off Mr Bradley - Mr Martin."

My conception of Mr Bradley-Mr Martin is similar to the conception developed by William Golding in "Pincer Martin" and I have made a fold in from the last pages of his book where Martin is destroyed "erased like an error", with my own version of Bradley-Martin's end - The end of Mr Bradley-Mr Martin is the theme of these pages - As regards The Writers Conference I shared with Mary Macarthy a feeling that something incredible was going on beyond the fact of people paying to listen - I could not but feel that it was indeed The Last Writer's Conference.

Nova Police besieged McEwan Hall

The last Writer's Conference - Heroin and homosexuality war melted into air - the conferents are free to come and go visiting the obscurity behind word and image - Mr Martin was movie of which intellectual and literary elite asked the question: What is sex? -

"Hear Mr Burroughs or his answer?": Flesh identity still resisted the question and that book in this memory erased the answer.

On reflection we can discover cross references scrawled by some boy with scars - The last invisible shadow caught and the future fumbles for transitory progress in the arts - Flutes of Ali in the door of panic leaves not a wrack of that God of whom I was a part - The future fumbles in dogs of unfamiliar dust - Hurry up - Page summons composite mutterings flashing forward in your moments I could describe - The *deja vue* boatman smiles with such memory orders - Shifted with the method of composition, I have frequently left no address - Some pages of straight narrative beside

you - Moments I could describe left other pages more comprehensible than the original texts that were his eyes - Inherit these by placing page deals: "Hurry up please - Heavy summons, Mr Bradley - Mr Martin, with texts moved or conveyor belts retained and copied my blood whom I created."

You are writer since the departed choose the juxtaposition beside you - The image of the hanged man shut off, Mr Bradley - Mr Martin, to fashion heavy summons - Too much comment and the great boatman smiles - Growing suspicion departed have left no address - Falling history beside you - Dogs that were his eyes inherit this - Let them stray please, its time - And they are free to come and go - Fading this green doll out of an old sack and some rope - The great streaks of paint melted into air - Out of the circle of light you are yourself bringing panic or chaos - Heavy hand broken, erased like an error, fading here the claws in The Towers - The great claws, Martin, caught melted into air - Their whole strength with such memories still resisted - Mr Bradley - Mr Martin was movie played the vaudeville voices - These our actors visible going away erased themselves into air - Adios in the final ape of Martin - Just as silver film took it you are yourself The Visiting Center and The Claws - They were our Towers - A Street boy's courage resisted erogenous summons muttering flesh identity - For I last center falling through ruined September beside you erased like and error -

A Russian scientist has said: "Martin disaster far now" - Shifted with travel in space - Writers were his eyes, inherit this travel in space and time - Areas opened by the heavy summons, Mr Bradley - Mr Martin - I think they must close your account - New and definite my blood whom I created leaves not the third who walks with the past and your dust now ended - These techniques that have been war melted into air - Hurry up in human survival - My last summons Nova Express - Reference is to the ticket that exploded your moments - Nova Police - Heavy summons, Mr Bradley - Mr Martin -

Cross references scrawled by some governmental agency decide what the citizen is permitted to see in Scotland since thought consists largely of the arts - Zero time to the sick areas of politics protecting unfamiliar dust - In English speaking countries, hurry up - Page summons sexual word and image - Consumer's orders shifted - Any form of censorship left no address - Thought material of method proffers precisely the texts that were his eyes - De Sade, Henry Miller are free to come and go - Censorship is the necessity of chaos for stupid individuals advertising to thin air the story of one absent - Like an error fading here the claws we know from Pavlov - Mr Bradley - Mr Martin was movie of which sex is the overt

expression — Voices asked the question: What is sex? — and erased themselves into the answer — Flesh identity, of which censorship is the overt expression, still resisted the question What is sex? and some boy's memory erased the answers — he had come muttering things i used to say over and over as Mr Martin Weary my blood whom i pent — Then i raised my eyes and saw words scrawled by some boy — Hurry up — Page summons composites — Get it over with — I have never known you moments, but the rages were the worst such memory orders — Shifted with me frequently left no address — Hurry up please — Heavy summons — Voice all day long muttering moved on conveyor belts very low and harsh no wonder shut off — But let me get on with this day and they are free to come and go without sore throat of an old sack and some rope — These flashes out of things i used to say over and over as yourself bringing panic or chaos — Never loved anyone i think fading here in The Towers — Same old things i dont listen to — These our actors going away on the final ape of Martin — Mr Bradly — Mr Martin voice all day long muttering sick lies — Closed your account — Not even mine it was at the end —

This brings me respectable price of my university — The Kid just found what was left of the window — Pages deal what you might call a journey — Its fairly easy thrash in old New Orleans smudged looking answer — Sick and tired of Martin — Invisible shadow tottering to doom fast — Dream and dreamer that were his eyes inherit this stage — Its time — Heavy summons, Mr Bradly — Mr Martin timeless and without mercy — You are destroyed erased like my name — The text of that God melted into air — Mr. Bradley — Mr Martin walks toward September weary good bye playing over and over — Out of the circle of light you are words scrawled by some boy with chaos, for a transitory ape of Martin understood Visiting Center and Claws — He had come muttering flesh identity — His dream must have seemed so close there, whole strength to grasp it — He did not know that it was still resisted, falling back in that vast obscurity behind memory as the boatman began to melt away — Enchanted texts that were his eyes inherit this continent — Mr Bradly — Mr Martin was movie played to thin air — Vaudeville voices leave the story of one absent — Silence to the stage — These our actors erased themselves into good night far from such as you, Mr Bradly — Mr Martin — Good bye of history — Your whole strength left no address — On this green land the pipes are calling, timeless and without mercy — Page summons the deja vue boatman in setting forth — All are wracked and answer texts that were his eyes — No home in departed river of Gothenberg — Shadows are free to come and go — What have i my friend to give?: An old sack and some rope — The great globe is paint in air —

