

Beating the Dead Horse: Deconstructing the Junk Genius of Naked Lunch



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Abstract

William S. Burroughs challenges each reader of *Naked Lunch* to make meaning of its convoluted pages. This project explores the two crucial keys to fuller understanding of his groundbreaking literary work:

Logic and Ethics.

In "Beating the Dead Horse: Deconstructing the Junk Genius of *Naked Lunch*," I illustrate Burroughs' means of exposing the flawed binaries that undergird the Aristotelian Logic of language. In *Naked Lunch*, the author bares the slippery nature of any such Logical language, whereby each word comes with a range of denotations and connotations, all of which shift constantly according to a concomitantly shifting context. This project primarily explores Burroughs' means of subverting traditional logic by exposing the flaws that riddle the foundations of language, essentially undermining the syllogistic system via the system (essentially fashioning a word virus/vaccine chain).

I also analyze the Ethical grounding of *Naked Lunch*, which grows directly from Burroughs' logical/linguistic subversions. Namely, Burroughs sought to expose the problems with the common Utilitarian Ethic that ultimately pushes the individual to the margins while subsuming the individual within the group (a symptom of the binary logical/linguistic systems that pervade thought and encourages othering). This article provides substantial evidence that links Burroughs' ethical equations directly from his Algebra of Need to Jeremy Bentham's Hedonistic Calculus.

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Naked Lunch (sometimes *The Naked Lunch*) is a 1959 novel by American writer William S. Burroughs. The book is structured as a series of loosely connected vignettes. Burroughs stated that the chapters are intended to be read in any order. The reader follows the narration of junkie William Lee, who takes on various aliases, from the U.S. to Mexico, eventually to Tangier and the dreamlike Interzone. *Naked Lunch* is a banquet you will never forget. This extraordinary novel is a comic apocalypse, a roller-coaster ride through hell, a safari to the strangest people of the strangest planet, ourselves. It is said of literary masterpieces that their genius is stamped into every line, and this is nowhere so true as it is of *Naked Lunch*. From its opening words we are aware that a unique world – comic, paranoid, visionary, delirious – is being revealed to us. Bizarre and nightmarish scenes flash by, like glimpses of some exotic and decadent city. I have seen the exact manner in which the junk virus operates through fifteen years of addiction. Beating a dead horse is more fun than you think : a partisan's view of the Southland. Item Preview. remove-circle. Beating a dead horse is more fun than you think : a partisan's view of the Southland. by. Porch, Ludlow. That person is beating a dead horse, the relationship is over there is no point in thinking about it since the matter is already resolved with you having broken up. Relationship = dead horse Bitching about it = beating it. Trying over and over to start your car after you've been in an accident where it is clear that the car is not going to work. Broken Car = dead horse Trying to start it = beating it. by Bradley Groot February 19, 2008. 558. 97. Flag. Get a beating a dead horse mug

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