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**On Resistance of Control and Expansion of  
Consciousness in William S. Burroughs' Textual Practice**

**论威廉·S·巴勒斯文本中的反控制和意识的拓展**

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*Ph. D. Dissertation*

**On Resistance of Control and Expansion of  
Consciousness in William S. Burroughs' Textual Practice**

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## Abstract

The American critic Kenneth Rexroth once said, “When you get through with Céline’s great classic *Journey to the End of Night*, you wonder why everybody didn’t hang himself. When you finish Burroughs’ book you wonder why do don’t yourself.” William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He was named after his paternal grandfather, William Seward Burroughs, the inventor of the adding machine. On the mother’s side, the maternal uncle, Ivy Ledbetter Lee, who came from the South and a Calvinist preacher, was the father of public relations. It seems that the writer spent his life career striking back against his heritage for the latter Burroughs has a deep contempt for the platitude of organized religion, combined with a maniacal mistrust for the mechanisms of order. Being a junk addict and homosexual, Burroughs in his mother country was hounded by the police and driven from place to place: busted in New York for forging a prescription, he had moved to Texas; busted in Texas for drunken driving and public indecency, he had gone to New Orleans; busted in New Orleans for possession, he had decided to leave his country. During his twenty-four years of exile, he has traveled South America, Europe and North Africa, and lived the harsh, transient existence of a drug addict for over a decade. When he returned to the United States in 1974 he sees his life's work reflected throughout the society and culture of the late twentieth century. He got titles such as the father of the Beats, the godfather of punk, the man who shot his wife, the junky, the psychic explorer and the self-pronounced queer, the literary outlaw --- all contribute to his high profile. He was admitted into the American Academy and the Institute of Arts and Letters as well as a Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France.

In the dissertation I narrow my discussion on *Junkie*, *Queer*, *Naked Lunch* and the *Nova* trilogy. I commit my study of the six books with deconstruction as my theoretical basis, for as I will demonstrate in the analysis, Burroughs’ writing draws interesting parallel with deconstructionist ideas such as the notion of reality, history, language, time and human body. And I examine the six books by focusing on the disruption of logocentric binarism and in terms of control and decontrol as my thematic concern. I hope to point out in Burroughs’ textual practice both the expressive content and formal strategies work towards resistance of control and expansion of consciousness.

In “**Introduction**” I make a brief introduction of Burroughs the man along the spatial shifts, and his major work with the corresponding criticism in chronological order. Then I clarify the books I’m going to examine, state the reason, make it plain that deconstruction is the perspective from which I will do my study, and give a general idea of what in each chapter I’ll undertake to do.

In “**Chapter I Resistance of Theorization**” I list ten different approaches of theorization on Burroughs: Morality Controversy, Modernism and Postmodernism, Amodernism, Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Reader Response, Cyberpunk, Queer Theory, Beat Writer, and Culture Studies. I present the fact that critics of different historical periods tend to view Burroughs in the light of their current theoretical trends, but as a matter of fact, Burroughs is anti-theoretical and does not fit in any category of standing criticism completely. I make it plain by demonstrating that the resistance comes either from Burroughs’ himself or from other voices in competing for a “correct” interpretation of him. In part II of this chapter, I point it out that Burroughs’ textual practice falls into, or is in such an interesting parallel with deconstructionist ideas. Some related key concepts of deconstruction such as metaphysics and logocentrism, binary opposition, trace and différance, signifier and signified, undecidability and iterability, and Derrida’s reading of Mallarmé and Joyce are examined, which contextualizes and helps understand Burroughs’ textual practice.

In “**Chapter II Deconstructing Dominant Discourse I: Marginalization and Institutionalization**” I examine two autobiographical novels of Burroughs: *Junkie* and *Queer*. Along the concept of binary opposition, I discuss respectively the junk and queer underworlds both in the realistic and metaphorical sense. I develop the idea that with Burroughs’ life experience of engagement with the two underworlds, in his fictional treatment of them both the junk and the queer underworlds hold up a mirror of the mainstream society, in which binary oppositions such as inside/outside, legal/illegal, possessing/possessed, control/decontrol not only exist as in the other world but the demarcation lines between them are constantly obscured; the rules such as “the Algebra of Need” applicable to the junk and queer worlds find themselves universal in the so-called world of integrity and purity. In the world of Burroughs, junk becomes a sliding signifier in the chain of signification, going from one signified to another, hence facilitating Burroughs’ making a comprehensive critique of

capitalism from the aspects of politics, economy, science and technology, culture and so on.

In “**Chapter III Deconstructing Dominant Discourse II: Control/Decontrol in Burroughsian World**” I go into the details of *Naked Lunch* and the *Nova* trilogy. I emphasize in *Naked Lunch* the thematic addiction of control from the perspectives of economy, politics, science, and culture, while in *Nova* trilogy a thematic analysis in terms of deconditioning becomes the focus as each title of this section indicates: “Destroying Mayan Calendar as a Means of Control in *The Soft Machine*,” “Retake the Universe: *Nova Express*” and “Explode The Ticket in *The Ticket That Explode*.” It is pointed out that, like junk and sex, the addiction to control is an all-pervasive desire, and the fight for decontrol is sure to be a relentless aspiration.

In “**Chapter IV Deconstruction at Work I: Dismantling and Rebuilding**” I make a conclusion of the books I’ve discussed so far viewed from deconstruction in four aspects: human body, reality, time and language. In his textual practice Burroughs practices what a deconstructionist preaches by trying to break out of the logocentric thought, making reflection upon the institutional framework. I undertake to demonstrate in the books Burroughs dismantles the logocentric body by showing us monolithic, autonomous nature attributed to the idea of body with organic wholeness and purity is one constructed by Western metaphysics. To elucidate this point more clearly, I rely on two concepts of “virus” and “parasite” in Burroughs’ texts to draw the conclusion that the body with individual and separate identity does not exist, and any bodily state is itself only a response to a controlling presence. Burroughs also makes it plain that the so-called logocentric reality is one manufactured artificially, a pseudo-reality, which is used to enslave people and maintain the status quo. He holds that reality is simply a more or less constant scanning pattern in the film studio, and he makes frequent recourse in his texts to the image of the agents who led people in attacking every form of control stepping out of the burning reality-film. Burroughs warns his readers, “It’s time to forget. To forget time.” For him, the concept of time is adopted to serve the absolute reason and to mode our minds, on the basis of which history is built not as a process of development but as a rigidly determined succession of abstract and eternal structures. As to language, he calls on to “rub out the word” for “What we call history is the history of the word.” He points it out that it imprisons

people in material bodies and assimilates individuals into a social order that is organized to benefit the controllers. Burroughs insists that his quest is the dissolution of all apparent dualisms and with particular strategies he employs he hopes to defeat those in control and approximate the ultimate state of complete freedom.

In “**Chapter V Deconstruction at Work II: Resistance of Language and Expansion of Consciousness**” I discuss Burroughs’ theory of language and his practice with language, especially his experiments of cut-ups. Theoretically, Burroughs is influenced by Alfred Korzybski’s General Semantics. I present three strategies he employs in resistance of language in practice: silence, picture and the cut-up method. In particular, I make an explanation of his application of cut-ups with writing. I point it out that with cut-ups Burroughs deconstructs the logocentric notion of writing, which I approach from the following two aspects: deconstructing the notion of originality and writing at the limit. Besides writing, Burroughs extends the use of cut-ups to tape-recorder, film and painting. Burroughs believes the cut-up method introduces elements of randomness and irreversibility, and is our way of perception and true to our consciousness. I hope to point it out that for Burroughs, cut-ups not only destroy habitual linguistic and narrative structures, but also help develop a new mode of consciousness. Burroughs’ attack is really on the whole method of constructing meanings, particularly in the Western world. To sum up, Burroughs’ practice of cut-ups with the transgression of limits undoes the logocentric foundation which has contained people all the time and helps achieve a new perception of the world.

In “**Conclusion**” I sum up Burroughs’ life and his ideas as revealed in his writing. His view of the capitalist society all starts from his personal entanglement with drug and homosexuality. What he sees in the socially marginalized and politically demonized world driven by profits and needs is a mirror of the monolithic capitalist world in reality. In my opinion, whether labeled as a Utopian or nihilist, Burroughs demonstrates the passion which compels literature to move beyond its accepted limits. Burroughs’ speculation on the nature of Western civilization’s predicament is serious. His intensity as released in his work may be appalling, even disgusting with a weird mix of paranoia, violence, drug use and teenage homoerotic sexual fantasy, yet his desire to transcend controls of various forms and his



commitment in experiments in achieving this goal truly deserve our respect. If his work does not help create a new human personality, it at least forces us to reconsider the traditional terms of literature. Then, I admit that the paradox lies in the impossibility of exempting himself from the terms of his own critique. And I remind readers that the function of cut-ups should not be overstated and an objective attitude is what should be adopted. I also express my doubt about the ultimate freedom Burroughs aspires. Last, I declare my stand in studying Burroughs the man and writer, and make an explanation for locating him as the object of my study.

**Key Words:** William S. Burroughs, deconstruction, control and decontrol, cut-up, expansion of consciousness

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库

## 概要

美国评论家肯尼思·瑞克罗斯 (Kenneth Rexroth) 曾经说过：“当读完塞林的《黑夜尽头的旅行》，你会为大家为何不去自尽而感到纳闷。可当你读了巴勒斯的作品之后便会为自己为何不这样做而纳闷了。”威廉·巴勒斯 (1914-1997) 生于米苏里州的圣路易斯，他跟随其爷爷的名字。关于他的家族值得一提的有：爷爷威廉·西沃德·巴勒斯 (William Seward Burroughs) 是美国第一台加算机的发明者，舅舅艾维·李 (Ivy Ledbetter Lee) 则是一位来自于南方的加尔文教传道士，后来成为美国公共关系学的鼻祖。然而有趣的是，成人后的巴勒斯对宗教的陈词滥调深恶痛绝，对机械程序也持怀疑态度，他似乎在尽其一生地抵触流淌在血液中的家族基因。身为一名吸毒者和同性恋者，他在美国的经历俨然一本警察的追逐日志：在纽约他因伪造处方而被捕，之后迁至德克萨斯；在德克萨斯又因酒后驾车和公共场所猥亵罪被捕，之后迁往新奥尔良；在新奥尔良，因携带毒品再次被捕，这次他选择了离开美国。在他二十四年的海外生活中，他的足迹遍及南美洲、欧洲和北非，而在这期间，窘迫无常的瘾君子生活也伴随了他十几年之久。1974年当他重返美国时，竟然发现在二十世纪末的美国社会和文化中处处都能看到自己的影子。他被冠以“垮掉一代之父”、“朋克教父”、“心灵探索者”、“贩毒者”、“自我表白的同性恋者”、“文学的流放者”等等称号。他还被象征权威和主流文化的美国艺术和文学学会接纳为会员，并获得了法国艺术和文学勋章。

本篇论文着重讨论了巴勒斯的六部作品：《贩毒者》、《同性恋》、《赤裸的午餐》和包括《软机器》、《爆炸的票》、《新星快车》的“新星”三部曲。全篇论文以解构主义为理论框架，通过对六部作品的深入剖析，指出巴勒斯对身体、现实、历史、语言和时间等问题的思考与解构主义思想不谋而合。本篇论文以解构主义对逻格斯中心主义二元对立的解构为契机，指出巴勒斯的文本实践无论从表达内容还是形式策略上均指向了控制与反控制的主体，大大开拓了人的意识领域。

“引言”首先以地点变换为线简要介绍了巴勒斯的生平，以时间为序介绍了他不同历史时期的主要作品以及与此对应的评论。其次，明确本篇论文的研究对象和研究方法并阐明原因。最后，对论文正文的展开脉络作了大致的介绍。

**“第一章 抵制理论化”** 在本章的第一部分，列举了十种从不同角度对巴勒斯进行研究的理论，它们包括伦理学、现代主义与后现代主义、非现代主义、心理分析学、马克思主义、读者反应论、赛博朋克（又称数字朋克、电脑叛客或网路叛客）、酷儿理论、跨掉派研究和文化研究。本章指出不同历史时期的评论家竞相以当时盛行的研究眼光审视巴勒斯，然而实际上他却有着“反理论”倾向。这种倾向有时直接出自巴勒斯本人的表白，有时体现在与之迥异、甚至互相排斥的另外一种研究观点和视角上，这样一来就对种种理论的适用性提出了挑战。在本章的第二部分简要论及了解构主义及其相关的主要概念，如逻格斯中心主义、形而上学、二元对立、异延、踪迹、能指和所指、不确定性和重复性等。并且指出尽管巴勒斯的“反理论”倾向，在很大程度上他的文本实践却与解构主义理念并行。解构主义将构成本篇论文的理论框架。

**“第二章 解构主体文本（一）：制度化/边缘化”** 本章主要以二元对立为导线，以巴勒斯的自身经历和两部具有自传色彩的小说《贩毒者》和《同性恋》为研究对象，从现实世界和文本世界两个方面，分别讨论了吸毒者和同性恋所处的边缘地带之现实意义和隐喻意义。通过细节性讨论，本章指出，逻格斯中心主义的二元对立如内部/外部、合法/非法、占有/被占有、控制/反控制等在吸毒者和同性恋者的世界里，两者的界限已变得模糊不清；而在吸毒者和同性恋者的世界里运行的规则如“需求代数学”却同样适用于代表着“纯洁”与“正直”的合法社会。在巴勒斯的作品中，毒品成为滑动的能指，它使得二元对立解体，从而展开了对建立在逻格斯中心主义之上的西方资本主义社会的政治、经济、科技、文化等在内的全面批判。

**“第三章 解构主体文本（二）：巴勒斯世界中的控制/反控制”** 这一章主要从主题意义上对《赤裸的午餐》和新星三部曲《软机器》、《爆炸的票》、《新星快车》作了深入细致的分析。从政治、经济、科技和文化等角度突出《赤裸的午餐》中各种生物热衷于控制对方的主题。对于新星三部曲则力求体现渴望摆脱控制的强烈愿望，如表现在《软机器》中毁灭玛雅日历、《新星快车》中重新占有宇宙、《爆炸的票》中炸掉一切枷锁的种种努力。本章通过对这四部作品的解读，指出如同毒品和性一样，控制他者的欲望广泛地存在社会各个角落，而反控制也注定成为不懈的追求。

**“第四章 解构进行时（一）：摧毁和重建”** 本章是在前两章主题分析的基础上，对巴勒斯表现出来的解构主义思想的集中概括。主要从身体、现实、时间和语言四个方面，指出巴勒斯在文本实践中颠覆了逻格斯中心主义，对制度化的思维体系和社会体系作出了深刻的思索。他指出逻格斯中心主义所界定的自主、有机、纯洁的身体实际上是西方形而上学思想创造的产物。为了更好地论证这一点，本章借助于巴勒斯文本中的“病毒”和“寄生虫”两个概念，以二元对立为切入点，总结出所谓具有独立属性的身体是不存在的，任何身体都处于控制和反控制力量不断的角逐之中。而所谓的现实实际上是伪现实，是统治阶级为实现维持现状、铲除异己的帮凶。在巴勒斯看来，现实就如同电影工作室里不断地被扫描出来的图象。在他的作品中总是反复出现那些带领人们反抗统治、追求自由的使者从燃烧的电影画幕中走出来的意象。巴勒斯提出“是时候忘掉时间了”因为它是形而上学绝对真理的基础，规范思维模式核心理念。而在此基础上历史只不过是僵硬的亘古不变的结构循环。他呼吁“消除语言”，因为“历史是文字的历史，”正是语言将人类禁锢在肉体之中，为社会秩序所吸纳，以便于统治者进行管理和统治。巴勒斯表明他将消解一切的二元对立，以其独有的策略将人类带向一个没有控制的自由世界。

**“第五章 解构进行时（二）：抵制语言 开拓思维”** 本章从理论和实践两个方面着重讨论了巴勒斯消解逻格斯中心主义规范下的语言所作的种种努力。在理论上，他深受阿尔弗里德·科兹伯斯基普通语义学的影响。在写作实验中，他提倡运用沉默、图片和剪裁法等方法来抵制语言。其中，剪裁法成为抵制语言最重要的策略。本章从两个方面讨论了剪裁法对于逻格斯中心主义意义下的传统写作的解构：1) 语言原创性的消解；2) 极限写作。除了写作，巴勒斯还将剪裁法广泛运用到录音、电影和绘画中来。在他看来，剪裁法所具有的随意性和不可逆转性实质上正是我们观察事物的真实过程，是我们意识的真实图景。本章指出，巴勒斯对语言的实践努力不仅打破了人们的语言习惯和叙述结构，更重要的是他否定了整个西方建构意义的方法。他超越极限，自由驰骋，游走在“语言的牢笼”之外，震撼了西方形而上学的基础，解放了人的思想，大大开拓了人的思维模式，使人警醒，逼人深思。

**“结语”** 首先对巴勒斯的一生和思想作了简要的总结，指出他对资本主义

社会的解构均来源于他身处非主流社会的亲身体验，正是他的边缘地位赋予了他对资本主义社会更为清楚而深刻的认识。并且指出，无论被称作空想主义者还是虚无主义者，巴勒斯为使文学跨越极限、开阔人的思维疆域作出了积极的尝试。他对西方文明的困境作出了严肃的思考，尽管他的作品充斥着让人震惊、有时甚至令人作呕的妄想、暴力、毒品和同性恋少年的种种性幻想，然而其所表现出的那种渴望超越任何形式的权力控制并为之不断尝试的激情值得我们尊重。也许他的作品不能改变现状，但至少可以让我们重新思考传统意义上的文学。当然，巴勒斯也有自相矛盾的地方，对于剪裁法我们也不应过分夸大其作用。最后，提出了本论文作者对巴勒斯所追求的最终自由的怀疑，并表白了对于将巴勒斯作为研究对象所持的个人立场。

**关键词：**威廉·S·巴勒斯，解构主义，控制和反控制，剪裁法，意识拓展

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this volume to indicate the titles of Burroughs' books. Full bibliographical data can be found in the list of works cited.

*Naked Lunch: NL*

*Nova Express: NE*

*The Ticket That Exploded: TE*

*The Soft Machine: SM*

*Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953-1957: Letters*

*Ah Pook Is Here: AP*

*The Adding Machine: AM*

*Port of Saints: PS*

*The Third Mind: TM*

*The Western Lands: WL*

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