

## Recent Reception of *Naked Lunch*

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This paper analyzes scholarship on *Naked Lunch* since Burroughs's death in 1997. Although the focus is on scholarly criticism, there is some discussion of news media and popular culture, since all of the obituaries upon Burroughs's death emphasized *Naked Lunch* as his most famous, or notorious, work. The paper includes some comparison between contemporary reception and earlier criticism, which was polarized and placed Burroughs out of the mainstream in "outlaw" status. New criticism reveals a long overdue critical consolidation and the beginning of canonization under the category of postmodernism. *Naked Lunch* continues to invite new theoretical perspectives and remains relevant to current discussions of globalization and the power of the media and the state, which are prominent in contemporary literary studies. Cronenberg's film of *Naked Lunch*, which has influenced popular perceptions of the novel and its author, is also discussed. Cronenberg's film adds yet another paratext to a book surrounded by paratexts from the beginning and stimulates re-examination of the Burroughs legend. Most film and literary critics agree that the film is about the legend of the artist who wrote the book, not an adaptation of the book, thus turning us back to the text itself and its resistance to normalizing narratives. (This paper is based on an essay that will be published in *Naked Lunch at 50*, edited by Oliver Harris and Ian MacFadden, Southern Illinois University Press, forthcoming 2009).