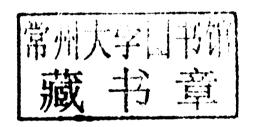


WILLIAM BURROUGHS

The Place of Dead Roads



Fourth Estate
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William Burroughs asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

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WILLIAM BURROUGHS was born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1914. The son of a successful businessman, Burroughs studied English literature at Harvard in the 1930s. A drop-out thereafter, he lived in Mexico, Tangier and the UK, and for many years was a heroin addict. He began writing in the 1930s but had little success until the early 1950s when he wrote two confessional books, *Junky* (1953) and *Queer* (written in the 1950s but not published until 1985).

Although largely unpublished for many years, Burroughs was immensely influential among the Beat writers of the 1950s – notably Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg – and already had an underground reputation before the appearance of his first important book, *Naked Lunch*. First published by Olympia Press (the original publishers of Henry Miller) in France in 1959, it aroused great controversy on publication and was not available in the US until 1962 and in the UK until 1964.

Burroughs's other works include *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962), *Nova Express* (1964), *Cities of the Red Night* (1981) and *The Place of Dead Roads* (1984). In 1983 he was elected a Member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

William Burroughs died in 1997.

From the reviews of The Place of Dead Roads:

'The Place of Dead Roads is Burroughs at his very best'
Guardian

'Burroughs has a paranoid vision, but as he himself said: the psychotic is someone who knows what's really going on'

J.G. BALLARD, Sunday Times

By the same author

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Naked Lunch

Nova Express

Painting and Guns

The Place of Dead Roads

Port of Saints

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The Soft Machine

The Third Mind (with Brion Gysin)

The Ticket That Exploded

Dead Fingers Talk

Tornado Alley (with S. Clay Wilson)

The Western Lands

The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead

The Yagé Letters (with Allen Ginsberg)

Last Words: The Final Journals of William Burroughs

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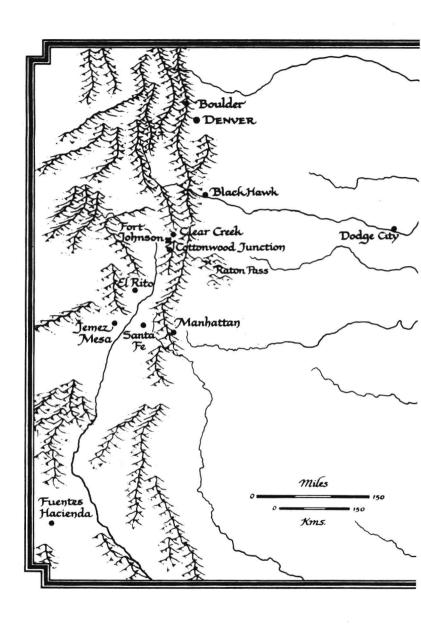
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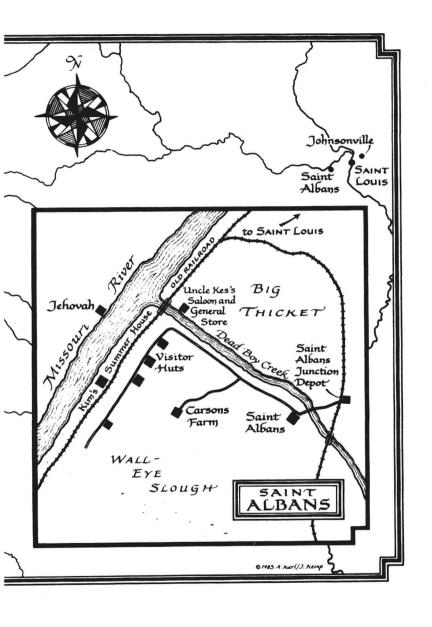
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To Denton Welch, For Kim Carsons

The original title of this book was *The Johnson Family*. "The Johnson Family" was a turn-of-the-century expression to designate good bums and thieves. It was elaborated into a code of conduct. A Johnson honors his obligations. His word is good and he is a good man to do business with. A Johnson minds his own business. He is not a snoopy, self-righteous, trouble-making person. A Johnson will give help when help is needed. He will not stand by while someone is drowning or trapped under a burning car.

The only thing that could unite the planet is a united space program ... the earth becomes a space station and war is simply out, irrelevant, flatly insane in a context of research centers, spaceports, and the exhilaration of working with people you like and respect toward an agreed-upon objective, an objective from which all workers will gain. Happiness is a by-product of function. The planetary space station will give all participants an opportunity to function.





1 STRANGER WHO WAS PASSING

SHOOT-OUT IN BOULDER

SEPTEMBER 17, 1889. What appeared to be an Old Western shoot-out took place yesterday afternoon at the Boulder Cemetery. The protagonists have been identified as William Seward Hall, sixty-five, a real-estate speculator with holdings in Colorado and New Mexico, and Mike Chase, in his fifties, about whom nothing was known.

Hall resided in New York City, and wrote western stories under the pen name of "Kim Carsons." "He was apparently here on a business trip," a police source stated.

At first glance it appeared that Chase and Hall had killed each other in a shoot-out, but neither gun had been fired, and both men were killed by single rifle shots fired from a distance. Chase was shot from in front through the chest. Hall was shot in the back. Nobody heard the shots, and police believe the rifleman may have employed a silencer.

A hotel key was found in Hall's pocket, and police searched his room at the Overlook Hotel. They found clothing, a 38 revolver, and a book entitled *Quién Es?* by Kim Carsons. Certain passages had been underlined.

Police investigating this bizarre occurrence have as yet no clue to the possible motives of the men. "Looks like an old grudge of some sort," Police Chief Martin Winters said. When asked whether there was any reason Chase and Hall should want to kill each other, he replied, "Not that I know of, but we are continuing the investigation."

The Sunday paper played up the story, with pictures of the deceased and the cemetery, and diagrams showing the location of the bodies and the probable spot from which the shots had been fired. When asked about the make and caliber of the death weapon, the Medical Examiner stated: "Definitely a rifle. Size of the exit holes is consistent with a 45-70 dumdum bullet, but the projectiles have not been recovered."

The article quoted the underlined passages from Hall's book Quién Es?

Papers in an old attic ... an old yellow press clipping from the Manhattan Comet, April 3, 1894:

Three members of the Carsons gang were killed today when they attempted to hold up the Manhattan City Bank. A posse, dispatched in pursuit of the survivors, ran into an ambush and suffered several casualties ... Mike Chase, a U.S. marshal, stated that the ambush was not carried out by the Carsons gang but by a band of Confederate renegades armed with mortars and grenades ...

This poem was wroted by Kim Carsons after a shoot-out on Bleecker Street, October 23, 1920. Liver Wurst Joe and Cherry Nose Gio, Mafia hit men, with Frank the Lip as driver, opened fire on Kim Carsons, Boy Jones, Mars Cleaver, known as Marbles, and Guy Graywood, described as an attorney. In the ensuing exchange of shots Liver Wurst Joe, Cherry Nose Gio, and Frank the Lip was all kilted. Only damage sustained by the Carsons group was to Boy's vest when he took refuge behind a fire hydrant.

"My vest is ruinted," he moaned. "And it was dog shit done it. There should be a law."

Owing to certain "offensive passages" written in the French language the poem could not be quoted, but an enterprising assistant editor had copies made with translations of the offensive passages and sold them to collectors and curiosity seekers for five dollars a copy.

Stranger Who Was Passing

un grand principe de violence dictait à nos moeurs
(a great principle of violence dictated our fashions)
Surely a song for men like a great wind
Shaking an iron tree
Dead leaves in the winter pissoir
J'aime ces types vicieux
Qu'ici montrent la bite...
(I like the vicious types
who show the cock here....)
Simon, aimes-tu le bruit des pas
Sur les feuilles mortes?
(Simon, do you like the sound of steps
on dead leaves?)
The smell of war and death?