



William S. Burroughs

Barry Miles

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Authoritative biography of cult writer William Burroughs (1914-1997). It has been 50 years since Norman Mailer asserted, 'I think that William Burroughs is the only American novelist living today who may conceivably be possessed by genius.' This assessment holds true today. No-one since then has taken such risks in their writing, developed such individual radical political ideas, or spanned such a wide range of media - Burroughs has written novels, memoirs, technical manuals and poetry, he has painted, made collages, taken thousands of photographs, made visual scrapbooks, produced hundreds of hours of experimental tapes, acted in movies and recorded more CDs than most rock groups. Made a cult figure by the publication of NAKED LUNCH, Burroughs was a mentor to the 1960s youth culture. Underground papers referred to him as 'Uncle Bill' and he ranked alongside Bob Dylan and the Beatles, Buckminster Fuller and R.D. Laing as one of the 'gurus' of the youth movement who might just have the secret of the universe. Based upon extensive research, this biography paints a new portrait of Burroughs, making him real to the reader and showing how he was perceived by his contemporaries in all his guises - from icily distant to voluble drunk. It shows how his writing was very much influenced by his life situation and by the people he met on his travels around America and Europe. He was, beneath it all, a man torn by emotions: his guilt at not visiting his doting mother; his despair at not responding to reconciliation attempts from his father; his distance from his brother; the huge void that separated him from his son; and above all his killing of his wife, Joan Vollmer.

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