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| Burroughs, William S. (1914-1997) |
| Burroughs, William Seward |
| Born in St. Louis, Missouri, William S. Burroughs was a major figure of the Beat Generation. He is known primarily for his controversial novel *Naked Lunch* (1959) — the subject of a U.S. obscenity trial — and for his use of the cut-up technique, developed by his friend, British-born artist Brion Gysin. The technique involves cutting up and reassembling text or film in random order to produce non-linear anti-narratives; influences include Dadaist collage procedures and T.S. Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’. Using this technique, Burroughs collaborated with Gysin and filmmaker Anthony Balch to produce short experimental films, including *Towers Open Fire* (1963), *The Cut Ups* (1967), and *Bill and Tony* (1972). The films juxtapose and overlay documentary footage of Burroughs and others with stock footage, as well as surreal, pornographic, and science-fiction imagery. Burroughs also narrated portions of the films, in part using text appropriated from Scientology manuals and film scripts — notably Tod Browning’s *Freaks* (1932). Fragments from *The Soft Machine* (1961), part of the science-fiction *Nova Trilogy*, appear in the narration of *Towers Open Fire*. Burroughs also appeared in numerous feature films. |
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| Further reading:  (Baldwin)  (Bridgett)  Link: <http://brightlightsfilm.com/39/cutups1.php>  (Burroughs)  (McLuhan)  (Murphy)  (Sargeant)  (Schneiderman and Walsh)  (Skerl and Lydenberg) |