

an excerpt of

EVERYTHING LOST: THE LATIN AMERICAN NOTEBOOK OF WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS.
Edited by Oliver Harris. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008. 217 pp.
\$59.95.

Reviewed by John G. Nettles

Although several generations of readers, scholars, and would-be hipsters have lumped William S. Burroughs in with the literary movement called the “Beat Generation,” Burroughs himself vehemently rejected the designation throughout his lifetime. Good friends though he was with Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and their crowd of acolytes of Buddha, bebop, and bombast, Burroughs never personally bought into the package. He preferred Mahler over Monk, scientific inquiry over introspective navel-gazing, and while the Beats spent their lives and ink looking for saints and angels, Burroughs spent his uncovering a vast conspiracy of shadowy overlords with their word viruses and agents of control. . . .

Everything Lost is beautifully bound and packaged, and though its prohibitive cover price makes it a more likely acquisition for libraries than for the average reader, its content is invaluable to fans and scholars of Burroughs’ work for its rare glimpse past the author’s Byron-on-junk public persona and into the mind of a man observing, with both passion and detachment, the desiccation of his romantic notions. A disturbing impressionist travelogue, a flawed but brilliant prose poem, and one writer’s beginnings all at once, the notebook gives us a taste of the real Burroughs, pure and uncut.

