

## THE BEAT SCENE REVIEW SECTION

# WILLIAM BURROUGHS with Brion Gysin, Gregory Corso and Sinclair Beiles

## BATTLE INSTRUCTIONS THE EXTERMINATOR Redux MINUTES TO GO Redux

This is a William Burroughs time bomb going off, sixty years or thereabouts later. Burroughs editor supreme, Oliver Harris, gives us three works that even he cannot clearly define for us. They are all things to all manner of reader.

He's keen for us to understand that Burroughs defies classification and he wants us to jettison that 'lost classic' tag that so often comes with these Burroughs books. Well, two of them at least *Battle Instructions* is a new work. Discovered, though he may blush at that, by Oliver Harris in the Burroughs archives. He stresses that there simply are no 'definitive' Burroughs manuscripts. Burroughs was an ardent reworker, rejigger of his writing. *That Minutes To Go* and *The Exterminator* are often labelled as 'lost classics' irritates him. Harris, as I

understand him, wants us to see them as works in progress, that's it with Burroughs, never satisfied. Harris speaks of the collaborative nature of *Minutes to Go*. How having four authors instead of one was a strategy designed to subvert the world of literature as it was sixty years ago. It simply amplified their desire to be different.

Oliver Harris never sleeps. He can't possibly ever lay his head down. The staggering trail of information in his substantial introductions in this trio of

Burroughs books is - to quote Bill and Ted - awesome. How he gets the scent and uncovers the secret histories of all three books, and there is fabulous history there. Some might say it is all too much,

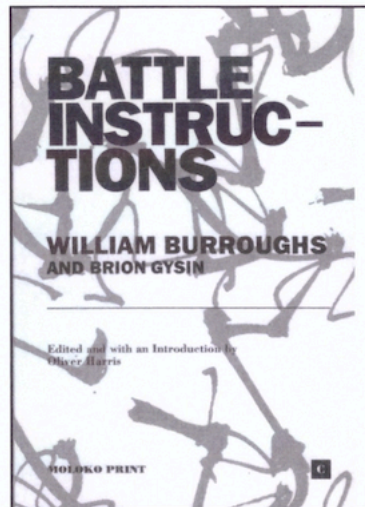
overwhelming. For the avid William Burroughs reader it simply must be a dream come true.

But be prepared to be perplexed at times. Such was the disarray in the archive department as Burroughs sojourned in North Africa, Paris, London, Mexico, New York and elsewhere, manuscripts get lost, get found, are patched together. Even such a Burroughsian expert as Oliver Harris found the task a daunting one at times. Burroughs often confounds. He wasn't here to be a safe 'novelist' he was asking to see the manager as an alien from another planet.

Space is the enemy for us here. This trio deserve better. The research, the collation, the design of it all, the books look wonderful, little works of

art as they try and pin them down - give them some coherence. Some identifiable form that us more mortals can latch on to. Well done Oliver Harris and well done publishers Moloko Print. Grab all three now.

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Brian Dalton