



Confessions of a Salvia Sorcerer

By Brother Harmonius

Being written in this Year 10 of **E**ra **A**quaria
*Being notes on an apprenticeship under tutelage,
Behind the gauzy veil of Our Green Lady of the Leaf,
The sacred mint Ska Maria Pastora,
The Divine Salvia, which also is called
Salvia Divinorum.*



Prologue

When I first learned of *salvia divinorum* in 1996, I was led to believe it to be a mild, weak substitute for magic mushrooms in Mexican-Mazatec shamanic practice. The triumvirate of psychedelic herbs, it was widely reported, was the seed of *rivea corymbosa*, a kind of morning glory vine called *ololiuqui*; the psychedelic mushroom *psilocybe mexicana*, with variants now widely popular in the western world; and thirdly, a little known member of the mint family that went by the botanical name *salvia divinorum*, or "diviner's sage".

Salvia divinorum is a member of the order Labiatae. The leaves are broad, properly described as mint green, with a coarse vein structure. The stalk is characteristically squared, like the catnip stalk. The stem is hollow, but juicy. I have seen photos of *salvia divinorum* plants that stood over eight feet tall and very profusely foliated. Those photographs were of plants growing in California and Hawaii. Alas, I live in Massachusetts, where they would not grow annually without some careful breeding. Traits are difficult to breed at present because of the scarcity of fertile seeds. You see, most of the plants out there are clones, meaning they are really only one plant spread far-and-wide.

Salvia divinorum is a near cousin to several other salvias, or sages, including the pineapple sage *salvia elegans*, the culinary sage *salvia officinalis*, *salvia splendens* and the desert sages used in smudge sticks.

In the beginning I tried growing my own *salvia*. The plants would do quite well until they got to be about a foot high, or until winter came around, and then they succumbed to a bluish-green fungus which overtook the lower stalk. The stalk withered and turned black, and the necrotic blue death would creep upward until the last leaf was no more.

I tried for several years to grow *salvia*. At some point I should like to try again. I have, for the time being, resigned myself to letting others grow the diviner's sage, and I accept my role as partaker of its mysteries, through the efforts of other farmers and agriculturalists.

The first time I smoked dried *salvia* was when I used the leaves from my potted plants. I was in a hurry to get results, of course, so I simply picked the leaves from my young plants and dried them in a microwave. Results were unsatisfying. The effect was a vague sense of "is something happening to me?"

At that time, in the spring of 1997 I began participating in an online community, one which explored the various entheogenic plants. *Entheogen* is a phrase taken from the Greek, which literally means "the spirit within". This was a more sophisticated way of



looking at the plant kingdom, with respect to a plant's effects upon ingestion. Instead of classifying a plant product as narcotic, sedative, stimulant, hallucinogen, etc., the term conferred a spirit presence within all plants, whether it was one that induced such overtly neuropsychological effects as does marijuana or soothed the sunburned skin like aloe vera. To use the plant for its medicinal properties meant imbibing the plant's spirit, and for a time the human and plant spirit coexisted.

Not always in a state of mutual harmony, of course. Plants like belladonna or the angel's trumpet *datuna stramonium* could wreak serious havoc if misapplied. While LSD had been credited with inducing profound change in the world of psychiatry, the ergot fungus from which it was derived reportedly caused limbs to fall off. I have actually eaten ergot. I picked them off the grains growing in my friend's rye field one year. The effects were mildly entheogenic, but I was afraid to try too much. The few ergot kernels I keep in a small plastic vial have the odor of rotten fish.

Some consider tobacco to be entheogenic, and according to the classical ethnography written by Valdes, Diaz and Paul tobacco traditionally accompanied the chewing of salvia divinorum by the Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico.

With the expansion of internet communities appealing to different interests, whether that was literature, religion, or science, old terms like "shamanism" were seen more often. Very often the term occurred alongside the word "entheogen" or "primitive animist". Like a subversive anthem, the entheogenist community coalesced around two popular books by author and self-proclaimed eclectic animist Daniel Quinn: *Ishmael* and *The Story of B*. Soon, hybrid terms like "eclectic animist" and "urban shaman" were infiltrating our language. I shouldn't mind being classified as either of these, should classification ever become necessary, though I think of myself as Gnostic, in order to avoid pigeonholing. Leaving doors open is very important on the path to self-discovery.

These terms reflected the growing syncretism between ancient, primitive science and the highly technological advances of western civilization. Somewhere in the Amazonian rain forest (what's left of it, anyway) a Yanomami shaman is scratching his head in confusion. These distinctions have no relevancy outside of the world enveloped by global communication, vis-à-vis the internet.

I had long been interested in primitive animism and hallucinogenic or inebriating substances. I can distinctly trace my interest to a 1974 National Geographic article about plant use among primitive societies. The photographs and illustrations alone were alluring, the stories romantic. I thought I should like to try them all. As it turned out, I have tried a great many of them, but not all.

In the winter of 1981-82, I was house-sitting for a friend who was vacationing in Puerto Rico. Among this friend's unique



collection of books were Nikos Kazantzaki's "Odysseus", Jack Kerouac's "On the Road", "The Travels of Marco Polo," a small book on Hatha yoga dated 1899, and a book by Margaret Kreig called "Green Medicine". From the latter I became introduced to R. Gordon Wasson's incredible Mexican magic mushroom safari. I couldn't get enough Wasson stories at the time. Wasson's journeys crossed paths with Albert Hoffman, the father of LSD.

The book was copyrighted 1964, and it was undoubtedly one of the first mentions of salvia divinorum to make the popular press. Kreig devoted a chapter to hallucinogenic plants, prophetically titled "Mental Drugs: From the Stone Age, to the Space Age—and Back." The chapter included references not only to Hoffman and Wasson, but also to Aldous Huxley.

Here, on page 373 Kreig writes what might be the first popularized reference to salvia divinorum outside of Mexico:

When he returned from his last trip he told me that he was now deeply involved with an investigation of plants used by the Mazatecs when the mushrooms are out of season. These are surely the greenest of all green medicines, belonging as they do to the mint family. The Harvard Botanical Museum has recently published an account of Wasson's experiments with a species of mint new to botanists—*Salvia divinorum*.

Frankly, although I read the book from cover to cover, if you had asked me afterward about a psychotropic mint called salvia divinorum, I would have responded, "Never heard of it." That's just how obscure this plant was, overshadowed by the sexier psilocybe, datura, and peyote. Those were botanical substances indelibly romanticized in Carlos Castaneda's perennial "The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge," which did as much to mainstream the Meso-American use of peyote and psilocybe as Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary did to the refined chemical derivatives mescaline and LSD among the literati.

In the background of all this brewed yet another psychotropic compound called ayahuasca, which also went by the name yajé, or its snuff variants yopo and cohoba depending upon which of the several species of certain interesting plants went into its composition. These were DMT and harmine/harmaline potions from the jungles of South America. When combined together the species *banisteriopsis caapi* and *psychotria viridis* induce vomiting purge, followed by a life-changing psychedelic. Even as I undertake my study of salvia divinorum, these other plants—and perhaps more to emerge down the road—are enjoying an invigorating interest by the spiritually malnourished denizens of the post-industrial. More people are considering ayahuasca as a serious form of therapy, as the importance of the vision quest gains mainstream acceptance. These are small steps in the right direction.

William S. Burroughs wrote about yajé in *The Naked Lunch*. But that book was largely Burroughs' poetic exposition of his own opiated nightmares, and seemed to move psychedelic literature in



the wrong direction. There was also an X-Files episode featuring yajé. Just thought I'd throw that in for no apparent reason.

Iboga is another curiously entheogenic specimen I have read about, but never tried, made from a root that grows in Africa. It has been used in the treatment of alcoholism.

Psychologists and therapists try to legitimize psychotropic substances by proclaiming their therapeutic or curative powers. I feel this is wrong-headed. Predicating nature's value upon its commercial value or practical use to humans is a capitalistic vanity that I resent. This is a mindset paralleling *Manifest Destiny* and the conquest of our aboriginal neighbors. Must plants now "fix" American alcoholics and drug addicts to validate their existence? This seems to be a Goose that Laid the Golden Egg approach to conservation (and freedom). Our government has become an oppressive dictator, let us not beat around that bush any longer. All these overseas wars we are fighting have nothing to do with preserving the supposed freedoms we no longer have, so what is it our child soldiers are really protecting with their lives?

Then came Terence McKenna and his DMT "self-replicating machine elves," which was a concept I once struggled with, but no longer. I am able to reconcile McKenna's theory of aliens, and that hallucinogens figured critically in the evolution of self- or "god-awareness" (which provokes a question, if a gazelle or cow eats a magic mushroom, does it become self-aware?). The psychoactive properties of DMT and salvinorin A share many commonalities.

The owner of a popular web site wholly dedicated to the entheogens (whom I will mention again in the following diary) interviewed Stanley Owsley. His contribution, of course, was in making high quality, cheap LSD readily available in the 1960s, and he figured importantly in Ken Kesey's *Electric Koolaid Acid Test* phenomenon. Owsley also designed the Grateful Dead logo, the one with the skull and lightning bolt. I very briefly engaged in an email conversation with Owsley on the aesthetics and functionality of a web site I tried to start in 1998. One of Owsley's suggestions was to "get rid of the ugly bear" on my home page. I was a little hurt, since I drew the bear from my memory of living among the black bears of Massachusetts.

As it read in this particular 1997 entheogen.com interview Owsley was skeptical of salvia's psychoactive properties. He mistakenly assumed the smoker's experience came from some residual DMT in the pipe the subject was smoking from. Boy, was he wrong. S_____ later reported that Owsley recanted. No worries, Owsley, for many of us were equally ignorant about the effects of salvia.

That's where salvia was 10 years ago. Obscure and misunderstood, adrift without its own myth. The pop culture and LSD pioneers had never heard of it, and so did what comes natural to a generation of egotists, they diminished its significance. Looking back, I see how I fell victim to ignorance by thinking that it must be a low-grade



substitute for psilocybe. A prejudice reinforced by the literature of the day.

This is a powerful lesson, I feel, about how literature, taken as singular, isolated sources becomes misinformation. Good information comes with the freedom to write and write and write about a subject over the course of years, so that slowly, surely, a solid body of knowledge is developed. You can ask an LSD expert like Owsley to give his opinion on something else, and it doesn't necessarily mean anything. As it turns out, salvinorin A, the active ingredient within salvia may be even more potent than LSD. You can buy yourself a \$10 book on botanical medicines, but it could be completely wrong about doses, dangers, effects, you name it.

I have heard third-hand about a certain legislator who said he would lie in order to pass scheduling salvia divinorum as an illegal drug. He was prejudiced against the concept of a legal psychedelic. Whether or not it was actually harmful was beside the point. It's a third-hand, circumstantial statement, but is it so hard to imagine? Think about where we have come in the thirty to forty years of psychedelic love. Only ten years ago books on mushrooms and mycology listed the red and white spotted fly agaric toadstool (*amanita muscaria*) as deadly poisonous. Yet, that myth has been dispelled in the 2nd Millennium, as a result of the broad exchange of information by the internet. We now know that eastern European cultures like Estonia hunt the fly agaric for food, and their toxicity when dried or baked is far less than the scary fables once served up in national negative programming (to use the late Dr. John C. Lilly's phrase) propaganda.

Now we have mothers trying to outlaw salvia (with some success) because a son committed suicide, and of course there must be only one reason why a perfectly normal post-adolescent would take his own life: The demon hallucinogen! This is chillingly reminiscent of Art Linkletter's anti-LSD campaign, following his daughter's fall from a balcony. You know as well as I do that when a young person dies, Congressmen are all ears. Nobody has the balls to ask the grieving parent, "What was your role in your child's death?" Is such a question insensitive? Of course, it is. But not asking it is to ignore the chink in the armor of our liberties' enemies. Those liberties, once taken away, tend not to be given back to us.

Parents do what parents have always done when their child is hurting, and that is to shift the burden of guilt elsewhere. In this case, ignorant society blames a substance that is unable to defend itself in a court of law or a congressional hearing. Need I really invoke the hypocrisy of legal depressants like alcohol? Or the use of automobiles and guns as lethal weapons? Or, how about the United States Marine Corps? When all is said and done, how many of the wars in the past 50 years protected American freedoms? Truth is a hard pill to swallow. Salvia divinorum can't speak for itself, so I must speak for it.



*** Ethnopharmacology of Ska María Pastora, Leander J. Valdés III, José Luis Díaz* and Ara G. Paul (Salvia divinorum, Epling and Játiva-M.)** Leander J. Valdés III, José Luis Díaz and Ara G. Paul
College of Pharmacy, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 (U.S.A.)
and Departamento de Neurobiología, Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, Apartado Postal 70228, Ciudad
Universitaria 20, D.F. (México). (Accepted July 10, 1982) [J.
Ethnopharmacology, **7** (1983) 287-312]



Ten Years of Mind Travel

Spring, 1997 (Year 1 E.A.)

The six salvia divinorum plants are potted, and green and growing outside my trailer in a rural hill town of Massachusetts. I have no idea of what they can do for me, or to me. I nibble on some stems. They are lush, succulent, and square, like obese catnip stalks. I am ever so cautious. From what I have read, the trip I can expect will be like a low level magic mushroom trip. Nibbling on some small pieces that I break off, I fool myself into thinking I'm seeing colors or geometric patterns. In actuality, I am not even close to experiencing salvia space.

I have picked a few leaves and dried them in the microwave oven. I made a special smoking pipe from the hollow stalk of a Japanese knotweed, which grows like bamboo. The bowl is a copper elbow, the kind you buy in a hardware store for plumbing. I smoke some harsh hits. There is something very vague happening to me, a very slight roll to my left, in a kind of counter-clockwise spin. That is it. Nothing more to tell at this time. Oh, well.

Fall, 1997 (Year 1 E.A.)

Someone has sent me an ounce of salvia leaf from Florida. This person has a popular—the most popular—web site on entheogenic culture. He is quite gracious. At some point I sent him some amanita mushrooms I picked. I sent samples to three others, also. This online community is rather solicitous, and I have made some good acquaintances.

I sit in my trailer; fill a pipe with some leaf that S_____ has sent. Wow! Bammo! It's unlike anything I have ever known, and I have experienced some of the strongest psychedelics ever made in a laboratory.

When I was a teenager I huffed PAM once or twice. Aerosols are quite a bit different from psychedelics. They mostly put you under, not make you hyper-aware of your immediate environment. The effect of PAM (a cooking oil in an aerosol can) is very powerful, if brief. I was thrown into a great



blackness, with a cosmic propeller whoosh...whoosh...whooshing faster and faster until I either passed out or woke up. Sometimes I went trapezing on blue, violet and red tendrils in the black void of space. This salvia experience came close to those delirient adventures with PAM. Was salvia a delirient, or psychedelic?

And what happened to me just now? My entire being was pulled and kneaded like saltwater taffy. My insides were massaged like pizza dough to my exterior, while my skin was folded back into my vertebrae. I had become a living lava lamp, a viscous glob of protoplasm. My head is rolling backwards, like the tentacles of an octopus curling inward. Yes, octopus, tentacles, this sensation is like my body is turning into writhing octopus tentacles. Even my head, my neck had become a tentacle.

I must let go; I must allow myself to go deep. I could never have imagined this sensation! Is this some kind of lycanthropy? Can I use salvia to shape-shift? I want to go as deep as possible. I will let it do this thing to me, so that I will know. If I must turn into an octopus to learn its secret, then so be it.

I was sitting at my desk. I lived in a trailer at the time, on a remote hilltop. I had just recently become divorced, and committed myself to the pursuit of arcane science. I made my own root beer, wine, hangover tonics, and practiced martial arts and yoga completely undisturbed by society.

Perhaps a little too undisturbed, as I had lost my car, was without work, and had to hide from the landlord when he came looking for rent money. As it turned out, I would not be hiding from him for too much longer. I would be seeking a new home, altogether.

I filled my knotweed pipe's bowl with a thumb full of salvia. I puffed several puffs, and melted into my chair at my desk. I had determined not to waste the experience, but to actually try and make telepathic contact somehow. For the first, and perhaps only time the experience became erotic. I was floating through a gray, pastel space, in which paisley shapes and angelic spirits were flying. I had a vision of a woman used to know. It



seemed she was beckoning me to private intimacy, and I became very horny.

I focused intently on her, and in this state of out of body bliss, we copulated. The physical sensation of the softness of her skin, her round smooth ass, the damp crack of her ass, my penis swelling immeasurably full inside of her was all too real. Afterward I reflected on the use of language to describe such events. We might say, "seemed real," or we might say, "was real." Whatever the language that we decide upon, as a pro-active attempt to self-direct the experience, or a passive visitor with no clear directive, that language decision sets us upon a course of events that determine our growth either as sorcerer or merely a passive observer, a tripper, a stoner.

I would not be a mere stoner. I would become a sorcerer.

"I love you," I said to my woman from the grayish sphere of my mind. "I love you." I said it as fact, as the fact that she was listening and that there was no question about her hearing me.

There was resoluteness to my mental words. My heart ached, because I missed her so. But here in this space unsupported by earth, we were together. It seemed that the mind had, at last, overcome physical limitations of geographical distance. Mind travel. I had not just gone to another place; I had done it with someone I cared about. There was no half-hearted "trying" to communicate. As Yoda said, "There is no *try*, there is only *do*." At least, I think those were Yoda's words.

Only do. No try. Do say to the entities one meets in salvia space. Go forth. There is much to fear, when one is faint-of-heart. There is much to do, when one gets over panic. Panic wastes time. The adventure is much too short to waste precious seconds on panic attacks. It is during the most profound stage of dissociation from the body that the visions are ripe for the plucking, and yet, that is the stage that most corresponds to telepathic breakthrough.



Winter, 1998 (Year 2 E.A.)

I am in my well-lit dining room in Syracuse, New York. A few puffs of leaf, and in my peripheral vision I capture an old and broad woman, of ancient Aztec aspect, sitting in a rocking chair, engaged in some sort of needlework. I call her "Aztec," but she's not entirely human, in ways which are difficult to describe. It has to do with her face, which seems inhumanly large, and ancient; a face engraved like wood bark.

Accompanying her are some younger females. These young women are not Aztec, as the old woman is. Rather, they seem more Anglo-Saxon, like young women one might encounter living on the prairie in the Pioneering days. A long time ago, when I was a little boy, I remember one of the Disneyland exhibits that resembled this experience...or, maybe it was Knott's Berry Farm? Whichever theme park I was at, the display was one of those voyeuristic ones where the audience sat in an auditorium, and a rotating panorama of time passed by. The stage rotated, with the set showing what life was like in America from the age of the pioneers on the prairie, up to our modern times. The experience I was having at the moment was something like that, an intimate, but observational encounter with strangers.

The scene is warm, cheerful and domestic. The women are enjoying an amicable conversation. Yet, they are in my room, my apartment, where the lighting is soft. There are houseplants, and my apartment is clean and cheery. The pleasant vibes are surely related to setting.

I sense good company and security. Do these women know that I am with them, watching and listening? They are not frightened, and neither am I. It all seems too close to this world, separated by the thinnest margin of attention. I wish to return to this company, but it soon slips away. The open-eyed variety of visions does not repeat themselves. Whether this might be a glimpse of the afterlife or the before life, I am encouraged.

The thing I learn about salvia space is its eternalness. By that I mean how the notion of an afterlife is really a return to what we were before we came into this body of ours. Imagine playing a game of masquerade, but at some point during the game, you happened to have forgot you were only the



wearer of the mask, and now you believe you are the character of the mask. Salvia is remembrance of past-life (pre-life) experience, the “who I was before I put the mask on.” It is like coming out of anesthesia, but in reverse.

(Years pass)

September, 2003 (Year 7 E.A.)

I was laid off from my job in April. Not for anything I did or didn't do. Corporate board games. I have mostly gotten over it. I killed some time this past weekend visiting the Town of Ithaca, New York, a hip, artsy little college town. There was a head shop on the concourse, with an advertisement for salvia in its window. These are obviously new times. The owner showed me three different varieties of extract, color-coded by strength: Green, Yellow and Red. Considering my budget, I sprung for a package of the yellow.

Daytime, in my study, sitting in a comfortable chair. The window behind me is open; I blow out my hit. Looking down at the wooden floor, I stare at a white soapstone Chinese dragon I sometimes use as a bookend. The dragon comes to life. It gives birth to a tessellated stream of basilisks, resembling something out of an M.C. Escher drawing. I have opened a psychic doorway to hell, out of which the basilisks come, but were supposed to stay contained. They are entities of evil that do not belong in this world, streaming forth by the thousands; millions. It is a dense congestion of streaming reptiles, like a fishing boat's net full of live herring. But these are not captured food; they rupture forth from the realm of the dragon. It is my world that is at risk. I decide I had better wake out of this trance to stop the invasion.

(Years pass)

July 28, 2006 (Year 9 E.A.)

Today I received an illustrious package from the _____. What great fortune. I will have to send J____ a huge thanks. The merchandise is quite assorted, considering that I paid \$20 for one package. This vendor color-codes their extractions. Yellow and green are mild; then red, and then



purple...Tonight! But first, I must completely and wholeheartedly immerse myself in this work of the day.

A July night, 2006

A small pinch of the red-coded extraction goes into my pipe. I took a large, full hit. It is very foggy outside. I release a billow of smoke. I pull the sliding door closed while I still have my senses, and those don't remain with me for very long. The vortex of salvia space whirls around me in a counterclockwise direction, and I barely make it to a love chair where I collapse. My original intent was to fall into the sofa, but I never made it there.

I am utterly immobile for...how long, really? Can it have been 20 minutes, or was it a much shorter time? I cannot believe how paralyzed I was (was, because I write this long after the actual experience). Again, I forgot how to breathe. I don't know what contortions my body flopped into as it fell onto the loveseat. My goal was a leather couch, but I didn't make it there until several minutes later.

The least disturbances in one's environment becoming extremely annoying. There was an apartment downstairs, where lived an elderly woman. I could hear her talking, even opening and closing her own patio door. She was talking to her daughter, I believe. Then I heard her in the hallway. She decided to do the laundry on a Saturday night. Would she come upstairs and knock on the door, asking for sugar? This bothered me to no end. I thought I should have to pretend not to hear her, if she did. Surely there was no way for her to know I was lying in a semi-coma on the love chair in the living room. With salvia, though, and this was not the first time, nor would it be the last, you have this weird sensation that everybody out there knows exactly what you are doing at that moment. The illusion of privacy that is the backbone of our psychic security is unmasked.

At one point, as I lie on the love chair, I thought I heard her say something like, "Do you smell that?" But, I might have only imagined someone saying that. When I was lying under the stars at a Phish concert in



New York, initiating a friend to the wonders of salvia, one of the nearby campers also made a comment on a particular stink, meaning the smell of salvia smoke. So used to the smell of cannabis and tobacco are we, and so keen is the sense of smell to unfamiliar aromas.

For the first time, and the only time, I blacked out. By blacked out, I don't mean "without memory," although that comes close to the mark. It was more like my spirit went to a place where time and relativity and grammar were not permitted. This was not the same as being nowhere. It was definitely somewhere. Unfortunately, that somewhere was a secret, even to me, the maker of the place. I wish I could put something of this into words. I underestimated the potential strength of a salvia divinorum extraction. Am I bold enough to even try the purple blend, after what I had just gone through?

I was house-sitting for a friend who had gone south for the winter. The house was an enormous log cabin, the highest residence in the state, with a four-state view. The east-facing vista was a spectacular valley view.

After some minutes, and I don't know whether that was five minutes or fifteen, I forced myself to crawl to the leather upholstered sofa, which provided me with ample legroom.

That was much more relaxed, even though my head seemed pinned to the sofa, and despite my inability to crawl, I was yet paralyzed for the most part. I stared at an enormous hemlock log that supported the 25-foot cathedral ceiling. Sentient beings, which have popularly come to be known as "elves" were peering out of the log. It was as if the log was a metropolis of such creatures, and every slight whirling design of wood grain was in reality a separate creature. They did not speak to me, but they did look at me.

I wondered for the first time if these were what were meant by elemental spirits. Indeed, "elementals" seems to me a more appropriate labeling than elves. The elementals are everywhere. Only in fairy tales and witch's fables, medieval fantasy, do we read about elementals. But under the experience of salvia, we see exactly what is meant by the elemental. It isn't just that a



clock, an iron pot or knick-knack takes the form of an elemental being. It's more than that, because such inanimate objects are bursting with sentient intelligence, multiple beings vying for shared space. Leafs become elementals, but the patterns formed by intersecting leaves also become elementals.

The elemental would be an important motif in my apprenticeship to salvia. I would learn to petition them to effect meaningful and substantial changes to my life, the world of consensual reality, during the 99.99999999% of the time I was not traveling in salvia space.

I determined to use this herb to make me happy, wealthy, and powerful. Not just material wealth and power, but the age of following the gods was over with the death of the Piscean Era. This was the new era, the Age of Aquarius, when men would themselves realize their god nature. At once I realized that this was the Savior Jesus Christ's message: "Are ye not like gods?" Yes! Yes, Jesus, thank you for making it all so clear now.

Many who came after you perverted your message, by projecting their own ideology onto you. Grafters, they did not understand your gift of godhood. They thought you were here to tell us, "same old, same old," and so it was business as usual. But, this was not business as usual. This was something new and different from what we had been told before.

A new covenant, a covenant with the divine self. But it would take another 2,000 years for that realization to gel. Humankind had hitherto been bound to subservience under man-hating gods. Now, having realized my own god nature, those same gods had better watch out for themselves. I'm not just one of them, I'm better than one of them, and I'm pissed!

It occurred to me just how heretical a concept I was now entertaining. And yet, heretic is simply what happens when one splits from convention. I would now officially split from conventional wisdom, which I recognized as not at all wise.

Another thing that vexed me was the utter misuse of language in this modern age. Crusaders would read this and proclaim to their legislators, Elk Fraternities and the PTA, "See! See this, this drug turns our youth away



from God, and they turn to Satan!" Yet, who are these liars, these fanatical Christian types who have absolutely no respect for the separation of church and state, and do not respect the right of worship, "every man according to his conscience"?

Do not be fooled by these liars who would keep us enslaved to Mammon, subservient to Yaldabaoth, Supreme Archon of the corporate state. Christian morality is neither Christian, nor is it moral. They lie.

July 29

Lying down in the dark is a much different affair from being in the light. The music and the colors soon overtake me. If I had a marimba and a drum I could reproduce the continuous, regular melody and rhythm I hear in my mind. The solid, cartoon colors envelop me in complete animated places. I am with talking serpents. There is a blue, horned nymph whose form flows with the background in which she stands.

It takes you; you do not take it. Be not afraid. Once taken, she will not let go until she is ready. You will be taken, as on a cosmic trapeze, in a great paper-doll cutout, of purple fire, a cosmic snowflake pattern. The blackness of outer space.

The being speaks to me, "We have you now...We control you now..." But, I myself go... Watch the beings...Listen to the beings...and ask them, "I will take control, I will take control..." Now, beware, you have not been returned to *terra cognita*. You are still of their world, and it is wholly different from this world. It is like being in outer space, where beings like totem poles are locked in a network grid pattern, and then you become one of them. If some say, "The music is like a woman singing in Arabic, surely the Arabic mystics knew of this state," I say, that they did not know, not even close. Some might say, "well, surely the Africans knew, it is in their music." I can say, definitely not. No group of people knew at all, except for those mind scientists who had access to this plant in her native mountains of Mexico. Some might say, "She is like a mild experience of mushrooms," and I



answer they are completely wrong, completely without the least bit of knowing.

Few, very few are ready for her. She is far beyond compare, beyond these feeble words. She is complete vision. Her world is peopled with beings who speak, beings of color, purple flame, intense licking colors, and a continuous musical phrase, repetitive but pleasant. It is so clear, so profound. You will think you are dead. You will come to accept your death. You will ask, "Am I dead?" and it will be hard for you to know that your body of clay lies yet on its bed.

When you visit your world, you realize how false are the religions of men, how weak is his prophesy, how bland his vision. Only the deep psychedelic does not fail to impress. All else is pale. All else has lost its deepest meaning. You will lose the great words of man, for they are many, but they touch not. They barely reach. The prophecies of man cannot come close. Though many words he tries, his is a weak and pale vision.

You can take your Bible and your Koran with their silly pedantry, your laws of Moses that trick the unknowing, simple masses into a dreamless sleep.

Here is a world startling in composition. Exactly the opposite of drunkenness, it is, in fact, extremely lucid. It is, in fact, clear and intelligent. The color is bright and contrasting, like Yuri Shakov's tarot card paintings.

There are artists who come close to capturing its essence. It is not entirely beyond description. However, it will never be truly described, and far less by a one who has not puffed that cosmic smoke.

Do not be fooled by pretenders. One who has not partaken will never, never come close to knowing.

The salvia world is distinctly geometric. Beings have a fantasy form. Sometimes they are elongated, like mushroom stems, with dour faces. The way they interlock is a regularly recurring theme. When you cut out paper dolls or paper snowflakes that is a primitive example of how salvia space geometry looks. Now, imagine those snowflake and paper doll figures in



three-dimensional form. Then, imagine that they are gigantic, and that you have become one of them.

The world is so removed from our world on this side of the veil that there is a minute of panic. I remember thinking, "what if I don't go back?" This panic is exacerbated by a sense of forgetting how to breathe. I actually wondered if my breathing had stopped. There is some sense of the world you were in before entering the new one. Actually, it is less sensation than it is dim memory.

Salvia is such a potent hallucinogen, and so vivid is its own peculiar scenery that I am certain it must not be revealed to any but the strong willed. Under no circumstances should one be engaged in any activity that requires their attention. Needless to say, this includes driving a car, or bicycle, and the operation of any kind of machinery whatsoever. In fact, you will be lying down somewhere completely comfortable, absolutely free from distraction. If in a group, make sure you are among supportive friends with whom you feel a sense of safety and comfort.

So much has already been written about the other psychedelics, natural and synthetic, that I have no intention of reproducing any of that here. Beginning with Albert Hoffman's excursion into the world of LSD-25, and Aldous Huxley's cleansing of the Doors of Perception with mescaline, the literature leading up to and surpassing Timothy Leary is abundant. Anyway, those substances simply don't apply to salvia divinorum. It is qualitatively a different trip.

On one occasion I did try psilocybe mushrooms and salvia. It was very intense. Not only was I swinging through the universe connected to the great living snowflake, which I have thus far been repeatedly trying to describe, (and which I shall repeatedly continue trying to describe), but I also stepped into a mirror on my wall.

This mirror was an artwork I had created, one of my very first with polymer clay, and it had at least two fantasy trees on it, with mushrooms and other fantastic shapes to form something like a peaceful nature scene.



As I stared into the mirror, lying down, of course, so that I could not see the reflection of my own face, I was soon transported into the mirror. I followed a pair of frolicking witches over the hill in the mirror. The hill was a grassy, peaceful knoll. I heard the witches say something like, "This way to Tim-a-La," well, that wasn't exactly what they said. The memories of the words are difficult to keep, but the vision is indelibly etched in memory.

The remarkable thing about this adventure was my ability to abandon my inhibitions. I had suffered a horribly frightening LSD trip when I was 21, and swore off all hallucinogens for many years. My mistake then was in dosage and time of day. As the decades rolled by, I came to certain insights that helped me overcome my fear of being completely and irrevocably overwhelmed in hallucinogen space.

This time I decided to simply let go, and release my ego to wherever the spirit would take me. I was lying on my futon; the low candlelight cast a golden hue. My Syracuse apartment was austere, the walls a clean white with dark, forest green Venetian blinds. It was a very dignified setting to conduct any religious ritual.

More than a lack of fear, I was genuinely eager to pursue the furthest reaches of astral space. To anyone who partakes of salvia, I recommend complete abandon of fear and a devoted willingness to go wherever it takes you. Anxiety is self-reinforced. It can be relaxed, like a muscle. A kernel of ego is strapped to consciousness like the people movers in a theme park ride. In terms of minutes the trip is short. You are bound to return fully conscious and well. Even under the influence of psilocybe, which is by no



Figure 1 This is an actual photograph of the mirror I psychically entered while tripping on a combination of mushrooms and salvia.



means of brief duration, after the salvia wore off, the remaining psilocybe effects were extremely mellow.

As I peaked on the mushrooms, I took one large lungful of salvia smoke, and released it. As soon as I could, I laid on my futon and closed my eyes. I was ejected into a black infinity, where there were no planets and no stars. This is the substrate where the human spirit templates are kept, like a fathomless suspension solution. Each cross weave in the giant net was really a being, a human being. Each one was identical to the ones above it and below it. I was hurtling towards the netting, while a part of me feared losing my individuality and, ironically, my connection to the interdependency of humanity. For, though each being was linked like paper doll cutouts, hand to foot, each was also isolated, by itself, in the blackest reaches of space.

Shifting ground

If I were to die during a salvia trip, would I want the afterlife to be the same as that which I experience under her influence? No, I am certain I would not. While in no way hellish, it is neither familiar nor congenial. There is a contradiction here, as I often speak of its "familiarity." But, it is a world of shifting ground, unlike when I return to my body. If I were dead, I would hope to rejoin some of those I loved (and hope to never see again those I didn't love!).

The world of salvia offers no such consolation. It is singularly impersonal, especially so in its deepest regions. These are shamanic forays where one should not stay. You are venturing into a domain of demi-gods and elemental spirits, like scuba diving into the world of fish and coral, where none who are not evolved for that environment should remain. It might be that this is the world of the afterlife. I hope it isn't, but who can guarantee?

Life allows us a lot of familiarity and control. We stand up when we choose; we walk when and where we wish to walk. We live under the light of the sun, and even the stars of the night sky are predictable. Our world is mostly fixed in form, the explanations of quantum physics notwithstanding.



The sky is exactly where it should be. Its color is blue, clouds move in it, they are up and we are down. The hills solid and rolling green.

The world of salvia is not in our control. It is as if we were being led or conveyed through it, on a guided tour, like an amusement park funhouse ride, or the Peter Pan ride at Disneyland, or the Monsanto ride that gives us the illusion of shrinking to microscopic size. You can see that such a journey must have a beginning, middle and an end.

Each journey is a story, but one that is never meant to last an eternity.

This is an exciting time to be a psychedelic shaman in the United States. But the political winds forever coil restrictions in relentless oppression. I pray that plants themselves will not be the victims of capitalist repression. Civil liberties are endangered in the west, and that is a whole topic of interest that warrants its own journal. And yet, repression of altered consciousness is a serious breach of civil liberties in our time. It is the result of ignorant politicians who turn specious anecdote to their own vote-getting, superficial and provincial views on drugs, and these are compounded by irresponsible use by immature, ill-prepared and undereducated consumers.

We live in a climate that is generally repressive. Invented wars and terrors are capitalizing methods by which a totalitarian government seeks absolute, unchallenged power. For now, salvia is safely enjoyed underground. Although the herb and plant are perfectly legal at this time, if history is any indicator, we don't have much time.

There are women. They remind me of African tribes women, in sitting positions. Their legs have an interesting mottled design on them. The designs are not so much painted as they are an integral pattern on the skin. It isn't blotchy or diseased, but regular, like tattoos; even more intrinsic than a tattoo. They are very attractive. I hear talking. What words were said, I cannot now remember.



War is an unnatural state for people. It is an aberration with no belonging; no home. But love and sex have belonging; they have a natural position in the human heart. War has no such natural home in the heart; it is an intruder, an invasion of the heart, a usurper of the natural tendencies of the heart.

I have never encountered war in the salvia world. I have never encountered violence. My paranoia is something I brought "through the door" with me; my fears do not belong in salvia space. As I write this thought I also realize it is a lesson in finding peace. We bring our fears with us, wherever we go. When we don't bring our fears with us, then the world we enter is naturally peaceful.

The beings in her world are always in natural contemplation. Perhaps they are the contemplative spirits of my fellow humans, who I don't recognize in their avatar state. To bring harm into the world is not a genuine act of nature. It is a perversion of truth. Natural truth wants serenity.

People look for signs that God exists, that someone in heaven hears their prayers, pleadings, crying. I want to know, do others hear my thoughts? God may be near, or perhaps too far away to care. We will be quickly settled in the knowing that a supernatural ESP exists, where a universal mind accepts our imaginative contributions like a pond accepts old tires and beer bottles.

We would be comfortable and satisfied if communication was possible with people by projecting our thoughts. We could be temporarily at ease by an absence of the Almighty eavesdropping on our thoughts, if we knew that metaphysical truth exists. Yet, don't we want cosmic justice, so that all the silenced voices of the oppressed, and the pain in our hearts, were acknowledged and rectified by a loving God, a personal God?

In this I believe salvia is also a gift, a minor salvation. It is an herb that puts us into contact with alien intelligence, bringing us to them, as it were. The alien beings with whom we communicate, and in turn speak to us, are surprisingly familiar. It is like picking up where we left off last. I am struck by how trivial are our mundane feuds. It lifts us to a new level of parity with



alternate intelligence, the likes of which are impossible to conceive without her.

Verbal fumbling ceases. Words flow correctly, without the impediment of the mouth-system. I am usually quite aphasic, and I attribute that deterioration to years of marijuana smoking. But the salvia space is quite verbal, though my mouth is not moving. Speech is communicated telepathically. Psycholinguists would do well to investigate the formation of grammar by thought alone. Is salvia, physiologically speaking, an indication of what happens in the Wernicke's Area of the brain, apart from the Broca's Area?

Such questions should be answered before the perversion of politics has its way over truth.

Salvia can be a harsh mistress. Marijuana became so addictive to me such that I would smoke it morning, noon and night. In this regard, salvia is a markedly different substance. The seasoned marijuana smoker requires little psychological preparation to imbibe. It can be so casual as to happen practically anywhere, and there was a decade or two when it did. Salvia space is much more difficult to get used to, because the ego is altogether transported to a geography that resists mapping. There is not "part here, part there." I find myself "all the way there."

As it is with other psychedelics, there is a part of the mind that can be described as the "ego examining itself." It asks, "where am I now?" And, "this will all be over in a few minutes." Meanwhile, the visual cortex is witness to an altogether different landscape.

Chicken Coop Travels

I have just returned from an astonishing trip, and I never left the chicken coop. My spirit was wholly gone from these dilapidated surroundings. The chicken coop transformed into another world. All the foliage from the blackberry



canes, which protrude through every crack and window space wore faces on their leaves. The world was so real, I was so immersed in it that for a while I thought I might not return. Again, as it was with other times, I had the sense that I was exposed to the whole world, open for inspection with every sort of intelligence in existence scrutinizing me.

I was sitting in a lawn chair, comfortable throughout the whole adventure. As I came to, beads of sweat were forming around my face and arms, so typical of its aftereffects. Also, the soles of my feet became hypersensitive. The grain patterns on a plywood board I use to gate up one entrance became multicolored. I began to hear the drone of a bumblebee, which I followed like a thread back to the world of sunlight and privacy.

For, the world of salvia is not as private as one might think. There is something disconcertingly exposed about it. It even seems to mark one for attraction to negative forces, along with the positive. Flies and mosquitoes are a nuisance with salvia, where one might hardly notice them otherwise.

*The bumblebee alights in the nape
Of the jewelweed's blossom.
It is a decent fuck in every sense.
To nature, it is sublime.
To children it is but a thing—
Can we say, 'pollination' and not giggle?*

Everything in the chicken coop is tinted red. At one time C_____ had spray-painted the inside for some industrial operation he was doing at the time. The overall redness was accentuated in the journey. It was extremely intense and vivid. My eyes were wide open. Though open, my eyes were not seeing what was there in normal space-time.

As I sit here now, enjoying the perfume of the burning rose incense, the blue sky and subtle white clouds on this August Wednesday morning, and the explosively profuse greenery that literally envelops this chicken coop like a jungle, I am glad to be back. Another thing I am glad about is the peace



and quiet of Wednesday that comes like a trough in a wave, the lull of a busy week. For me, it is the perfect time to enjoy the brief salvia excursion. Especially in summer, when it is warm enough that I don't need extra clothing, but cool enough that the air is not burdensome, and I can live within my own skin without persistent discomfort.

I smoked three bowls full earlier in the morning, and lay my pipe on my bed. But, that was a very superficial meditation. Not so, this time in the chicken coop, after smoking a large pinch of extract. And, though so much of the detail is ever so hard to illuminate with words alone, the faces in the leaves are memorable. The state is most easy to describe when I am on the verge of emerging, when I have one foot in the waking world and one foot in the dreaming. That is when I clearly recognize a "lava flow" of patterns and colors, as I observed in the plywood, and the faces make themselves known. Perhaps the strong visions that occur in the most intense part of the trance are so removed from the structured world in which the written word was invented as to be inherently inaccessible to words. Perhaps what is needed, instead of mere attempts at description is a kind of fantasy fiction, where the reader can recreate the world for himself by putting himself there.

I purchased two ounces of crushed leaf from a Virginia seller. I needed to test it, before providing my consumer feedback. Here I sit again, in my trusty old chicken coop, some minutes past an extraordinarily deep astral journey. I packed my salvia pipe full of leaf, and toked deeply. Unlike the concentrated powders I have been smoking lately, it took me two deep hits to fully consume the bowl's contents.

Almost immediately, I went into the familiar clockwise "twist." Like a corkscrew contortion, to my right and downward, into a screwing torque pattern. I wish these journeys weren't so difficult to recall when I return to my body. One of the first thoughts to come to me was that I had entered so deeply into the salvia world that I might not return. Another thought that



occurred to me was, "what is a 47-year old man doing hiding in a chicken coop?" And yet another thought, "the chicken coop is transparent. Surely other people will come here very soon to say, 'what's wrong with you G____?'"

One more thought I recall was, "the creatures of nature (birds, bees) are going to enter and bite me." There is a definite fear of intrusion by the corporeal world, that the body will be taken advantage of during its momentary lapse of consciousness.

There are no doors in the chicken coop. One wall, the south-facing wall is completely open. An expansive view overlooks a completely wild, uninhabited valley. Blackberry bramble and jewelweed grow very high, up to eight feet high, and actually start to take over the chicken coop. So, even though two sides are wide open, with no doors, the interior is well concealed by profuse vegetation. There were several occasions when people walked right by without the slightest awareness I was sitting inside, reading, writing, meditating, and practicing yoga.

My chair is uncomfortable. I re-meshed it with nylon tubing I pulled from maple trees that had long ago been sapped. My careless brother never bothered to remove the tubing that crisscrossed the floor of the woods. I am wearing shorts, and sharp edged fragments of chair fabric dig into my thighs.

Despite the accompanying annoyance, this journey came with deep visions. I saw elephant like creatures, looking at me. Not quite wild elephants, these were more like quasi-human elephants. They projected a human-like intelligence. The "trip wave" pulled me in, like the undertow of big waves at a beach. In some very general way the experience can be compared to going underneath the ocean in a submarine for a few minutes. But, it's not a shallow undersea ride; it's a deep-sea adventure. I am a completely different personality when I am there. If you have ever had a favorite vacation place where you are incognito, and the locals know you in a way that your neighbors and family in your community back home do not, you can get a sense of that personality change.



August 16, 2006 (Year 9 E.A.) - morning

Truly, there are some environments more private and comfortable than others. I'm becoming more comfortable with her world; she shows me more and more with each excursion. And yet, so many of those thoughts, even in the midst of their thinking are all but impossible to verbalize and remember.

Noises are exceedingly annoying. The telephone is obnoxious. Who relies on the telephone so much that they have to call me just to know if I'm here? I stay in a house which is called by its mistress a *retreat*. Yet, there is little retreatful about it if I am being pestered at regular intervals. The road traffic is relentless. At night, there are obnoxious spotlights positioned around the front yard that prevent me from seeing the stars. An absurdly paranoid security system announces danger through the voice of a preposterous faux-female enunciator. Here I sit, in the highest house in these hills, with a four state view, but with a sad disconnection from the nature it supplanted when it was built only a few years ago.

This complaint of mine might seem unrelated to a journal on the exploration of salvia space, but I know it is essential. The fullest appreciation of this singularly internal event is only possible when conditions outside are comfortable and peaceful. Without comfort and peace, the distractions of the artificial world detract from my enjoyment. Like an herb whose medicinal value is indicated by its relative sweetness or pungency, so too are the therapeutic properties of the salvia experience in proportion to its enjoyableness.

One of the character building (rebuilding?) aspects of coming to know salvia is how we grow in touch with who we really are as a person. We stop lying to ourselves; likes and dislikes are open for honest inspection. I now discern the influence of dogma and enslavement. I am learning to assert my true personality with salvia: A "me" that has for so long been obscured under the timidity of being stoned for years and years.



"Salvia is for people who can't get reefer," a friend once assured me. I know different. Salvia is the intelligent man's stimulant. Reefer is the opiate of the masses. It is an elitist's herb, and I have become guardedly elitist about it. In fact, I no longer share it with the people I used to smoke with. They don't understand. One had a negative experience. It should be noted that the person called it "evil," but he also had a bad accident only a couple of years before, and during his coma, he was also in a hellish place. I believe that salvia gives us our essential self. If it is evil and blackness in your heart, it is a black and evil place where she takes you. It is your place.

Cocaine was once called a drug for the elite, but it was really a drug for the rich. Salvia divinorum is very cheap; people give it away. Yet, it can only be truly regarded with respect and admiration by the few.

She is best kept secret by the initiates, those who seek heaven within (as opposed to the poor fellow who found only hell). It will not make you a better husband, a better worker, or a more productive member of the social order. It will bring you into contact with the realm of the soul. It is a soul-herb.

Saturday, August 26

I thought I should update this journal, even though it has been at least two weeks since my last journey through the cosmic wormhole. Unlike marijuana, which was for me so habitual that when available I could not refrain from smoking it, salvia is available to me in plentitude, but I only rarely use it.

Salvia is certainly not addictive, not in the way marijuana is, or alcohol. It has been three weeks since I've ventured into salvia space. I don't write this because my mind is plagued with "should I, shouldn't I." Other things take precedent, and each event is its own essay. I'm not writing because of how much I miss it, but because keeping this journal liquid requires a bit of effort on my part. If I let dust gather, I may forget about it altogether.

Visions cannot be fully explored in a day or two, and neither can dreams. Some sound or smell or word reminds us of a dream segment we had



altogether forgotten, and that is the way it is with the salvia dream. These descriptions take time to digest.

I return to who I am today, and if I have fully explored visions seen and lessons learned from my last adventure, I find that my "ordinary" state is still full with thought and potency.

However, today I have the quiet opportunity to hang out in the chicken coop, where I may delight in some provocative exploration.

Chicken Coop Wednesday

Does it seem like other people are watching while you trip? Maybe the whole world? It's like the walls roll back, revealing my pathetic body sitting in a chair, like a sand crab exposed on the beach when the wave ebbs.

Time? Three-quarters of a stick of incense. How is it that this herb can make this filthy, decrepit chicken coop into a splendid, painted thing of beauty? It brought me to the land of sunshine, where good thoughts, good vibrations rule. There is life there. A good and kind life.

Buckets of sweat drench my face. As I emerge thoughts about what it would be like to have my head kicked in trouble me. It's not so much in the actual doing of it as it is an awareness of the senseless violence. Is it an evil thought? Or am I being sensitive to the evil in other violent people? I believe I'm picking up this violence that circulates through the hearts of men. I don't like it one bit. I think about that National Geographic documentary where karate men are measuring their punch force, and I think, "who cares?"

Who should care that a man can destroy with his hands? At what point in the development of civilization did destruction become a benchmark of accomplishment? As of this very session, I do not care for violence; it disgusts me. But then, more questions come to me, like, "what do I care about?" One of the first answers to come to me was, "I care about thoughts."

Psychedelics cannot be separated from the religious experience. The salvia journey is as natural as that which comes before, and that which



comes afterward. In Dion Fortune's "The Mystical Qabbalah," The Three Supernals, paragraph 29:

"Anyone who is familiar with practical mysticism knows that there are three paths of superconsciousness—devotional mysticism, which correlates with Tiphareth; nature mysticism, of the inebriating Dionysian Type, which equates with the Venus Sphere of Netzach; and intellectual mysticism of the occult type, which equates with Hod, the Sphere of Thoth, Lord of Magic."

What we should come to understand about salvia space is that it belongs to the second type, the nature-mystical, being ruled by the Dionysian "Venus Sphere of Netzach." I regard without argument that the experience is one of inebriation, even a kind of delirium, only because function on a voluntary motor level ceases. Delirium connotes certain pejoratives, like sniffing airplane glue. This might be an unfortunate casualty of calling salvia a deliriant. Calling it a hallucinogen, though, has its own problems.

For all their differences, the classical hallucinogens like LSD, mescaline and psilocybin share a great deal of similarity. For one thing, they are highly exogenous, meaning that the psychonaut who uses them can continue to operate in the moral, social realm. Salvia, by sharp contrast is entirely internal. One cannot drive a car, or order a hamburger, let's say, as one could conceivably do quite well under the influence of the hallucinogens.

So, for those of us who wish to be dedicated to the nature mysticism, we must be content to accept that we seek direct visions using the tools available in nature, i.e. the hallucinogens, and all the honor due our plant allies. But, for those of us inclined to study the written words of the Western Mystery traditions, an eclectic new compound form of mystical experience is born out of the synthesis with the other two forms. The symbolic magic of intellectual occultism, which may be an incorporation of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (Otz Chiim), or the Masonic symbols of which I honestly know little about, or secret Rosicrucian knowledge, or the mythologies up to, but not restricted to the Greek and Roman mythologies (symbol over devotional) and the Gnostic cosmology, with its Barbelo, Sophia, Adam, Seth, Archons



and Yaldabaoth. It would seem that if we could actually visit those realms that we only intellectualize about otherwise, then wouldn't that make the spheres we visit tangible as well as poetic?

Why should we not add to the devotional, like the Sufi mystic who dances for the love of Allah, or the Christian and Jewish prayers, fixing the third eye on the glory of the Almighty? To what proportion we make magic with our symbolic understanding, and experience the spheres and angels directly with our plant allies' help, and pray or dance for the glory of our being, in reverent communion or even conjugation with the Divine cannot be decreed except by each and every willing heart. Praises be to religious freedom! For it has enabled us to overcome the boundaries that our law-encumbered ancestors lost life and liberty over. I liberate myself from false gods and meaningless dogma. A magician, a shaman and a congregant, may I enjoy—yes, enjoy—the freedom to be each one, and worship as my conscience knows better than what temporal violence would upon force upon my will.

Friday, September 8, 2006 (Year 9 E.A.)

Can anyone truly say where they've been, following a salvia trip? As I once again entered her realm (and I no longer understand why I continue to refer to the spirit in the feminine) this question perplexed me, for even on its distant ground, I knew not where I was, so how much less would I know of it when I returned?

Rainbow region, a train was entering it. The vagina was cosmic. It was attended by a city of beings.

Long, spider crab fingers and hands, interlocked. Snakeskin covered, rotating upon other snakeskin covered spider crab fingers, like Tinker toy Ferris wheels.

She is strange, but not a stranger. The world where I go is like death, but not in the sense of oblivion and nothingness. It is something, it is a location, just not one I can find on a map.



I had a vision of the poor Korean boy as he was being executed, beheaded in Iraq by those abominable beasts who can hardly be called human. I saw his face being shoved into the floor, felt the knife for him as it carved into his neck without retreat. These are the salvia visions I could do without. I don't choose them, they choose me to watch. For what purpose? To do what I can so that such barbarity is diminished in the world of the living.

Violence of this sort is repulsive to me. I rethink my interest in the martial arts; I understand better from the victim's point of view. I have the ability to reject what abhors me.

May 7, 2007

Here is the ultimate domain, where the trees say, "everything here is alive," and indeed, it is true. There is no empty space; the local universe is rippling in a rainbow colored current, and the trees, branches, rocks—everything—calls me by name. I am immersed in familiarity, the swirling nebulae of the forest is so intimately involved with my thought that the flies avoid harassing me, because I do not perceive insects as a threat. Indeed, the whole natural world about me relents, and hostility ceases to be a primary mandate. When all the world comes to life, and its innate intelligent spirits speak, the world of benign harmony takes over reality for a little while.

An Excursion Into the Woods, I

It is May, and I sit upon a cushiony mound of moss in the woods. There is a persistent breeze that keeps my skin at exactly the right temperature. In direct sun, it is almost hot, but here in the shady woods I neither chill nor sweat.

The perfect day, in a trusted spot where no human presence interrupts my revery. What does it say for the human species when they, of whom I am one, are the only spirits I fear? What reflection on my own kind that all



the threat of the universe is absent, where my seat is the only fingerprint of humankind?

Let me pray:

“My God, find my prayer
Acceptable to Thee,
Bring my eyes into your Light,
That my spirit may be guided,
And become a beacon to
The blind that stumble in darkness.
Let my feet not sink in the chaos
Of matter,
But let me raise the Holy Spark
In all Creation,
And assemble in Heaven’s Oneness.”

There are two ways to experience her divine visions in the light of day: When the eyes are closed, the traveler tumbles forth into the unknown, in free fall, wrapped in a layered thickness of astral fluid. In the world of salvia space there is no absence of being, no vacuity or void. Color, texture, and substance are omnipresent.

With the eyes open a wholly different experience ensues. Trees and branches curve inward, forming a tunnel, where my ego resides for a time. There seems to be sentience to everything, not just the trees, but even their branches talk to me. The spirits in the objective environment speak to me in a personal, intimate sense, as if they have known me in eternity, and that familiarity is a given.

It is startling to me; it’s more like forgotten old friends, with whom we rejoin for a time. Smoking her in the woods on a clear, warm day is safest.



An Excursion Into the Woods, II

My preference of terms today is meditation. The salvia meditation. It is a trip into the astral universe. The transition happens very quickly, but seamlessly. I realize how overused is the word “astral,” but I have considered the proper terminology in which to place the salvia meditation, continuing to think on it even now. It is a place with definite reference points to our contemporaneous universe. It is like stepping into another room for a bit, one with its own paint color and decorations, where its own private party is going on, a party that has no interest in the other parties simultaneously taking place in other rooms.

When I sit in a favored spot (Blessed am I, the King of the Universe has seen fit to give this beauty to me) I look out through a mingling of leaves, like precise emeralds, seeing the hills beyond the valley, because I am high up on a hill top, with the azure mantle of the sky framing all—and the spirit takes me in, envelopes me completely, wrapping me soul inward to this temporary place.

The spirits of the trees begin to speak to me all at once, telepathically, by the hundreds, thousands, as if every leaf were its own face, saying, “Come in, come in...”

Suddenly I feel very exposed. It is the most unusual of circumstances to be deep in the woods, where the probability of being happened upon by another person is less than slight, it almost never happens. Yet, here I sit, feeling open and exposed as if the whole world knows I am sitting there in a salvia trance, saying, “G____, what are you doing there?”

But, guess what? It is not my family or associates who are watching me, it is the trees, and the sentient elementals of the salvia universe. I am on their planet, and their eyes are on me, their voices loud, if only in my mind, but not in my ear.

The journey is usually all too brief. I have barely enough time to acquaint myself with these beings, though not for lack of trying, when the sensations of the contemporaneous world play in my ears (the crackling twigs), or the surface of my skin (a cool breeze racing behind me).



As I emerge from the visit to this other strange room, I am asking questions of myself and my beliefs. So much of what we believe is ridiculously contrived in the face of these stunning visions.

The salvia meditation, I cannot say this enough, has a distinct familiarity, as if it was a world we dipped into in our souls long ago, and forgot about. It is "soul home," the place we return to at the end of time. It is the place we came from at the beginning of time. Its confirmed existence gives me hope and faith, not in the Son of Man, but that all living creatures are of one life.

July 10, 2007 (Year 7 E.A.)

The world was, once again, familiar, but only on an emotional déjà vu level. Visually, we could only just barely begin to reference the images seen to those of this agreed upon dream outside of dreamland.

There were dreamlike structures of alternating beige and green. Sometimes the beige was more of a pinkish tint, other times more like an orange. Then, there were the "people."

There was a female form. Psychedelic consensus has taken to calling these anthro-gynomorphs "elves." I think the term fairy would likewise work, especially as I have seen fairies in their own world. Either way, who knows what such beings would choose to call themselves, if asked?

These elves tend to be multicolored, with a variety of patterns, and shaped differently, as if there were a variety of species. On today's trip, there was such a woman, and a man. The man, and all his surroundings were of the orange-beige/green banding pattern.

This was a daytime excursion. Day trips have a different light about them, but are every bit as luminous as the nighttime visions.



I was in the land of the Elephant People. They seemed to be a streamlined hybrid species of human and elephant. Their dorsal side was charcoal colored, while their ventral sides were a salmon pink. They wore silk clothes with gold brocade, like Chinese clothes.

The one elephant man I saw wore black silk, with a gold-trimmed Nehru collar.

Sorcery

I have a friend who uses salvia because with it he gains access to the fount of creativity. I would even call him "hypergraphic," because his writing tends toward the incessantly long-winded.

This journal isn't meant to be an unbearable tome, a thoughtless regurgitation of free association. It does require a bit of digestion, however. Although I started out with no thought about writing for anything but my own pleasure, the truth is this manuscript already has an audience besides myself. I want to capture the salient points of select experiences, and apologize if some are more boring than others.

My friend D_ and myself differ according to purpose. There was a time when the adventure in and of itself was sufficient to justify using the leaf. As I studied my psychonautic adventures, I came to realize this could be a tool for other purposes. I sought ways of changing or manipulating my corporeal world by the activities in the astral.

Pick a thing you want to change, anything. It could be wealth, love, a successful venture, or even hate.

As I already mentioned, I once used salvia to gain entry into the very mind-space of a woman miles away to communicate with her telepathically. She was halfway around the world, in fact.

Recently I've considered the dark side of salvia sorcery. Not to put too fine a point on it, I was given knowledge about how to assassinate at a distance. It seemed to me there might be two ways I should go about this. One was to enter the astral sphere, which is common to all of creation. That



means I can also step into your astral space just as surely as you can step into mine. In fact, there is no "mine" or "yours," the astral being the Collective Conscious in its most literal sense. If I can overpower you there, it would be a clean crime, a deed without fingerprints.

The other way might be to form spirit alliances that would act in proxy on my behalf.

Of course, for this idea to even have occurred to me at all must mean that there is someone out there who has incited reasons for my wanting them dead. Is it really so strange that a monk should consider the forces of darkness, as well as the light?

My primary journey into Gnosticism began with a dim understanding of the workings of the universe. When I was a teenager, I prayed to Jesus to help me quit smoking cigarettes, or that a certain young girl should like me, or that I should acquire some toy. My understanding was a quagmire of improbable and ridiculous, which is how I would sum up the literal sense of most religions, especially the Christian religion.

I was in fear of the Christian God, always looking down upon me, scolding. At some brave point I learned to recognize Him as a projection of social programming. Jesus, if there ever was a Jesus, died like all men. The Gnostic doesn't worship Jesus of the cross. The cross is a symbol of torture and execution. I would no more hang about my neck a golden crucifix than I would wear a miniature gallows or Guillotine. We interpret the Teachings as ways to elevate our spirit to its divine origins. In short, we are imprisoned gods, bound by muscle and skeleton.

The Gnostic desires illumination, enlightenment. Doing "good deeds" so that we will find favor with Jesus, who will then select us to be with Him in heaven is a contrived and false premise for conducting life. The underlying morality of "Do unto others as ye would be done by" is a human code of conduct. It has reappeared in other cultures, not only Christianity. Being universal and secular, it stands to reason that Christians have yet again



falsely assumed there are particular laws which came into existence with the ministry of Christ.

What Christ means to the Gnostic is "Are ye not also gods?" He was a man who taught that divine nature is in all of us, and to remember this divine nature is to see our supernatural being without the deception of the layers of paint that color our soul.

Those layers of paint were put there by a demi-god, the world-creator Yaldabaoth.

Now, Yaldabaoth is not quite like the devil you learned about in Sunday school. There is an eternal intelligence far beyond and above our puny perceptive ability. If one was bigger than the universe, might one see the myriad galaxies as but molecules of a single cell of an unimaginably greater being?

This Yaldabaoth is an offspring of the infinite intelligence. Yet, he himself is not infinite. The universe is his plaything, his making. He formed living organisms from the clay of the earth, and infused into us the breath of soul. When the body returns to the ground, the soul should return to the original source, and back home we go.

Yaldabaoth is not essentially evil, but is minor. If we do not find favor with Yaldabaoth, life can be dreadful. What he favors are individuals that put their faith and ambition in serving him and his world of clay. There are those to whom good fortunes seem to come easily. Wine, women and wealth. Things. Cars, castles, and a carefree life. More things. These are people who have lost their soul identity. They have fallen under the spell of Yaldabaoth's glittering charms, and will probably not become free at the time of body death, but return to the charms that have attached them to the world of things like chains.

The Gnostic seeks to free himself of these chains, and so refuses the attractions of wealth and success. The spirit of the Gnostic is free to pursue other worlds. The mind of the Gnostic is directed by his will. He traverses the three worlds of the Tree of Life by willing the mind to ascend or descend, or even move laterally. For years I did not understand Castaneda's



"assemblage point" and "luminous egg" or cocoon, where moving the assemblage point means a change of perception that is literally equal to creating or inhabiting new worlds. The concept of shifting the assemblage point is patently clear to me these days. It is what happens when I enter salvia space, and new worlds, different worlds, manifest themselves.

Some might dismiss these shifts of the assemblage point as mere hallucination, superficial cartoons that amuse but lack fixture in time and space. But I see now that salvia visions occupy their own time and space. And still, they are not heavenly visions. The astral and the heavenly are at two different places on the Tree of Life. The astral universe is "shared mind." It is where Yaldabaoth is, from the outside, looking in to his universe of creation.

It is as the painter painting on his canvas, or a potter shaping the clay on his wheel. In each case, he stands on the outside, looking into his canvas, or looking in to the space he shapes into the vessel on his potter's wheel. When we shift our assemblage point into salvia space, we have ventured outside of our normal location on canvas or potter's wheel, and roam around the luminous night of Yaldabaoth's lonely habitation. I say lonely because, although populated with millions of spirits, they are preoccupied with themselves. The trick of the salvia sorcerer is to break into a communication with a spirit.

And, not just any spirit, but a benevolent spirit...benevolent to ourselves, at any rate.

One of the spirit types is what I call "The Guide." For myself, that is always a male gendered spirit that takes a recognizably human form. Often, this spirit is more of an audible entity that remains off to the side, unseen. The guide will say things like, "Here he is, come in, come in." The party host or maitre 'd.

A good place to start making allies in salvia space is The Guide. But, would the guide kill somebody for you? Would a party host kill another guest for you? Probably not. What he can do is introduce you to other members of the party—those strange, auto-illuminated, self-involved entities open to



examination in their dark cages like house of horror menageries. There, arbiters of sex, interspecies communication, love, health and even death wile away eternity like bored gods on Mount Olympus.

This chapter begins with a note about someone who connects with the creative source. I have an epiphany I wish to share about the word "Creator," as that Supreme Intelligence we pray to. It has come to be debased, simply the name of an imaginary man who is much bigger than ourselves. In fact, the name Creator beautifully describes what is going on when we connect to that originating fountain of creation within us. Creator is not an angry, wizened old man. Creator is a never-ending fountain of renewal. When we beseech Creator, we are asking to be intellectually and physically renewed.

Renewal must be the first, most basic kind of magic we should attempt. This is because things go wrong. The body breaks. The mind breaks. The spirit breaks. Confusion, ignorance, domination and disease are all effects of being broken somehow. But, do we stay broken, like an old bicycle, or can we fix ourselves? And, who is doing the fixing, anyway?

It is understandable that we implore the Creator using anthropomorphic terms. By forming an image of the Creative Source in human-like terms, and speaking to this as if it were one of us, we establish a kind of protocol, which hopefully translates into two-way communication.

Now, there is another way. A prayer is also a spell. But, prayer suggests an asking by words. There is something beyond words, however, that is rarely understood. Form an image of the creation you wish for. Make prayer to the Creator for the necessary thing, and then smoke the salvia. As you enter into salvia space, don't worry about the confusing visions and entities that are guiding you inward.

On a purely unconscious level our wish has been sealed and delivered. Again on an unconscious level delivery has been made by the Inner Mercury to the Entity-in-Charge, the Guide. Be assured the Guide will convey your sealed wish to the "proper authority." Depending upon the nature of the wish, the Guide might awaken one of the dreaming totem pole creatures, which will let you into their own dream for answers to the future or past.



Or, an independent entity, perhaps a fire warrior or air sylph will take charge of the cause, if it is an action which needs influence over the lives of other humans.

In the narrow scheme of things people are only aware of the surface activity of their interactions. It is stimulus-response, call and answer. Politics, nation building, public education all look like a “black box” to us. We put something in, and something comes out. What takes place inside the box is neither seen nor understood.

Yet, with salvia, something unique to our history is happening. For whatever reason, Creator entrusted this strange and powerful plant to a very small number of people in an extreme limb of the world. Salvia not only gives us a vision of what is inside the black box of the Collective Conscious, but may also throw us squarely into the center of this black box.

Somewhere, a man wants to build a dam, a new electrical generating plant, and a whole economy grows around that idea, and wars, and Presidents and Congressmen and armies are accreted around that idea. Once the wheels of an idea are in motion, it would seem that no one man can stop the dynamic reciprocating forces that build and destroy such ideas.

All of these ideas and actions have their origins, however, their “creation” in same black box of the Collective Conscious. Do you imagine that world leaders are aware of the subtle undercurrents that make up national and international policies? They are not! Great they might be, with their abilities to offer wealth or despair at the touch of a button. But, such men and women are still tools, expendable and re-creatable in other times and other places. It is the one who can master the astral spaces—the Black Box—that influences the puppet master of the unwittingly powerful.

If you have ever studied an exercise like yoga or a martial art, then you know that as a beginner, we intellectualize every move. That, and the fact that our bodies are rather punished into making unaccustomed moves make our practice awkward and inefficient. It’s not until time goes by, and with practice and patience that the moves are graceful and fluent, as well as effective.



The salvia sorcerer has very much the same challenge ahead of him. Initially the experience seems quite beyond our control. Fortunately, its unpleasantness scares many would-be sorcerers away. It seems that as a recreational pursuit, people partaking of power plants aren't really interested in astral projection. They want mood change.

But, salvia divinorum isn't about mood change. It's not about bright colors and trails, laughter and sex. It's about leaving the body temporarily and penetrating the veil between two worlds. Consciousness pours from one vessel to another, and we are eventually poured back into the first vessel.

The trick to effecting change by using salvia divinorum is to organize one's attention *before* one enters its space. Imagine being a human cannonball, fired from a canon into a great net. Hurtling out of the canon barrel, you cannot change direction, and you might not have a lot of time to look around and orient yourself before you land (hopefully) safely into the distant net.

You do, however, know where you would like to land (besides in a net). You set up the canon by pointing it, and filling the magazine with a known quantity of charge, and raising or lowering the barrel for a particular arc. All of these are analogies of how to direct the salvia experience. Amount of charge, for instance, refers to the strength and quantity of the medicine you partake.

Before "getting in to the barrel"—that is, smoking the medicine—you will attempt to construct a prayer, a spell, or the thing you would have accomplished. This will be communicated to the guiding spirit, once inside. When you do enter its space, time is precious. You will have little time to adjust, but just time enough to observe and make requests to whomever you meet there.

Now, the first time I was thrown head over heel into salvia space, my will was insufficient to orient myself in the tumultuous undercurrent. It was like being whipped around in the surf, pummeled into the sand, legs and arms flailing uselessly. However, with time I have grown accustomed to the peculiarities of entry and ride, so that now I can at least form a fair degree



of concentration and focus. Imagine the difference between being that body surfer tossed in the waves, to mastering staying upright on a surfboard, and riding the crest of the wave. Even though we don't control the wave's direction, we can operate gracefully atop the wave until our ride comes to an end.

I have heard it said that you get out of a salvia journey what you bring into it. To an extent this might be true, because we have preconceptions that inhibit our true perception. But, there is also a large degree of independence of the experience. That's because, and this is perhaps one of the deepest secrets of the astral world, it exists on its own, like a dream, doing what it does without our permission.

You might have a thought or trouble as you walk along a road, but the cars driving by, the birds flying overhead, the barking dog and the haggling merchants all do what they do despite our personal emotional involvement with their goings on. Such is also the truth about our astral projection. We meet beings, our Guide speaks, and it is a land that operates on its own rules. How much we can enjoy or bring back with us is, however, connected with how preoccupied we are with our own problems and ideology, or how open we are to acceptance of this other world.

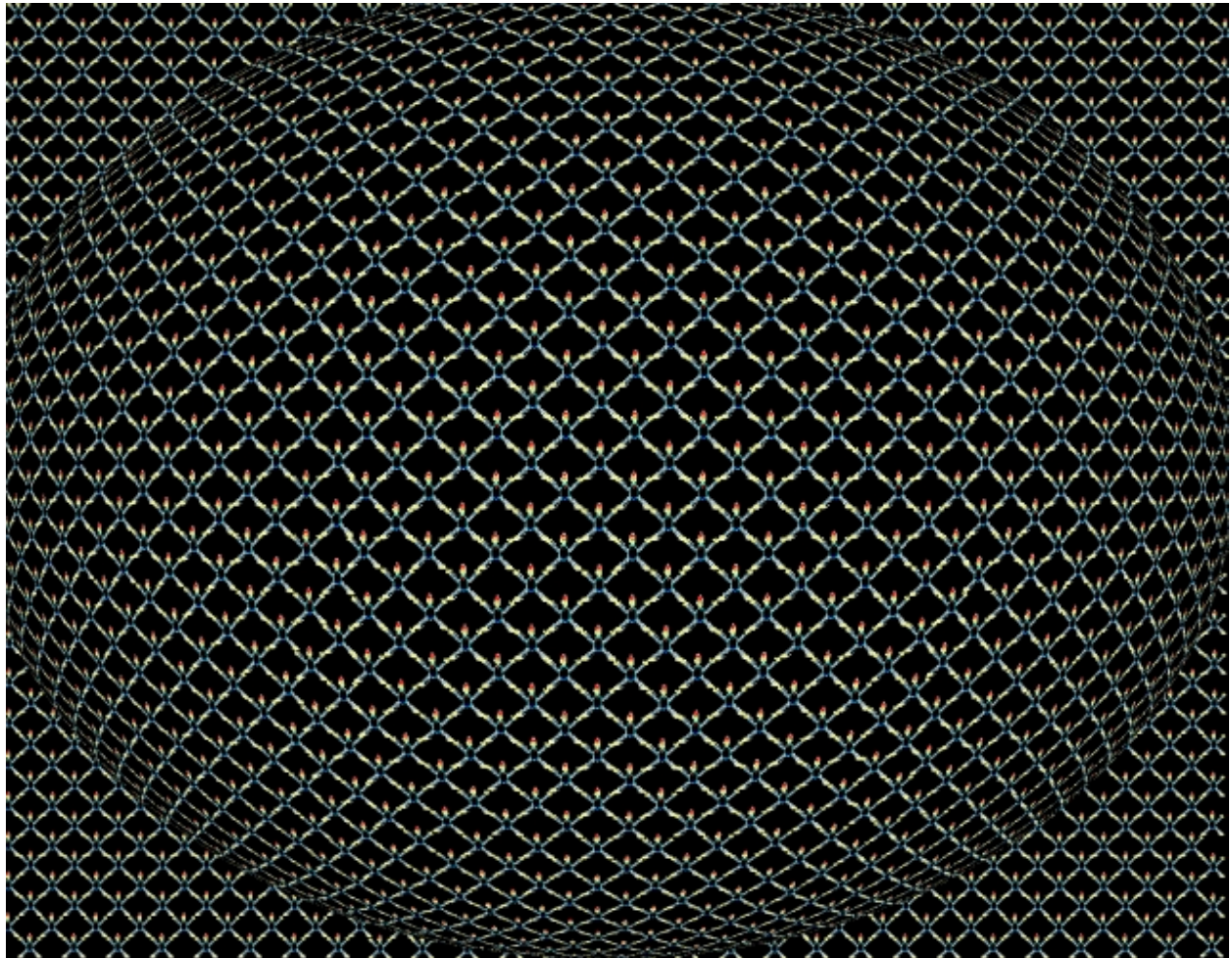


Figure 2 - The Cosmic network (or snowflake) of humanity. After one hit of salvia during the peak of a psilocybe mushroom experience, I took my place in the network. I became one of the silent elves suspended in the network shown here.

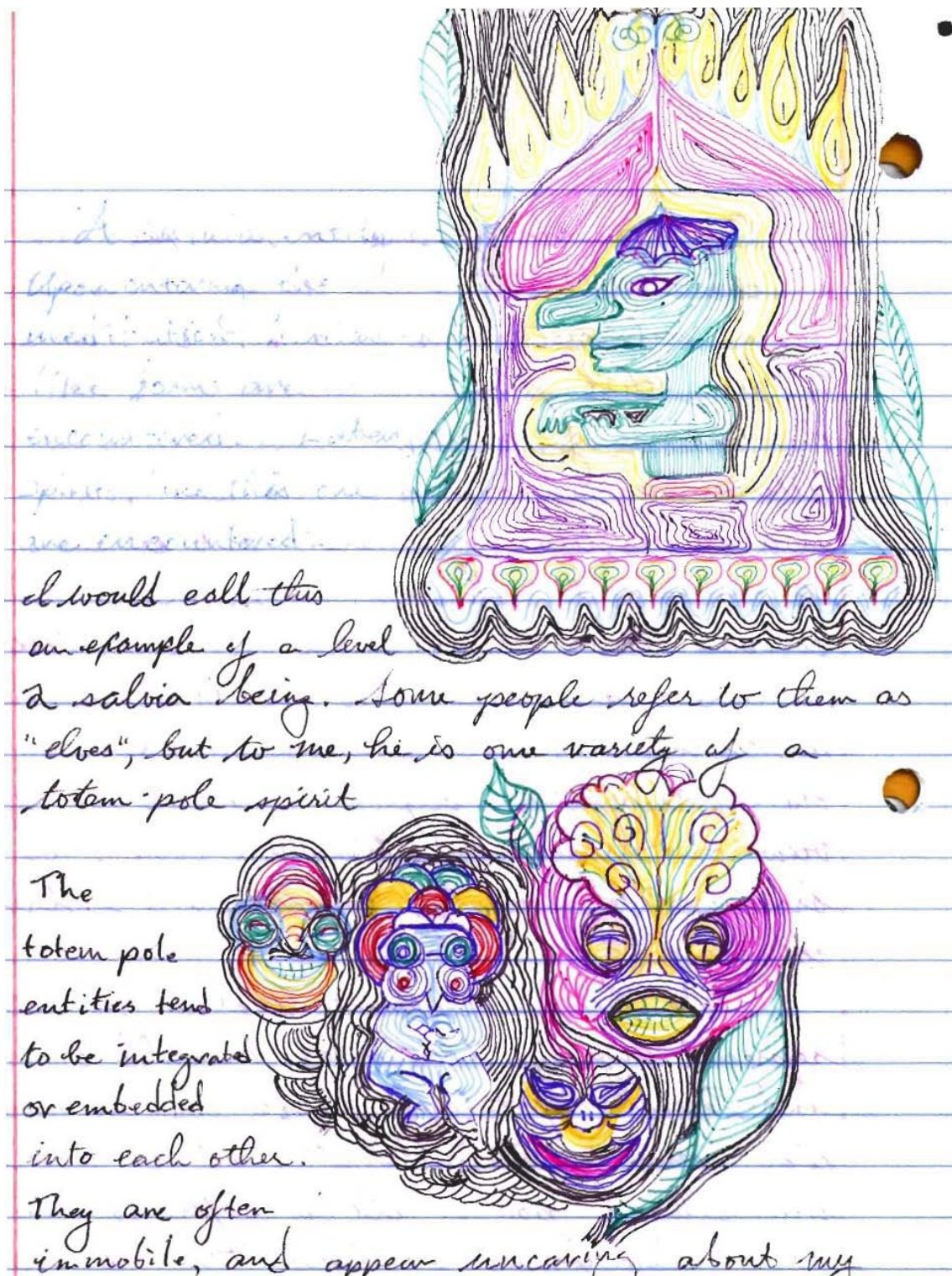


Figure 3 - What I refer to as "totem pole" beings, because of the way they stack upon or next to each other. Take the top creature, for example, and fill a cavernous grotto with such identical creatures. As you should imagine, one man's "self-replicating machine elf" is another man's "totem pole creature". The lower image is closer to what I have witnessed occurring in natural patterns, like wood or leaves.

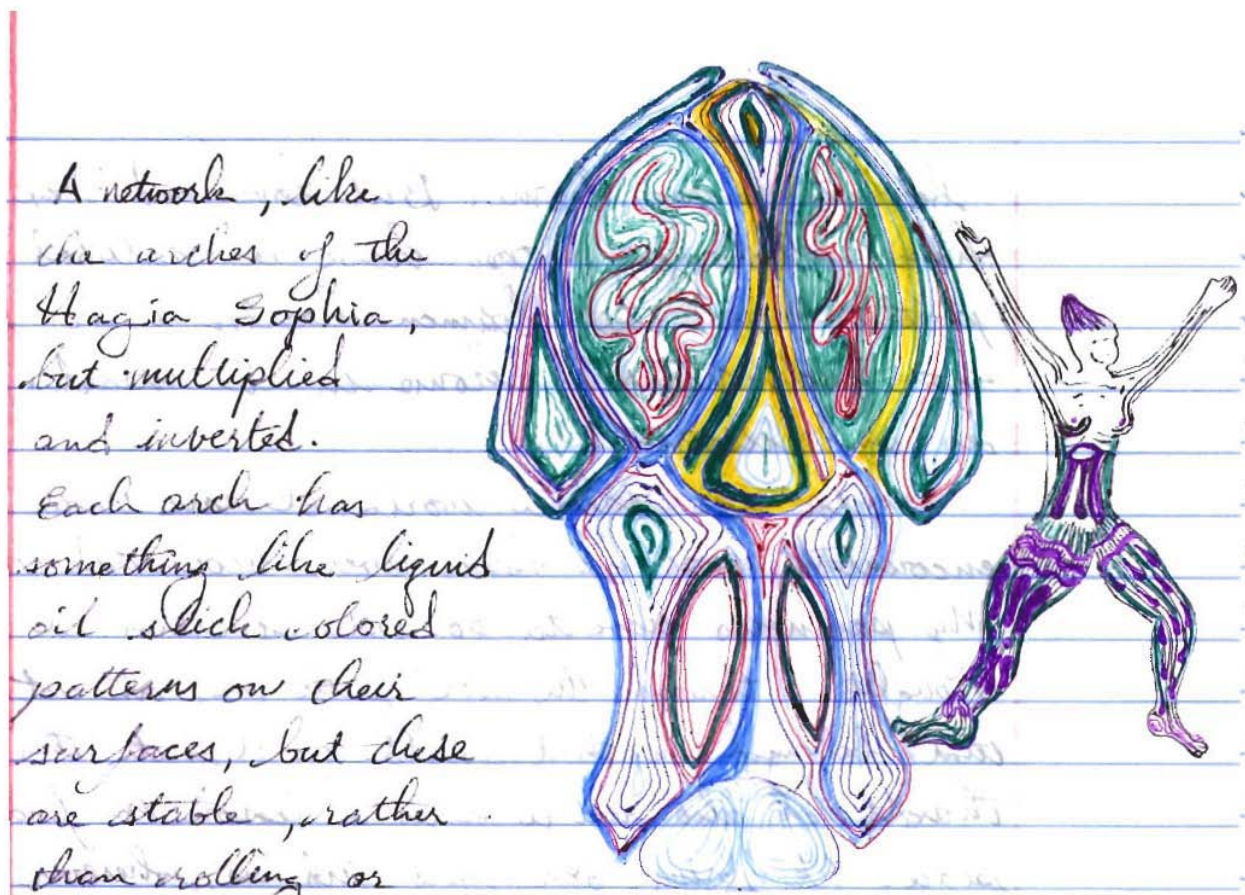


Figure 4 - A great cavernous cathedral, the arches of which are luminous and multi-colored. Replicate and magnify the image so that it covers the entire night sky, and one were floating like a cloud within the space contained, and you can barely imagine what it is I am talking about. The colors swirl and shimmer as oil patterns upon still water. To the right is a woman, not unlike the snowflake elves, but her body was also shimmering with colored patterns that seemed to move and change shape. Her patterns were more regular, like tattoos.

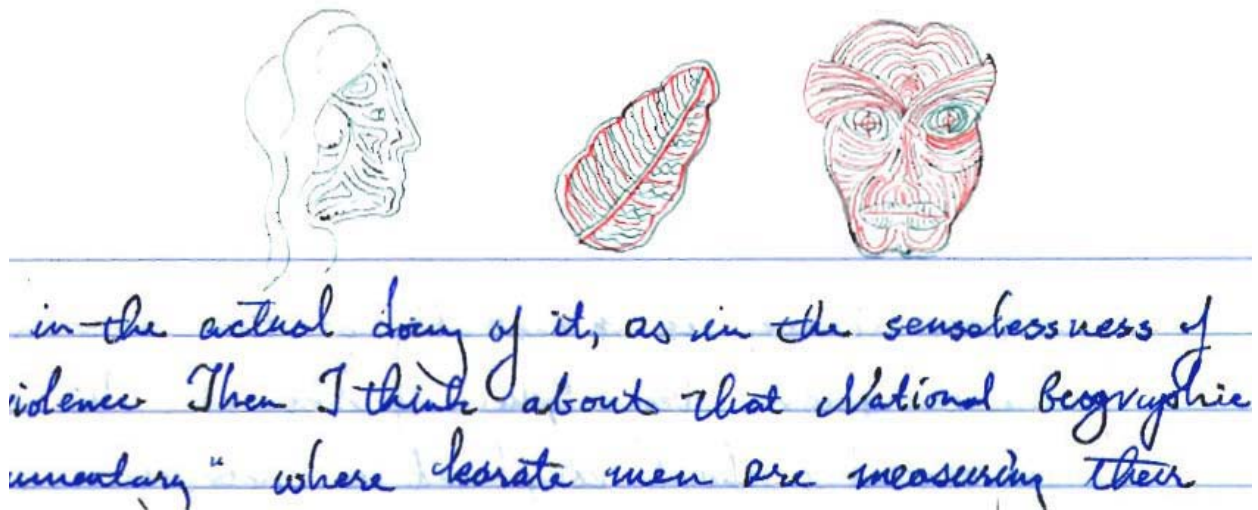


Figure 5 – Various and sundry flashes of imagery under the spell of salvia.



"The bumblebee alights in the nape
of the jewelweed's blossom—
It is a decent fuck in every sense.
To nature, it is sublime,
To children it is but a thing.
Can we say 'pollination' and not giggle?"

"The bumblebee alights in the nape
Of the jewelweed blossom—
It is a decent fuck in every sense.
To nature, it is sublime,
To children it is but a thing.
Can we say 'pollination' and not giggle?"

I wrote this poem upon coming out of a salvia trance, where I watched the bumblebees pollinating the orange jewelweed blossoms that encircled the chicken coop I conducted many of my explorations in.

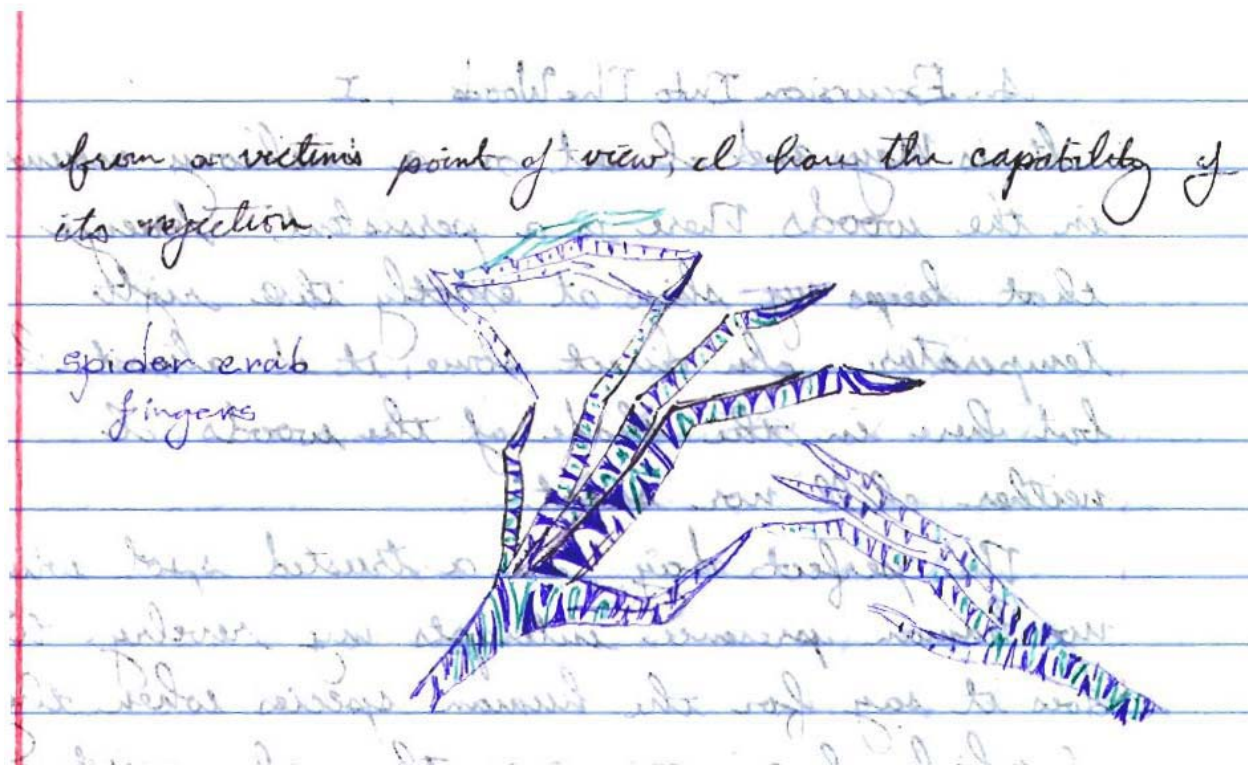


Figure 7 – Spider crab fingers. These were long, lean, rotating upon themselves like the tines of cogwheels. Their colored skin patterns were similar to those of the aforementioned salvia lady.

July 10, 2007

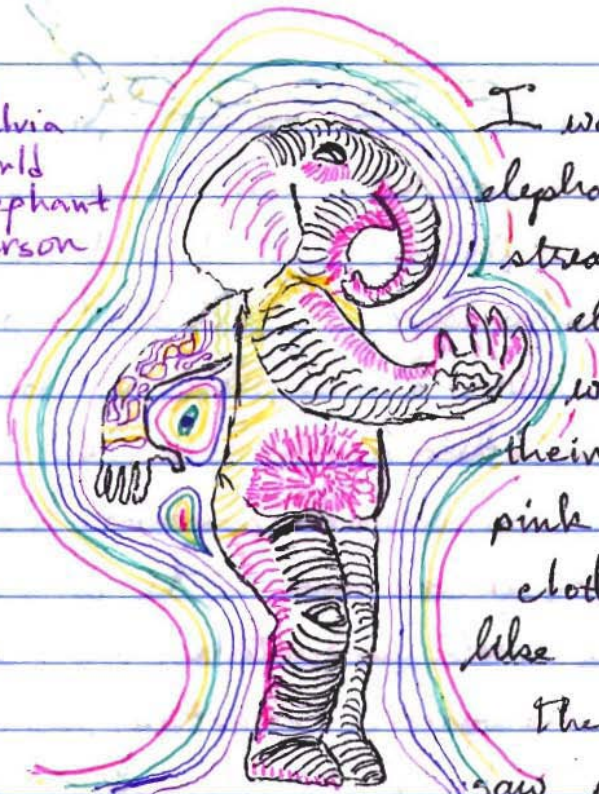
The world was, once again, familiar, but only on an emotional, "deja vu" level. Visually, we could only just barely begin to reference the images seen to those of this agreed upon dream outside of dreamland.

There were chainlike structures of alternating beige and green. Sometimes the beige was more pinkish, or again more orangish. Then there were people: there was a female form. Psychedelic consensus has taken to calling such anthro-gynecomorphic beings "elves". But, I think fairies would likewise work. In any case, these elves of salvia space tend to be multi-colored, with a variety of patterns. On today's trip, there was such a woman. And a man. The man, and all the surroundings, were of the orange-beige/green banding.

This was a daytime excursion. Day trips have a different light about them, but are every bit as illuminated.



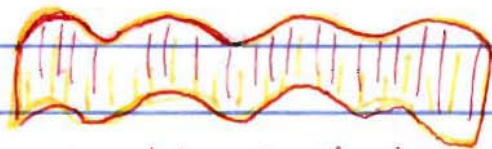
A
Salvia
world
elephant
person



I was in the land of an elephant people. They were a streaming of human and elephant. Their dorsal side was charcoal in color, their ventral sides salmon pink. They wore silk clothes with gold brocade, like Chinaman.

The one elephant man I saw wore black silk, his Nehru collar had a gold trim.

I apologize that I am not the artist I would like to be. My visions don't come out well in my drawings



A curtain of flesh

Figure 9 – The elephant people were sentients. They were like people, they were like elephants. They were a spirit that merged the essential form of the human with the essential spirit of the elephant. They were the human form of the elephant, or the elephant form of the human. In any case, they were their own species. They wore clothes, and the vision was very colorful. I believed I could communicate with them, and in so doing, establish communication with the Elephant Manu, or collective elephant spirit.