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# An Introduction to the Psychedelic Pastoral: Tracing Mind-Altering Plant Life into the Modern Industrialized West

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An Introduction to the Psychedelic Pastoral: Tracing Mind-Altering Plant Life Into the  
Modern Industrialized West

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Amy N. Buck

August 2016

Advisor: Bin Ramke

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## ABSTRACT

My Masters thesis offers literary pastoralism as a viable entry into the conversation on psychedelic plants and their use in mind-alteration throughout the industrialized West. I will, first, establish that the original pastoral tradition can be related to the existence of psychedelic plants, and that the use of such plants has inspired a deeper communion with various levels of the natural world. Next, my analysis focuses on parallels between pastoral literature and accounts of psychedelic hallucinations, which are often comprised of ultra-pastoral visions of landscapes, arabesques, and even cosmic space. These similarities suggest that psychedelic plants initiate a peculiar and remarkable pastoral encounter with what becomes a non-natural, industrial reality. The question of obtaining a more cerebral relationship to an abandoned natural world is examined in literary figures including William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Baudelaire, and Aldous Huxley. A review of the ties between the cerebral and the natural throughout these authors' psychedelic and pastoral works will open our own 21<sup>st</sup> century doors of perception to a new literary mode uniting the two disciplines.

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHEDELIC PASTORALISM

“How does Nature deify us with a few and cheap elements!”

– R.W. Emerson, *Nature* (1836)

Psychedelic “drugs” (a weighted phrase subject to scrutiny) remain a largely deviant area of interest well into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dangerous allure has long overshadowed the consciousness-expanding capabilities of psychoactive plant matter. Unfamiliar modes of perceiving and understanding our relationship to both physical and nonphysical reality have generally been found unappealing by much of the logocentric West (i.e. modes of the supernatural or paranormal, the holistic, even the psychedelic). Consequently, Westerners would only find psychedelia unaligned with their long-held beliefs in platonic structures and binary oppositions in the world and civil society. Such persisting ideological structures as religion, capitalist economy, social constructs, and even basic hetero-normative and monogamous nuclear family models keep alternative lifestyles such as psychedelia at the backdoor of mainstream culture. The staving off of psychedelia is achieved through the influence of normative language and moral

constructs that portray psychedelic drugs as delinquent, abnormal, or valueless to the prosperous West.

Psychedelic materials are conventionally associated with individuals who cannot function coherently within or offer anything productive to the larger society. These very notions of coherence, civil duty, production, and society, however, are abolished by the psychedelic experience, which is precisely why psychedelic drugs are so highly cautioned against by governmental and political authorities. Phrases such as “spun-out” and “out of their heads” portray the alternative attitudes acquired by psychedelic users as disorienting rather than centering. And, while these users are quite abnormal, I insist that this only reinforces that our mass culture be reexamined, rather than psychedelia enthusiasts damned. I believe as the English writer, Thomas de Quincey, says of his experiments with opium in the *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1821:

[On] a subject so important to us all as happiness, we should listen with pleasure to any man’s experience of experiments, even though he were but a plough-boy, who cannot be supposed to have ploughed very deep into such an intractable soil as that of human pains and pleasures, or to have conducted his researches upon any very enlightened principles. (408)

All experience is valuable to mankind if it can procure any sense of fulfillment. De Quincey references the pleasures of the plough-boy, the pastoral shepherd. He says the plough-boy is judged incapable of “[ploughing] very deep” into the self. Yet, as the origins of psychedelic history will suggest, it was the pastoral shepherd who originally knew of the psychedelic encyclopedia earthed at his feet.

Literary pastoralism is initially related to psychedelia in its concern with how authors, their characters, as well as readers are situated in their natural environment and

the status of their relationship to that environment. Pastoralism, as defined by scholars Terry Gifford, Paul Alpers, Harold E. Toliver and William Empson, provides a space for us to see how integral the psychedelic is to our humanness. A crucial aspect of pastoral theory is the open-endedness granted within it. Little can resist a connection to pastoral sentiments because it is essentially to do with our thoughts on origins, rootedness, and ideality – all of which underpin how we construct an identity and interact with the world. Pastoral thinking assumes a “home” space – whatever literal or metaphorical shape that may take – to which humans attach themselves and about which we create personal narratives of grounded-ness. Narratives that we use to then determine how satisfied we are in our environment. In many ways, then, pastoral narratives are recovery narratives. When one is within that central location deemed home, a sense of settlement and situated-ness in the world is indeed recovered.

Herding literature (i.e. ox-, sheep-, and cattleherding) is popularly conceived to be the earliest form of pastoral writing, and the simplistic lifestyle portrayed therein remains the foremost trope of its theory. Paul Alpers refers to “an atmosphere of *otium*” in his overview of pastoral sentiment; this is the notion that the end of the day brings leisure and contemplation (22). This practice is central to the psychedelic experience, as well, in that the drug user is afforded a sort of mental vacation enabling him to think more clearly on his *negotium*, which is the conceptual companion to *otium* and means “the conduct of business” (Fellmeth and Horwitz). For both the psychedelic and the pastoral modes, there is a necessary progression of one’s daily chores and deeds leading to a time of recreation: the shepherd must tend his flock before nightfall, just as the



psychedelic user must “keep his day job.” Further, the pasture would have been filled with psychoactive materials potentially part of the herder’s reality and herbology. This connection between early pastoral figures (even those earlier than herding cultures) and psychotropic plants available to them suggests that the ancient pastoral tradition is correlated to the existence of psychotropic plants. Consequently, the use of such plants grants access to the pastoral world, which then becomes synonymous the archetypal home space we call paradise.

Several psychedelic pastoral themes are recurrent throughout accounts of altered consciousness: first, the transportation to images of natural spaces, particularly when nature is literally absent; next, the idea of retreat into a nostalgic paradise, and finally, the subsequent return from that paradise imbued with psychedelic pastoral knowledge. My literary review begins with an account of pre-civilized use of psychotropic matter, then leaps many centuries to the Industrial Revolution of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, from which I travel toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century present. It is not to say that these concerns did not exist in the time between what we call ancient and modern history. Rather, my concern is to resist writing an encyclopedia of psychedelic pastoral literature, although I have found that these sentiments can be read into most literature. The literature in question displays an insatiable curiosity with the ability of psychedelic plant materials to shape how we see and write the modern West. In general, literature is a renowned domain of knowledge and entertainment; yet, we insist on overlooking one of the most deeply rooted, longest running influences on its history. Marcus Boon argues in *The Road to Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs* that there is “no literary movement that has not materially or

discursively incorporated drugs into its practices” (7). The fixation on drug use signifies a tendency towards escapism. And, if escape remains at the height of our 21<sup>st</sup> century existential concerns, why, then, do we keep a primary mode of safe and satisfying escape at the edge of our cultural radar? How and why is it a “secret literary history” if it points to a universal human endeavor spanning time?

William Blake is repeatedly alluded to in pastoral and psychedelic texts to follow; and, even for me personally, Blake is very much tied up in the fruition of this project. I was given Lewis Hyde’s “Two Essays on the Oxherding Series” in a graduate course on literary pastoralism. Hyde remarks on the sensuality of the practice of Chinese oxherding drawing and, at the end of the piece, concludes, “Hearing, sight, smell, taste: The senses can awaken us to the thing we seek, the thing immediately present, should the doors of perception be cleansed” (20). At this point, I only recognized this reference from having read Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* about his experiences with mescaline in the early 1950s. I did not know yet that Huxley derived his titles from Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Here, then, between these texts (“The Oxherding Series,” Huxley’s *Doors* and *Heaven and Hell*, and Blake’s *MHH*), I found an intersection of pastoral literature and psychedelic thought where William Blake stood tall in the middle. These pieces pointed to the doors of perception acknowledged by Blake and about which Blake proclaimed we cleanse in order to more fully use our senses. The acts of subversion inspired by Blake’s mystical experiences bring together the two very different areas of psychedelia and literary pastoralism.

Beyond Blake, I find that access to alternative versions of the pastoral are especially significant to modern, techno-industrialized societies that have forfeited ties to the natural world. The rise of industry in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe has had an enduring effect on the way Western societies interact with a world quickly being divided into the city versus the country, urban versus rural – which will be elaborated by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (1973). Clusters of industrial developments urge families *en masse* towards growing urban epicenters away from agricultural or township lifestyles marginalized to the surrounding landscapes. Day-to-day experiences of crowded slum living, long work hours under dismal conditions, and the appearance of littered, smog-filled city streets uprooted the inherent pastoral connection human's have to the earth. While representing a major economic push in modes of production, the rise of industrial cities, however, also promoted the popular concept of modernity largely influential by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and still holding sway today: a belief that continual newness and ceaseless evolution are pivotal to a civilized society.

The earliest accounts of drug-use in the industrial era of England are Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* in 1816 and Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1821. Although there is much to say of Coleridge's opium-induced primal paradise, I have chosen to bypass Coleridge in favor of De Quincey, whose text was later adopted by advocates of the French decadence and shared among members of the infamous Club of the Hashish Eaters, including Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire. I will trace the line of thought from Industrial England to France, and eventually to 20<sup>th</sup> c. America. A review of these writers' related works depicts, first, a life

regretfully devoid of the pleasures of nature, and second, an attempt to restore one's pastoral origins through psychedelic experience and subsequent literary accounts of one's journey.

The precursors to psychedelic experience found in French modernism signal a trajectory towards the American beat and hippie movements quickly following the second techno-industrial revolution of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. American countercultures were the products of wartimes following the second rise of technological modernization; the beats of the 1950s and the acid-heads of the 1960s produced the largest amount of psychedelic pastoral literature thus far. I will cover authors such as Aldous Huxley, playboy of modern psychedelia, as well as Allen Ginsberg and Tom Wolfe.

Bringing us closer to the 21<sup>st</sup> century present, a central figure to my project is Terence McKenna, whose late 20<sup>th</sup> century works will be drawn upon heavily throughout this paper because they embody what the unified psychedelic pastoral mode looks like. Born in 1946, Terence McKenna, was witness to the rise and fall of the hippie agenda. And, his line of psychedelic pastoral thinking was a direct result of all that he learned from the psychedelic counterculture infiltrating mid-20th century America. His career as an ethnobotanist (that being one who studies the relationship between humans and plants) has led him to a higher appreciation of the psychoactive matter so influential to that relationship. In 1976, under pseudonyms, O.T. Oss and O.N. Oeric, Terence McKenna and his brother, Dennis, published *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide*. Terence McKenna's foreword to this guide reads from the perspective of the psychoactive mushrooms:

You as an individual and Homo sapiens as a species are on the brink of the formation of a symbiotic relationship with my genetic material that will eventually carry humanity and earth into the galactic mainstream of the higher civilizations. (*Psilocybin* 15)

Therefore, by reacquainting ourselves with the natural world through the magic mushrooms, McKenna believes that humans will be able to go beyond the confines of that natural space to other pastoral dimensions, including Blake's pastoral mental space. McKenna promotes the magic mushrooms as a means of assuaging "an urge to seek contact with the essential mystery underlying the fact of being ... [or] a groping toward some sensed transcendent fulfillment" (*Psilocybin* 17). Accordingly, nature is the bridge to what humans deem metaphysical. By entering into a more intimate relationship with the physical, literal world of nature, humans may actually be afforded higher access to the realm of the spiritual, metaphysical, even supernatural sought in pastoral literature.

Terence McKenna presents that more intimate relationship necessary between nature and man in a later text in 1991, called *The Archaic Revival*, which underpins much of my thought outlined herein. In the chapter "Plan/Plant/Planet," McKenna says:

The plant-human relationship has always been the foundation of our individual and group existence in the world. What I call the Archaic Revival is the process of reawakening awareness of traditional attitudes toward nature, including plants and our relationship to them. (*Archaic* 219).

McKenna is aware of how our relationship (or lack thereof) to the natural world is critical to our sense of progress within that world. He believes that "our reinvolved with and the emergence of the vegetable mind ... now offers us the boundless landscapes of the imagination" (*Archaic* 150). This boundless imaginary is the literary pastoral zone.

Returning to what McKenna calls “traditional attitudes toward nature” is undoubtedly a characteristic of pastoral theory. McKenna’s archaic revival is a reaction to what we are seeing as “the ultimate threat to pastoral, the long-term desecration of Arcadia and the inability to return to a recognizable human society” (Gifford 111). The archaic revival is synonymous with the pastoral nostalgia in that both signify interdependence with nature as opposed to industry, and now cyber-technology.

McKenna follows the line of destruction laid out by Gifford in predicting:

Looking at present cultural trends and extrapolating them, it’s reasonable to suggest that by the end of the Mayan calendar – which is in 2012 A.D. – we will be unrecognizable to ourselves, that what we take to be our creations, computers and technology, are actually another level of ourselves. And that when we have worked out this peregrination through the profane labyrinth of history, we will recover what we knew in the beginning: the archaic union with nature that was seamless, unmediated by language, unmediated by notions of self and other, of life and death, of civilization and nature. (*Archaic* 18)

This prediction is the pastoral threat that deeply concerns Gifford in *Pastoral*. And, this is the precise situation that we face post-2012. There is now an added element to the binary of city and country: that of cyberspace. Social media platforms and instant messaging technologies are drawing us even further from the natural world. With the addition of cyberspace, we come to view even the city as now somehow more aligned with nature. At least the city is still a physical place in nature, as deformed as it is. McKenna proposes that, once technology and global industries desecrate the natural world, we will be forced out of cyberspace to return to what is left of our physical environment.

Both psychedelic and pastoral modes attempt to bring the individual back to a free-space, whether it be the space of the open plains or that of an unfettered mind. The

parallel motifs and endeavors of psychedelic experiences and accounts alongside pastoral goals and sentiments are what my project intends to bring to the forefront. A consideration of the psychedelic pastoral together as its own theory will enable future scholars and audiences to reflect on how these two very different endeavors simultaneously point out the same struggle towards “home.”

## CHAPTER TWO:

### ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS

Many terms and connotations are given to psychedelic drugs within the myriad tribes and modern subcultures they influence. I will tend towards a few common among countless, often interchangeable terms. In minimizing my language, I do not want to minimize the weight and implications behind this family of terms. Historical and governmental narratives created to steer our social imaginary in a particular direction have marred the language available to psychedelic research. Scholars Lester Grinspoon and James B. Bakalar's *Psychedelic Drugs Reconsidered* attests that "names and definitions were unfortunately molded into ideological weapons during the political-cultural warfare of the 1960s, so that choosing ... is now often imagined to imply a decision about social philosophy and even metaphysical world view" (5). First, then, in trying to define and differentiate these terms, we must consider any preconceived notions attached to them. Attitudes and images portrayed in Western popular cultural must be put aside so that we may better envision the spiritual and cosmic implications of psychedelic drugs. As such, psychedelia may eventually be viewed in a more phenomenological, cerebral fashion – intrinsic to the individual, rather than effects of a drug.



Each term was created and used with varying context and intentions. Early descriptors like “psychoactive” or “psychotropic” refer to “those [substances] which cause psychological changes or modify mental activity either by use of a plant or else by a chemical synthesis” according to Marlene Dobkin de Rios in *The Wilderness of Mind: Sacred Plants in Cross Cultural Perspective* (7). These basic terms point out the ability of these agents to interact with the human psyche, to alter it in some fundamental way. However, they fail to embody the aesthetic value or the structure of these mental activities.

The most notorious term, “psychedelic,” did not hit the scene until the era transitioning the American Beats to the Hippies. *The ABC-CLIO Companion to The 1960s Counterculture in America* provides the following entry on the word:

In 1957, the psychologist Humphrey Osmond, a Briton who had immigrated to Canada, introduced the word ‘psychedelic’ to a meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences. Shortly before this, he and the British author Aldous Huxley had taken mescaline and LSD. They dislike the prevailing terms used in psychological circles to describe the mystical trip experienced on these drugs – words such as hallucinations and psychosis. (Hamilton 249)

Most important here is the attempt by Osmond and Huxley to find more accurate ways of explaining the psychedelic experience. Terms such as “hallucination” and “psychosis” assume that the psychotropic drug user experiences things that are external or unnatural to him. They suggest a disturbance, a psychotic impairment or sickness staged by the mind-altering chemicals.

Psychedelia, in contrast, implies a modality or a filter on experience, rather than a condition. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists psychedelia as “an apparent expansion of

consciousness through greater awareness of the sensations, emotions, and unconscious motivations, often accompanied by hallucinations.” Another entry better describes these hallucinations as “having intense, vivid colours often forming a swirling abstract pattern.” We see in these definitions, then, that rather than being out of one’s mind, these experiences may be described as an opening of the mind – “an apparent expansion.”

The investigator of psychedelia is sometimes deemed the “psychonaut.” This term, first appearing in the late 1970s, does not receive as much use. According to the *OED*, author Sam Keen uses the term in his 1991 *Fire in Belly*: “The way of the psychonaut leads into the jungle of the psyche.” It was also used by German writer, Ernst Jünger, in a 1994 logbook citing the psychonaut as “a voyager employing entheogenic drugs as his vehicle” (*OED*). This term, therefore, suggests an astronaut of the psyche as the psychonaut; he is one who soars through psychic space on the wings of his botanical spacecraft. If we begin to think of psychedelic drugs as an entry into ourselves and our potential, rather than as a thing which inhibits our proper function, then we can begin to finally take on the airways and cosmic channels of the literary psychonauts before us.

#### Precursor to the Origins of Psychotropic Drugs: What is Nature?

Before I go any further, the next related term – and the one that underpins this entire discussion – is nature, or what will become the romanticized ideal of Nature. First, there is the natural world outside; that is, the literal trees and animals and the elaborate biology that tie them all together. As man became more sophisticated in his machinery and technology though, he became separated from the natural world and, as a result,

created a narrative looking back at that natural world from which he had just willingly removed himself – this is the second form of nature.

It is reflective separation that places nature as what Ralph Waldo Emerson calls in *Nature* (1836) the “essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf” (1283). Alpers’ *What Is Pastoral* echoes this: “Nature, which once was simply the world in which man found himself and acted, is now seen to be separate from him, and presents itself as the ideal of harmonious existence which he seeks to achieve” (29). Then, as we see here, the second form is what became Nature, the abstract idea of those things and what that idea meant for mankind, which is the “harmonious existence” that Alpers notes.

*The Country and The City* outlines the dynamic of these dueling landscapes in England since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A Marxist, one of Williams’ concerns became the divided socio-economic ideals of the rural versus the urban. Williams elaborates how the city came to be established as distinct from and favorable to nature, while still placing nature on a sort of metaphorical pedestal – that is, paradise. Williams describes this idealized view of our natural upbringings as “the idea of an ordered and happier past set against the disturbance and disorder of the present” (45). Despite all that industry was bringing to the economy of England, it remained in harsh juxtaposition to nature. Nature as the “ordered and happier past” suggests that the natural world inherently possesses a more perfect economy without the advantages of mechanical production. The addition of mechanics and machinery brings this sense of “disturbance and disorder” because the intuitive system of nature is impeded upon and exploited. Nature is severed, manipulated, and made to work at an unstable pace. As such, a vision of pre-urban nature is constructed in

contrast to the trials of the city. Williams calls this “an idealisation, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time” (45). In the upheaval brought on by industrialization and eventually urbanization, society tries to grasp at any semblance of order; what it finds is the natural order left behind in former traditions – the pastoral.

The result is to look back at the conditions of agrarian culture as symbolic of an organic, more sensual and balanced way of life. Additionally, Williams explains that the modern world “is mediated by reference to a lost condition which is better than both and which can place both: a condition imagined out of a landscape and a selective observation and memory” (181). That is, as we remove ourselves farther from nature, the more it becomes a preferred image to us rather than a literal space. The construction of such pastoral myths, then, is a defense mechanism against the existential anguish induced by the urban atmosphere. A potential place of return is important to the city resident who is perpetually shrouded by steel and dust. To construct and behold a mental portrait of pristine nature indicates survival of the urbanites.

Man seeks communication with his natural world as a way of reviving the pastoral harmony lost in the city streets. Emerson expresses, “The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me and I to them” (1284). There is a direct link, then, between the mind of man and the laws of nature. He must find paths of communication with the natural world in order to survive most effectively. Psychedelia suggests, therefore, that man can “pick up the phone” in nature. He has the

ability within himself to commune with the natural (natural, here, as an ideal, not a place). McKenna remarks that our industrial consumer ideologies “were conceived at the time of the shattering of the symbiotic relationships with the plants that had bound us to nature from our dim beginning” (*Food* 63). Because of this, he says, “Existential man was born” (*Food* 63). The rise of modern concepts in lieu of man’s pastoral tradition gave birth to man as the introspective, contemplative being he is today.

Once man separated himself from the physical environment that once sustained him, he became self-reflective as a way of filling that gap. He had to look into himself for answers now. If man were still aligned with the natural, he would not sentimentalize that separated world. Emerson confirms, “We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence” (1291). Here is the notion that Nature is in the mind of man. That idealized view of Nature is, in fact, the mind of man; according to Emerson, again, “the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind” (1292). He suggests that what we seek to communicate to nature, we can do so within our minds. And, psychedelics show little distinction between nature and self – a notion adopted by Blake.

#### Origins of Psychotropic Materials

Psychoactive materials can be found in an ever-growing range of natural vegetation and zoology; the most popular being extracted from various plants, trees, or fungi around the world. A 1998 article for the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* by psychiatrist Stanislav Grof outlines some psychoactive occurrences in nature:

The most famous examples of these plants are several varieties of hemp, ‘magic’ mushrooms, the Mexican cactus peyote, South American and Caribbean snuffs, the African shrub eboga, and the Amazonian jungle liana *Banisteriopsis caapi*, the source of yage or ayahuasca. Among psychedelic materials of animal origins are the secretions of the skin of certain toads and the flesh of the Pacific fish *Kyphosus fuscus*. (344)

From this, we see an immeasurable variety of psychoactive matter available throughout the natural world, ranging from digestible plant matter to the survival mechanisms of many organisms. There is debate, though, about which drugs constitute psychedelics versus other terms such as narcotics or opiates, dope, stimulants, and the list goes on. For example, many mainstream psychedelics did not hit the Western scene until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. LSD, for example, was synthesized in the 1930s by Albert Hofmann “[who] did not learn about LSD’s hallucinogenic qualities until 16 April 1943, when he accidentally spilled a miniscule amount of the drug on his skin” (Hamilton 189). Therefore, substances like opium and hashish were considered early Western psychedelics in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century audience though, would not immediately consider hashish and opium when thinking of psychedelics because there are so many more available to us now. Opium and hashish, two of the drugs more easily procured from nature, are often aligned with narcotics as opposed to psychedelics for their ability to make their user drowsy and sedated; however, the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Club of the Hashish Eaters” in Paris produced much literature suggesting the psychedelic nature of these materials.

I will avoid the conversation on semantics to say: by psychedelic, I mean psychoactive drugs extracted from organic materials. This, however, brings up further

debate on what can be counted as natural or not. Some would ask: well, what is not natural in some way or at some point or another? Everything, even man-made things, come from the natural world. So, then, how far removed from nature does a drug have to be to no longer be considered naturally derived? How many synthesized chemicals and processes must be in play in order for something to become unnatural? Again, not debates for this space, but they deserve being mentioned here.

The botanist, Richard Evan Schultes, alongside chemist Albert Hofmann, and ethnopharmacologist/anthropologist, Christian Rätsch, have compiled a wealth of psychedelic plant information in *Plants of the Gods: Their Sacred, Healing, and Hallucinogenic Powers*. First, numerous mushrooms throughout the world contain the psychoactive property psilocin or psilocybin. One type, the “Liberty Cap,” is reported by Schultes et al. to have been used in both Central Europe for the last twelve centuries and even by Alpen nomads and European witchcraft practitioners prior (72). Even the nickname “liberty cap” gives insight into the powers allocated by the mushrooms protruding from the earth for our secular and spiritual benefits. The Teonanácatl is another *psilocybe* variety that is named “divine flesh” by the Aztecs. Schultes et al. claim, “Few plants of the gods have ever been held in greater reverence than the sacred mushrooms of Mexico” (156). The visions produced by these fungi must not be downplayed: mushrooms were truly deified by peoples for their ability to alter one’s consciousness. Again, the terms given to these materials reveal the significance of these materials to various cultures. The mushroom as “divine flesh” indicates an embrace of the godhead through nature’s fruits.

Next, we have what is commonly called “acid” is lysergic acid, or LSD. McKenna says, “Found in several related genera of morning glories and ergot, the LSD hallucinogens are rare in nature” (*Food* 34). The LSD derived from morning glory seeds in southern Mexico are used “in divination as well as magico-religious and curing rituals” (Schultes et al. 45). A final popular psychedelic is ayahuasca or yagé. According to Metzger, ayahuasca “has been used by native Indian and mestizo shamans in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador for healing and divination for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years” (1). Ayahuasca is made from DMT derived from the root bark of a tree native to South America, which produces overwhelming hallucinations though they only last about five minutes. Further, McKenna says DMT also “occurs endogenously in the human brain” (*Food* 34). It is for this reason that McKenna speculates that DMT may not even be considered a drug – it is, instead, internal to us. While little is known about DMT in the human body, it suggests that psychedelic experiences are intrinsic to human beings who may possess psycho-activity within their physiology.

We see how nature spreads its psychedelic limbs throughout the world for humans and non-humans to more intimately experience a pastoral relationship with nature. What this tells us is that psychotropic plant and animal matter is a largely untapped source of “renewal of the spiritual relationship with the natural world” (Metzger 5). It is even responsible for our very concepts of spirituality and mystical phenomena. “Nature is thoroughly mediate,” Emerson demands, “It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Savior rode. It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful” (1295). Here, spirituality is the



service of the natural world in that it provided early and even modern cultures with a way of thinking about the non-physical aspects of the natural environment. The natural world offers pieces of itself so that its inhabitants can enter into and alter their various conscious states.

### Psychedelic Drugs Throughout Early Pastoral Cultures

The first partakers of psychedelic drugs were actually wild animals whose unusual behavior eventually tipped off the idea to human cohabitants. Researchers such as R. Gordon Wasson and Scott Hajicek-Dobberstein reported one of the first instances of this phenomenon in observing that Siberian reindeer would frolic about as if intoxicated from eating the Siberian soma mushrooms. Hajicek-Dobberstein posits that “after the last Ice Age in the northern Eurasian forest belt ... approximately 9000 B.C.E. ... early human foragers found and ate the magnificent red-and-white fly agaric, possibly after observing the effect it had on reindeer who had eaten it” (100). The fact that many early groups of people learned how to use psychedelic plants from neighboring species indicates an interspecies bond among animals and plants so complex they were willing to investigate the mushrooms and bring them into their own culture.

Some animals are even necessary for the production of psychedelic substances; for instance, cattle dung provides ample fertilization for the growth of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. McKenna refers to the “human-mushroom interspecies codependency” that developed from early people’s desire for the mushrooms that grew from the cattle feces (*Food* 20). Humans, therefore, gained much more immediate access

to the mushrooms in their domestication of cattle. This means that the ever-present, though perhaps unintended, pastoral relationship between cattle and human counterparts is historically linked to the ingestion of psychedelic drugs.

Further, many hunter-gatherer societies relied on these powerful substances to give their hunters heightened agility and focus. In a chapter on “The Stoned Age” in *Food of the Gods*, McKenna describes a young tribesman’s first experience of “the soapy taste of the rasped root bark” called Togna or “the plant-of-power-to-sit-still,” which he is told will make him invisible and enable him to strike more accurately (43). With the Togna, the young man is able to wait patiently and indefatigably for the lioness to appear. And, when it does, he is possessed with the dexterity to keenly locate and take aim against his prey. Psychedelic plants, then, had more practical benefits for hunters who could manipulate their heightened senses and opened awareness.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### PSYCHEDELIC PASTORAL THEMES

One view of psychedelic experience is that it offers a space to realign with that original bond with the earth, as many firsthand reports include pastoral imagery that may not be available under normal lived circumstances. Walter N. Pahnke and William A. Richards in the article “Implications of LSD and Experimental Mysticism” remark, “The ceiling may seem to bulge at the corners of the room and the walls may undulate as though they were breathing. It may actually seem possible to step inside a picture of a woodland scene on the wall and walk among the trees” (184). Pahnke and Richards describe access to the proto-pastoral scene or the forgotten pastoral backdrop to reality. Psychedelic drugs can produce experiences of one’s surroundings taking different shapes and signs of life. The physical world may even appear to dissolve before one’s eyes. These transformations could be considered pastoral shifts of the experiencer’s point-of-view. From the stationary position of one’s home, psychedelic experience can relocate the individual to an outer (or perhaps inner) realm where they can move about freely within their environment.

## Transportation to Natural Spaces

The ability of psychedelic drugs to relocate one to a more pastoral space is the first of my themes. Although naturally occurring, psychedelic drugs are capable of taking their user to utterly supernatural places. The psychedelic moment is often referred to as a “trip,” and this term is very apt in conveying the extent to which psychedelics take one on a journey. As Pahnke and Richards suggest, this trip may even be one of form, rather than perspective or location.

One’s trip may be experienced from the body of an entirely nonhuman being or no being at all. In *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience: The Classic Guide to the Effects of LSD on the Human Psyche*, Robert Masters and Jean Houston relay that the psychedelic experiencer “may seem to himself to assume the form of some animal or even some inanimate object; and he may be reduced to a sub-atomic particle or expanded to the proportions of a galaxy” (68). The body remains un-phased by these shifts and dislocations, but the experience is nonetheless palpable to the individual. The phenomenological experience is real; this must not be taken lightly. The body is not bound to the mind on psychedelic drugs; it is distinct from the human’s heavy form. The psychonaut is able to travel in his mind through a multitude of dimensions and shapes from one physical location.

## Pastoral Retreat and Return

Retreat into the landscape is a major component of both the psychedelic and the pastoral. The notion of retreating into nature has maintained great significance to many

cultures early and modern. An example of a modern revival of pastoral tradition is the Huichol tribe, who, according to an article by professor of sociology and anthropology, Hope MacLean, are “a nation of about 20,000 people who live in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Northwest Mexico” (76). She says, “They speak a Uto-Aztecan language, and are thought to be one-time hunter-gatherers and travelling traders, who may have only recently converted to life as Mesoamerican corn, bean and squash farmers” (76). The Huichol believe that peyote is a “source of spiritual and physical energy or life force” and perform a pastoral retreat across Mexico in order to acquire the coveted mushrooms (MacLean 81). Dobkin de Rios, a medical anthropologist and psychotherapist who studied psychoactive plant life in South America, explains:

The peyote hunt is considered to be a return to a paradise lost, a time now idealized, when the Huichol lived as hunters and gatherers ... [and] is believed to symbolically recreate original times before man became mundane and was separated from the gods, plants, and animals. (20)

We see here how the peyote mediates a pastoral bond between the modern Huichol tribe and their enduring land.

This bond is then further expressed in Huichol yarn paintings made from small beadwork displaying intricate, wildly colorful hieroglyphics and arabesques. Figure 1 below is from *Plants of the Gods* by Schultes et al (63):



Figure 1

The above example includes many figures of the deer, which was the symbol of the shaman for many Mexican Indian tribes and which many researchers have related back to the discovery of the psychedelic mushrooms by early herding mammals. The inscription included with the image explains that it is a “chronicle of the creation of the world” (Schultes et al 63). This creation occurred when the Elder Brother Deer found the “portway” that “unifies the spirit of all things and all worlds” (Schultes et al 63). Their

reference to the divine deer recalls the original moment when man saw the deer partake of the land's drugs. These tapestries illustrate the pastoral depth of the mind on peyote; there are multiple screens situated at angles from one another though all pointing back to the animal at the eye's center. There are floating symbols reminiscent of biological DNA and even the stars filling outer space, and all of these things are interlaced and encoded with what we would perceive as metaphysical information, but it's not metaphysical at all – in fact, it is hyper-physical, the physical. It is that which binds the depths of the ocean to the eyes of the human to the galactic space out of reach. The peyote hunt, then, is a tradition that enables the Huichol to peer into that universality and on-going, ancestral interconnectedness.

Further, within literary pastoralism, the pastoral retreat is a means through which one can exit the current non-natural conditions into the space of a narrative or prose piece. And, this retreat can similarly occur under the influence of psychedelics, as many writers I have cited have experienced. This provides an area to reflect on those conditions from a neutral, outside space and contemplate how one might maintain a pastoral connection to the physical world when devoid of our original intimacy with nature.

Gifford expands this motif into the notion of retreat and return in *Pastoral*. He states, “This literary device involved some form of retreat and return, the fundamental pastoral movement, either within the text, or in the sense that the pastoral retreat ‘returned’ some insights relevant to the urban audience” (1-2). This implies that by entering into the pastoral condition, the individual or author acquires knowledge, experience, or plots that can translate into the material world.

Pastoral thinking and subsequent literature, then, is a sort of defense mechanism for the dislocated individual, particularly when ignited by psychedelic drugs that can grant the mind some heightened freedom from the body. Huxley explains in *The Doors of Perception*:

If they practice [contemplation] at all, [those who take psychedelics] may bring back enlightening reports of another, a transcendent country of the mind; and if they practice it in the height, they will become conduits through which some beneficent influence can flow out of that other country into a world of darkened selves, chronically dying for lack of it. (20)

Huxley believes that psychedelic retreat can enable the individual to straddle the fence between the dimensions of the natural, the biological, and the original and that of the urban, the artificial, and the material. The psychedelic experience transports one to the psychological Eden so that he or she can gather the pastoral insight to endure the larger society that now exists.

Return is necessary because, although it is appealing to “turn away from merely symbolic straw and chaff to the bread of actual and substantial Fact,” Huxley believes that, “For Angels of a lower order and with prospects of longevity, there must be a return to the straw” (*Doors* 39). The psychedelic experience reveals the true nature of the world; the individual can see beyond the constructed symbols into their essences.

As such, it is difficult to return from this retreat after being momentarily privy to that which nature withholds from the civilized individual. “To fail to return,” Gifford demands, “is to remain in a high-flown madness, to have been self-indulgent and to have failed the tribe” (93). One cannot reside in the psychedelic pastoral state; this is why



psychedelic trips always end. The natural world only offers temporary respite. To stay in the moment of retreat is to suspend one's life; that is useless to the environment, which seeks efficiency and evolution. Pastoral knowledge is only useful to the individual if he or she can transport it from the psychedelic experience back to the functioning community.

### Nature as the Nostalgic Paradise

The retreat and return suggests that the natural world being retreated to is somehow innately better than the civilized world. As mentioned before, in removing ourselves from natural conditions, we came to idealize those roots in the natural world that we were simultaneously pushing away. Therefore, in our psychedelic experiences, our civilized minds also experience a reaching back to the pastoral sentiment. Toliver's study of pastoral Renaissance poetry puts forth, "[The] presence of higher idyllic peace may also be a source of nostalgic longing or despair if the 'shepherd' is unable to find the key to transformation" (9). Psychedelic drugs, however, bestow the shepherd with a library of botanical thresholds into that "higher idyllic peace." Psychedelic drugs bring the nostalgic out of the remembered past to be re-acquainted with in the present moment. These experiences restore the loss that is implied in our nostalgia for our natural upbringings. McKenna acknowledges this desire in contemplating, "In the absence of a partnership community and with the loss of psychoactive plants that catalyze and maintain partnership, nostalgia for paradise appears quite naturally in a dominator society" (*Food* 121). Partnership here seems to be synonymous with the pastoral union

with nature and all its earthly children. Without that partnership, without the pastoral, the civilized individual is left barren and wanting in his city. This nostalgia also appears in Gifford's claim that pastoral discourse is "a linguistic borderland that constructs the artifice of Arcadia" (46). That is, pastoral writing seeks to build a distant yet locatable paradise within the writer's diction and imagery.

#### Nature Within Nature: Preternatural Spaces

Another thematic link between psychoactive plants and the pastoral mode is the ability of psychedelic drugs to yield an experience of the preternatural, or nature at its core. The preternatural implicates that elements of the divine are layered between man and his world, the dimensionality and biology of the universe or even the anatomy of its creatures. Stanislav Grof interprets the holotropic state possible through psychedelics as "a means of direct communication with the archetypal domains of deities and demons, forces of nature, the animal realm, and the cosmos" (345). Grof describes psychedelic access to these entities or sources as being linked by way of their position outside of immediate civilization and human contact; they reside in the psychedelic pastoral realm. Psychedelic drugs open up a variety of pastoral conditions, ranging from supposed Edenic beginnings to perspectives throughout the animal kingdom to outer space even, and offer one the ability to communicate with the inhabitants therein. An account from Masters and Houston, for example, elaborates, "But a godly peach proved friendlier and accepted my adoration with kindly beneficence, radiating on me the preternatural light of its numinous fuzz. I bowed my gratitude and moved on, transfigured by the deity of

things” (19). What would normally be deemed a mere peach in the sober state becomes a symbol of the divine under psychedelic drug influences. The psychonaut enters into a mentorship with the peach that shares its inherent knowledge of the world. This account also refers us to the first form the preternatural can take – the divine or supremely spiritual.

Experiences of transportation can reach deific proportions in that, rather than being transported to a different space, the individual can experience being altogether removed from a physical space and replaced into the metaphysical. Dobkin de Rios attributes this to the spiritual connection between physical and mental powers: “There may be a schism felt between body and mind, or else the opposite may occur, in that the boundaries between man and the universe dissolve and experiences of unity with nature or godhead are clinically reported” (9). The psychonaut may have the sense of being elevated to a higher spiritual position in nature. During a DMT experience, for instance, McKenna explains how he is removed from his bodily place on earth and shot across the world:

I was fixated on the spectacle of the earth below and realized that I was moving south, apparently in polar orbit, over Siberia. Ahead of me I could see the Great Plain of Shang and the mass of the Himalayas rising up in front of the red-yellow waste of India. The sun would rise in about two hours. In a series of telescoping leaps, I went from orbit to a point where I could specifically pick out the circular depression that is the Kathmandu Valley. (*True Hallucinations* 105)

His pastoral senses have been intensified. McKenna appears endowed with omnipresence over the natural world. He is lifted from his temporal and spatial reality to a place of totality. He is no longer bound to the physical restraints of his body. He can access any

geographical position on earth from this point of abstraction; the natural world is fully available to him in this state. McKenna's reference to making "telescoping leaps" from one location to another suggests a heightened ability to zone in on things from a distance.

The psychedelic agents enable him to bring these destinations into abnormally sharp focus. "Each of us thus appears to be a microcosm," Grof believes, "containing in a holographic way information about the macrocosm" (352). From his magnified point of view, which McKenna identifies as polar orbit, he is empowered with an ability to observe and traverse the landscapes of China and Southeast Asia. "And no man touches these divine natures," Emerson announces, "without becoming, in some degree, himself divine" (1302). The psychonaut does not return untouched; in fact, he is undoubtedly elevated in his altered state. There is an esteem that appears coupled with the illimitable and omnipotent knowledge available to the psychedelic user. The psychedelic state enables one to see information plainly within the natural world without the restrictions of human ego or intention; as such, the psychonaut can be the shepherd, the sheep, even the land and the sky enveloping them.

Dobkin de Rios speaks of this ability to focus in her research on the Bwiti culture. She calls this heightened state "an orientation, a point of reference in his search for security" (34). Psychedelics unhook the human filter from how one makes observations of the world. Pinchbeck notes on mushroom use, "Trees and plants glowed with patience and intelligence, as if expressing a deeper wisdom" (55). Thus, rather than imposing meaning or structure upon the world, the individual on psychedelics is able to see the brilliance of the world for itself. This experience is highly pastoral in that the individual

comes to value the natural over the analytical, or man-made. The wisdom of nature becomes inherently known, rather to something to be determined against the prosperity of the city.

Another aspect of preternatural transport is that individuals may feel as though they have been consumed by or transferred into the fabric of the universe. In his *Breaking Open the Head: A Psychedelic Journey into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism*, Daniel Pinchbeck recalls seeing “spiraling plant-like forms and dancing geometries swirled with music” (28). Through psychedelic drug use, he is able to witness the geometry that makes up the natural world. Later, he continues, “Eyes closed, I saw a grid stretching in all directions. Geometrical forms of strobing spheres and pyramids arose on all the points of the grid” (164). Here, again, the world reveals the arrangement of its particles. The individual seems to be able to see the abstract dimensions that construct reality. The experience of the preternatural, then, is that of nature beyond nature – the biological, cellular even. To return to Gifford, he states that the pastoral is “reductive in a way that can be either simplistic or profound” (54). What we see, though, is that the simplistic and the profound are one in the same in the psychedelic experience. Empson calls this the pastoral process of “putting the complex into the simple” (53). The individual cannot distinguish between the two. Masters and Houston report of another experiencer:

Dwindling to ‘micro-nuclear proportions, he first reported his ‘atomized’ state, then grandly announced: ‘I am the nuclear image of eternity ... I am the original stuff. All universes find their pattern in my being for I am the cosmic infinitesimal ... I am the source, the fountain, the stuff before stuff.’ (71-72)

This is an example of the simple and the complex coming together in the psychedelic user's intuition in that he witnesses the parallels across his person and within the structure of the surrounding universe.

On another occasion, McKenna describes being transported into a space in-between the earthly and the cosmic:

When I regained consciousness I appeared to myself to be surfing on the inner curl of a wave of brightly lit transparent information several hundred feet high. Exhilaration gave way to terror as I realized that my wave was speeding toward a rocky coastline. Everything disappeared in the roaring chaos of informational wave meeting virtual land. More lost time and then an impression of being a shipwrecked sailor washed onto a tropical shore. I feel that I am pressing my face into the hot sand of a tropical beach. I feel lucky to be alive. (*Food 11*)

Here, McKenna recalls riding a flow of information envisioned as waves and coastlines. He perceives the wave as clear and illuminated knowledge that surrounds and consumes his body. This influx of consciousness displaces McKenna. He speaks of being thrust into a void as the abstract and concrete planes merge. Where these two dimensions conjoin is experienced as a liminal space of intense reconciliation with the composition of the natural world. He arrives in this unfamiliar yet blissful place seen as a tropical beach – a scene of pastoral renewal as well as reverence for the land.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### BEGINNINGS IN WILLIAM BLAKE

“The imagination is everything,” Terence McKenna says, “This was Blake’s perception” (*Archaic* 100). It is only fitting that I give a chapter entirely to 18<sup>th</sup> century English writer William Blake, as many of the writers included have continuously looked back to Blake for his rebellion against ideological norms as well as his emphasis on the individual’s creative powers. Marcus Boon’s account of literary drug history even owes its title to Blake; he admits that he chose the title *The Road to Excess* because William Blake, “who was not to [his] knowledge a drug user, was the last writer in the West who was able to see the universe as a manifestation of the open, unbounded excess of imagination” (12). Blake was witness to some divine or supernatural (perhaps hyper-natural) thing that has since been attributed heavily to the psychedelic experience.

It is this road of excess that Blake claims “leads to the palace of wisdom” (*Proverbs of Hell*, Plate 8, line 8, p. 66). And, for Blake, the excess of his imagination signaled the genius of his wisdom. Blake claimed to “have been visited by an archangel,” yet the nature of his visions is a lively topic of debate that I will not pick up here (Hamilton 36). No one can know whether young Blake endured hallucinations from an

illness or whether he simply created the unusual and elaborate visions from his own creative genius. It does not matter where or why Blake's visions came to him; what matters are the doors his visions opened to Blake himself and continue to open for generations of psychedelic-using readers to follow. Boon goes on to say that at the end of the eighteenth century in which Blake was writing, it was "inevitable that [literature] would discover 'drugs' as a hidden, but always present, prop to its newfound independence" (6). He says this particular interest was because "the peculiar structure of transcendental subjectivity, which literature has invoked repeatedly, necessitated material agents that were able to evoke or provoke the subject into some form of manifestation, whether drugged or drug free" (6). As investigations into the visionary powers of the mind became increasingly popular, alternative methods of enacting those psychic investigations also gained notoriety. Writers became curious about ways to supplement their creativity and increase their ability to envision myriad experiences. This curiosity began with Blake and remains largely a devotion to Blake. He understood that the human mind offers a whole new arena of creative or visionary play if one is willing to go beyond the limits of the mind's city. Blake found Emerson's noisy forest in the back of the mind and demanded we endeavor into it.

### Blake's Pastoral Vision

Blake provokes many questions: is the pastoral space really just psychosomatic? Is the nostalgic Arcadia to which we desire return actually a psychological impulse? How much can we separate the mind from the pastoral world? Wayne Glusker's essay "What



is it Like to be a Blake? Psychiatry, Drugs and the Doors of Perception” in the collection *Blake, Modernity, and Popular Culture* summarizes Blake’s psychedelic pastoralism:

The first thing to notice about Blake’s hallucinations is how mellow and cheerful most of them are . . . they seem like pastoral scenes of cosmic harmony: not just angels but angels in trees, or walking companionably with haymakers; even Ezekiel’s presence is tempered by a ‘tree in the fields.’ These early hallucinations show humans blending seamlessly with the natural and the supernatural. (169)

The psychedelic pastoral is evident in that the spiritual is reliant upon the natural.

Glausser calls Blake’s visions “pastoral scenes of cosmic harmony,” but I would like to take that notion one step further to say they are pastoral scenes of psychic or even psychedelic harmony. Spirituality is our making meaning of the physical world; it is our relationship to that world.

Blake’s spirituality, while hailed for being elaborately metaphysical in imagery, has been no less concerned with staying in the concrete pastoral moment. In the first part of his two-fold *Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* (1794), Blake begins with a poem entitled *The Shepherd*. It reads:

How sweet is the Shepherd’s sweet lot,  
From the morn to the evening he strays:  
He shall follow his sheep all the day  
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs innocent  
call. And he hears the ewes  
tender reply. He is watchful  
while they are in peace,  
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh. (*Innocence* Plate 5)

Blake begins his account of innocence with the quaint shepherd; therefore, innocence begins as nature, just as modern man began as the shepherd. Beginnings, here, are of

communion with the pastoral world when the shepherd's flock could count on him for their own wellbeing. The flock's trust of their shepherd implies a psychic connection inherent between man and nature.

Psychedelic plant matter is capable of restoring Blake's psychic bond between man and his lost pastoral world. "How do you know," Blake questions in *A Memorable Fancy*, "but ev'ry Bird that cuts the air way,/ Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (*MHH* Plate 7, lines 28-29, p. 66). The pastoral fusion with nature has been severed from man and rejected from his sciences of the self. He is no longer in dialogue with the birds and the forest trees that surround him, but rather in dialogue with himself – with his own selfness, even. He has entered into his own mind's jungle.

This is the psychedelic pastoral mind that Blake so often implies in his prints and poetry. We see a depiction of this idea below in Blake's colored print entitled "The Night of Enitharmon's Joy," which is often referred to as "Hecate," who is the Greek goddess of religion and mythology. This print merges pastoral imagery with the deeply spiritual and alchemical as the triple goddess sits cloaked in black among the forest's creatures.



Figure 2

Figure 2 is included in *Plants of the Gods* with the following note: “The ancient goddess of witches, Hecate, lords over the psychoactive and magical herbs, particularly those in the Nightshade family ... [She] is depicted with her shamanic animals” (88). Blake reaches back to tribal shamanism in the creation of his own practice of altering consciousness.

Further, Schultes et al. relate the goddess Hecate to the nightshade plant, which is described in *Plants of the Gods* as a hallucinogenic drug used as “a psychoactive love potion in Lithuania and Latvia” (74). From this, we confirm that Blake’s pastoral vision is a heavily psychedelic one; he is curious about what the earth has to offer the wandering

modern mind. The descent into the mind suggests that Blake is aware of a disjointed-ness apparent now that man has moved into the modern city and away from the forest. Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) witnesses a loss of shepherd-like innocence.

An excerpt from the second plate entitled *The Argument* reads:

Till the villain left the paths of  
ease, To walk in perilous  
paths, and drive The just man  
into barren climes.

Now the sneaking serpent  
walks In mild humility.  
And the just man rages in the  
wilds Where lions roam. (lines  
15-21, p. 61).

A repositioning of the natural world and civilization occurs when the villain enters society (conceived of as a “perilous path”), while the just man is pushed into nature – already reconfigured as the zone of the wild rather than the original.

#### Blake's Proto-Psychedelic Pastoral Mind

What my project owes to William Blake is the notion of the mind as the ultimate pastoral realm worthy of exploration. Blake's pastoral vision looks within the individual to the nature inside of him, rather than the physical world he is eager to leave behind. *The Doors of Perception* explains of psychedelic knowledge: “This retreat from landscape ... has been a retreat from the outward Datum into the personal subconscious, into a mental world more squalid and more tightly closed than even the world of conscious personality” (23). This inner world surfaced by psychedelic drug use is deeply pastoral; it

is the individual's mental Arcadia, the peaceful refuge within the mind. Huxley, here and in suggesting Blake, is getting at is what editor Michael Phillips outlines in his introduction to Blake's *MHH*: that Blake's project is one of "always questioning and learning, reaching for new heights of understanding: a pilgrim's progress in an era of scientific rationality and spiritual confusion" (2). For Blake, the psychedelic and the pastoral can only intersect in the space of the psyche. Blake's pastoral retreat is an inward one and a largely psychedelic one.

All the notions of nostalgic paradises and preternatural spaces can be found in the mind if nowhere else. Toliver reports in his chapter on "Industrial and Romantic Versions" what I believe Blake realizes in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: "that paradise is located in the private workshop of the imagination rather than those deities and sympathetic streams of Arcadia that the conventional shepherd addresses" (213). We see a coming together of the ideal of nature along with our mental wellbeing. These thinkers are all suggesting that the nature we so endlessly covet can be found in our very heads: "Nature is ourselves," McKenna announces, "to be cherished and explored" (*Food* 274). We see this with Blake who goes so far into himself that he creates his own universes from one space called Albion. Twentieth century Blake scholar, S. Foster Damon in *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* provides an entry on the Four Zoas that emerge from Blake's story of Albion. Damon explains that the Four Zoas are a four-fold universe emerging after the fall of Albion, which "symbolizes all mankind" (142). The zoas are comprised of "sunny Eden (the Eternity of the Zoas), moony Beulah (the subconscious), Urizen's starry realm (law), and Ulro (the earthly world of generation)"

(Damon142). Blake, then, uses his imagination to create his own proto-pastoral realm that unites the psychedelic spirit with the cosmic earth. Sunny Eden is paralleled with the moon representing the subconscious, or being; therefore, paradise is parallel to beingness. Further, Urizen's stars are indicative of the cosmic law aligned with the natural world of Ulro, which suggests that the metaphysical we perceive outside of ourselves is actually accessible within the earth. Finally, it is from inside of these realms that Blake is able to plot and execute various narratives of the rise and fall of man in paradise.

#### Huxley's Psychedelic Interest in Blake

Recall what Huxley wrote to Dr. Osmond about the LSD user: why would Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* be so useful to the psychonaut? Is it because Blake has intuition into the wilderness of the mind? Phillips proposes in the introduction to *MHH*: "The work portrays a journey of self-exploration and analysis in the form of rigorous cross-examination and dizzying journeys into other worlds ... to outer space, to hellish landscapes underground, even to a printing house in Hell" (5-6). It is this introspective practice that Huxley seeks to inspire in the modern LSD user. The psychonaut follows the same inward path that Blake's visions took him along: "down the winding cavern we groped our tedious way till a void boundless as a nether sky appeared beneath us. & we held by the roots of trees/ and hung over this immensity" (*MHH, A Memorable Fancy* Plate 17, lines 21-24, p. 76). The boundless is here secured by the earthly; the narrator is suspended over an existential pit, yet he hangs on by the "roots of trees." His connection to the natural world is what grounds his metaphysical experiences: "So I remained with

him sitting in the twisted/ root of an oak, he was suspended in a fungus/ which hung with the head downward into the deep” (lines 30-32, p. 76-7). The traditional psychedelic symbol of the fungus segues our penetration into the mind.

### The Deviant Visionary Blake

There is a distinct turn from the normative thinking apparent in Blake’s visionary experiences that is less cited in his scholarship. His visions are not orthodoxies of spirituality or civility; they, instead, reject the orthodox. Critic Jeffrey John’s article, “Reality against Society. William Blake, Antinomianism, and the American Counterculture,” argues Blake’s antinomianism as equal in value to his visionary efforts. “He accepts and uses the established categories,” Kripal says, “but only to go beyond them, using their own forms, structures, and rhetoric to do so” (100). In true psychedelic fashion, Blake completely distorts normative structures in an effort to overthrow those impositions upon the self. The *Proverbs of Hell*, for example, according to Phillips’s introduction, “have become a lexicon of protest and liberation, upsetting convention and subverting authority, made all the more memorable by the spirit of exuberant delight that characterizes their collective wisdom” (*MHH* 1). To demonstrate, Plate 10 of the *Proverbs of Hell* demands: “Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads/ without Improvement, are roads of Genius” (lines 10-11, p. 69). That is, innovation of the self lies in deviating from the ideology and culture present at hand.

Psychedelics have long offered avenues of alternative genius; these are the crooked roads, but they are nature’s own roads – roads pointed out to man for their

existential wealth. However, these roads appear differently to those unknowing and unwilling: “As I was walking among the fires of hell, de-/lighted with the enjoyments of Genius; which to An-/gels look like torment and insanity” (*MHH, A Memorable Fancy*, Plate 6, lines 15-17, p. 65). Hell can be viewed as the psychedelic nature so capable of upsetting man’s sense of his society. Blake restricts himself to the lowly; yet, he finds the lowly as more apt towards genius than the world of angelic, straitlaced squares.

Perhaps the most notorious and repeated example of Blake’s antinomianism is in the famous line about the doors of perception. Blake suggests that, in order to enter into genuine visionary experience, one must be willing to vanquish their pre-given notions about the world and man’s experience within it. The *Proverbs of Hell* (Plate 14) claims:

But first the notion that man has a body  
distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this  
I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by  
corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and med-  
-dicinal, melting apparent  
surfaces away, and displaying  
the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were  
cleansed every thing would  
appear to man as it is, in--finite.  
For man has closed himself up, till he sees  
all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern. (*MHH* lines 11-21, p.  
73)

Blake sees his fellow man as imprisoned to the idea that his material body and his internal soul are not intersectional. To forfeit these shackles, one must use “medicinal corrosives” to “melt apparent surfaces away.” Blake may not have been thinking of psychedelic drugs; yet, the implication is certainly there for modern readers. Blake was



trying to find a mode of psychedelic experience from within, regardless of aid by plant extractions. On Blake's doors, Glausser advises, "Blake did not really have any elevated or freakish gift of perception" (163). That is, Blake was not engaged in anything supernatural; instead, he simply called for a reevaluation of how we commonly perceive our experiences. Glausser elaborates, "When he wrote of cleansing the doors of perception and seeing the infinite that is hidden to ordinary minds, he was urging a different mode of ordinary perception in which people shake off inhibiting categories and ideologically manipulated assumptions" (163). One must enter into the visionary experience as blanked of previous ideas and open to deciphering the world from their own endeavors and outside of what is given to us by the authoritative social body.

#### Influence on 1960s American Counterculture

Blake's dirty doors have drawn considerable attention since their appearance in the late 18<sup>t</sup> century. The group who has attached themselves most wholeheartedly to Blake's vision is the American counterculture of the 1950s and 60s. Kripal asserts, "The 'countercultural Blake' was no accident and no projection, in other words. And the secret of this particular moment of his popularity lies again in the nature and structure of Blake's antinomianism" (100). For example, when Allen Ginsberg was on trial under accusations of obscenity after the publication of *Howl*, he claimed that his piece had been inspired by an encounter with William Blake (Kripal 103). Blake links the two overarching goals of the counterculture. These goals are to rebel against the norms and to do so through alternative measures of experience. Glausser says this is because, "Blake's

perception operates under a process so different from normal consciousness that it can only be explained as or approximated by a chemically altered state” (164). Obsessed with Blake’s proto-psychedelic experiences, the goal became to achieve Blake’s visionary status through drug use. As Glausser writes of Aldous Huxley’s fixation on Blake: “Like many other intellectuals from the golden age of psychedelia, [Huxley] drew heavily on Blake as he tried to interpret what was happening in his altered state” (171). Blake’s visions were a measure of the psychedelic experience. Glausser adds, “Huxley’s mescaline perceptions emerge from neither tabula rasa nor cosmic ‘Mind at Large’, but from a mind prepared to see what Blake saw” (171). Blake, then, became the end-all be-all; if one could see what Blake saw, then he or she would know that their doors of perception were being wiped clean.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### INFLUENCE OF 19<sup>th</sup> C. EUROPEAN MODERNITY

Industrial growth altered the face of society; in fact, industry, in many ways, is even responsible for contemporary notions of mass society as mechanical technology overtook what were once small-scale agrarian or craftsman cultures. Rapid assembly-line production becomes paramount to specialized connoisseurship. The notion of relentless progress gets adopted into the social consciousness. The working-class citizens of the city create something of a collective machine of people producing and reproducing the modern ideal. An ideal that conflates the individual with the larger social body – the “city.” Considerations of the group, the city as a whole, or eventually the global economy overpower one’s individual concerns. The larger narrative of progress overshadows any individual endeavors. As such, the neurotic, tireless pace of the industrial thrust becomes mirrored in the plight of the urban individual or the collective city crowd. William Chapman Sharpe’s *Unreal Cities* observes, “The archetypal city-dweller desires rest but is always on the move” (1). Like the machines around him, the city-dweller never stops working and producing. He is, in effect, also a monotonous machine; the engines and concrete he inhabits come to inhabit him as well.

The harsh, unforgiving environment of the city induces much grief in its inhabitants. In his *Confessions*, De Quincey refers to the city streets as a “stony-hearted stepmother... that listenest to the sighs of orphans, and drinkest the tears of children” (383). The city, here, is personified as an unfamiliar, yet authoritative parent. While nature has long been held as a maternal figure, we see in De Quincey that the city is one step removed from that familial bond. Not only is the city a secondary, perhaps replacement mother, it is a “stony-hearted” one, meaning the city is an un-nurturing, would-be caretaker. Note, too, that her children are orphans who are center-less and without a “home space.” These sentiments are critical to pastoral views on nostalgia and rootedness that place forgotten nature at the core of humanness. Urban orphans are sub-humans, then, born into a state of displacement. De Quincey depicts agonized children born into a post-fall world after the connection to paradise has been lost.

The urban scene that Thomas De Quincey constructs is indicative of “that very powerful myth of modern England” that Raymond Williams discusses in *The Country and the City*:

[The myth] in which the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder ... It [the myth] is a main source for the structure of feeling which we began by examining: the perpetual retrospect to an ‘organic’ or ‘natural’ society. (96)

What is most important about Williams’s statement is that the city in this instance is not synonymous with progress or advancement. The image of a backwards movement denies celebration of modern advancement. Instead, it represents dilapidation of the self.

## Baudelaire's Ennui and the Turn to Vice

One intriguing effect that came along with the convenience of modern development was newfound introspection and boredom. Now that factories and machines were able to complete a large portion of human daily tasks, those who were not full-time laborers had time available to ruminate on the lived condition. The experience of the self enters the focus as never before by raising questions of what the individual does to occupy and, now, entertain himself when there is no work to be done and no purpose to fulfill. This reflects McKenna's claim that, "The ennui of modernity is the consequence of a disrupted quasi-symbiotic relationship between ourselves and Gaian nature" (*Food* 56). Boredom reflects an awareness of one's own modern meaninglessness when severed from nature. Baudelaire discusses this modern state of mind through the French word for boredom: ennui, which he personifies as a slovenly beast in the poem *To the Reader* from the collection *Flowers of Evil* (1857):

One creature only is most foul and false!  
Though making no grand gestures, nor  
great cries, He willingly would devastate  
the earth  
And in one yawning swallow all the world;

He is Ennui! – with tear-filled eye he dreams  
Of scaffolds, as he puffs his water-pipe. (lines 33-38, p.7)

Baudelaire's portrait of Ennui articulates disinterest in the world of production in favor of leisure and daydreams. The individual is able to retire to the endless streets in his mind's city, or even outside of the city to an image of the natural world. What makes Ennui remarkable, then, is its unique power to immobilize the city dweller and turn his eye from

his labors or civil duties. Ennui can incite contemplation as an escape from the urban environment. One can be physically within the city, yet evade boredom through his memory and knowledge of other locations. The sedative state of ennui allows one to retreat to the more “natural” space of one’s thoughts. As Sharpe says, “For Baudelaire as for De Quincey, the unreal situations of the city continually force the juxtaposition of the temporal moment and eternity, deferring the simplest of contacts in this world to the timeless plane of the next” (66). This means that the city is experienced as a duality of time. The immediate movement of the machine that is the urban economy is simultaneously paralleled by the on-going consciousness of the individual both within and beyond the cityscape.

The turn to vice is another aspect of the modern feelings of ennui of the urban inhabitant. We see Baudelaire’s Ennui smoking a “water-pipe,” presumably of hashish, and lost in thought. Such habits of vice are coping strategies for urban suffering; when the city scene becomes unbearable, the individual turns to debauchery and decadence as a means of withdrawal.

Baudelaire speaks of this scenario in the poem *To the Reader*:

Truly the devil pulls on all our strings!  
In most repugnant objects we find  
charms; Each day we’re one step  
further into Hell,  
Content to move across the stinking pit. (*Flowers of Evil* lines 13-16, p.5)

An image of depravation and entrapment, the city, this “stinking pit” of ennui, has stagnated the individual so that gratification can only be found in what society deems as excess, perversion, and other self-invested adventures that defy modern values.

## Psychedelic Roots in English Literature: Thomas de Quincey

De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* offers a worthy example of the modern individual's psychedelic interests in its unabashed willingness to enjoy such projects of the mind. De Quincey welcomes the reader to share in his intriguing experiences in an overview of both the pleasures and the pains involved in prolonged opium usage. Of his drug experiences, De Quincey admits, "I have struggled against this fascinating enthrallment with a religious zeal, and have, at length, accomplished what I never yet heard attributed to any other man – have untwisted, almost to its final links, the accursed chain which fettered me" (346). De Quincey relies on opium to liberate himself from Baudelaire's ennui. De Quincey believes he has delved into the depths of his psyche through opium and returned from those gallows afresh. The insight acquired through his opium escapades is something akin to a balance, an "untwisting" from the man-made "chains" of the urban lifestyle. There is a sense of transportation to a hyper-natural space where the world is overblown and unified, which also recalls themes of oneness with the world. De Quincey details:

The sense of space, and in the end, the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes, &c. were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to conceive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time; I sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience. (420)

There is a great deal experienced in one moment here. First, De Quincey finds that his

preconceived notions and established dimensions of space and time become distorted and inflated. Space shifts in contrast with the determined confines of the cityscape; in fact, the cityscape is liable to altogether disappear.

Despite being stationed in his fast-paced society, he experiences time as extended, even fragmented. Time opens itself up as a subjective experience, not a pre-determined confine. In being transported to the free-space of his imagination, De Quincey notes that the time he endured – a century or more within a few hours – was farther-reaching than any typical human experience.

#### Formation of the Club of the Hashish Eaters in Paris

Nearly a century later, the Club of the Hashish Eaters picked up the task set out by De Quincey. French writers Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert exchanged a series of letters in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, many of which discussed how De Quincey's *Confessions* inspired their own psychedelic endeavors. His text sets the tone of respectful fear of these mind-altering materials that Flaubert admits to Baudelaire:

But I must especially thank you for introducing me to Mr. De Quincey, a charming man! How likable he is! ... For some time these drugs have, for me, exerted a certain attraction. I even possess some excellent hashish ... But *it frightens me* – and for this I blame myself. (*Artificial* vii-viii)

There is a peculiar reverence built around these drugs that is carried into the French culture. And, the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Parisian Club of Hashish Eaters grew from this curiosity. The Club of Hashish Eaters is said to have begun as a project by a French physician, Dr. Jacques-Joseph Moreau. A 2002 article in *The Guardian* on the Club



explains, “In 1840, Moreau swallowed some cannabis, with the intention of reporting on its intoxicating effects ... [and] realised that experimenting on oneself with a drug whose nature was to distort sensations and impressions was not enough. He needed guinea pigs” (Green). Moreau wanted to judge the effects of mind-altering drugs from a sober perspective; therefore, he recruited others willing to participate in an informal study on psychedelic phenomena.

It is worth noting that the group experience fostered here is reminiscent of tribal peoples’ use of psychotropic plant extracts under the guidance of a shaman. The first of his specimens was Théophile Gautier, who brought along “a number of leading Parisian litterateurs: Alexandre Dumas, Gerard de Nerval, Victor Hugo, Honore de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire, Eugene Delacroix and many others” (Green) These men “would gather regularly between 1844 and 1849 at the suitably gothic Pimodan House, also known as the Hôtel Lauzun” (Green). The presence of writers and artists among Gautier’s group suggests a very special relationship between artistic expression and ventures of the mind.

The psychedelic experience hit home with these thinkers for its ability to transport the individual to a sacred space and enlighten the individual on the nature of his relationship to the world. Emanuel John Mickel Jr’s “The Influence of Opium and Hashish on French Literature in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century” claims it is through the practices endured at the Pimodan House that these artists “hoped to find a means of escape to an exciting, exotic, poetic world which would have all the charm of Paradise” (66). Here, again, plant-based drugs are employed as a means of relocating to a

more pastoral enclosure. Whether natural in substance or in sentiment, the pastoral desire for an unprofaned realm is essential to the 19<sup>th</sup> c. artist entrapped in the urban zone. This is because, as Boon suggests, these writers “spoke of states of consciousness that offered the promise of escape from the tedium of urban or suburban life” (3). Mickel adds that, for those “eagerly seeking an escape from the ‘ennui’ of reality and ardently searching for a mystical experience which would bring a measure of peace,” hallucinogenic drugs offered “the opportunity to reach down into the rich fount of the subconscious, to look into one’s own soul in search of something new” (90). What immediately strikes me about Mickel’s assertion is the notion of “a measure of peace” brought through psychedelic experiences. This suggests that peace is a rural sentiment, and that there is little of it to be found on the urban plain. Mickel portrays the “rich fount” of the mind as its own intricate realm worthy of exploration; this paints the subconscious as a pastoral dimension in its own right. The mind becomes the original space of nature to which we seek reunion, and psychedelic drugs offer a viable route of return.

#### Théophile Gautier: Psychedelic Pastoral Presence in the Club

The seminal text that came from the Club of the Hashish Eaters was Théophile Gautier’s essay entitled “Le Club des Hachichins” published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1846. Gautier outlines the Club’s setting, members, and his own experiences there. In an excerpt from *The Guardian* article by Green, Théophile Gautier begins:

I arrived in a remote quarter in the middle of Paris, a kind of solitary oasis which the river encircles in its arms on both sides as though to defend it against the encroachments of civilisation. It was in an old house on the Île

St Louis, the Pimodan hotel built by Lauzun, where the strange club which I had recently joined held its monthly séance. I was attending for the first time.

Gautier describes a kind of pastoral bubble secluded from impeding urbanization. A flowing river divides their place of exploration from the industrial reality outside. It is also personified as a caregiving figure that cradles the Club of the Hashish Eaters in a pastoral nest; this must be contrasted with the image of De Quincey's stony stepmother. Moreover, their activities are held in a "remote quarter in the middle of Paris," which indicates a unique positioning within the city as distant from and overlooked by the urban culture.

Gautier also includes several descriptions of his hallucinatory experiences during his involvement with the Club of the Hashish Eaters. Mickel's article introduces Gautier's visions as "a myriad of colors and designs, the metamorphosis of objects and individuals, the transposition of one language into another, and the interesting phenomenon of being able to see through the outer surface of one's own body" (119). Gautier's experiences encompass psychedelic pastoral themes of detachment of the self into nature, the intake of colorful geometric information, and the morphing of humans into other natural entities or elements.

An excerpt from his "Le Hachish" published in *La Presse* in July of 1843 is included in Charles Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradises*, in which Gautier recounts:

Soon after, I fell into a state of heavy lethargy. My body seemed to dissolve until it became completely transparent. There was the hashish, glimmering with emerald fire inside my chest. My eyelashes lengthened immeasurably and wrapped, like gold threads, around a small ivory spindle which then began to spin with astonishing speed. Shimmering

cascades of multicolored gemstones, arabesques and flowers presented themselves in endless succession, in effects which I can only compare to those of a kaleidoscope. I could still see my friends, but they were now transfigured, having assumed the forms of plants and beasts: here an ibis pensively standing on one foot, there an ostrich flapping its wings so bizarrely that I could not help but collapse with laughter in my corner.  
(xvi)

The self is vaporized into the atmosphere, thus into the natural world. The initial sense Gautier has of his body is the presence of the hashish within him, which he envisions as an “emerald fire.” This is suggestive, first, of a “supernatural” nature in that gemstones possess a very mystical, otherworldly air about them; and second, it is suggestive of an “elemental” nature in that fire is a natural state of matter. The psychedelic pastoral is evident in the hallucinogenic merging of an image of a gemstone that feels both “beyond nature” while being so explicitly symbolic of nature (emeralds are green and green is the color associated with nature) with another image of fire that is so basic to our understanding of the natural world.

Gautier’s sight is flooded with preternatural imagery of an assemblage of various dislocated parts of the natural world. An influx of pastoral information comes as the dimensions of nature open themselves for Gautier to re-commune with the natural condition from which the industrial society has so far removed him. Finally, Gautier witnesses humans transformed into “plants and beasts” – specifically an ibis and a flamingo. The shift to non-human depicts the human form as either interchangeable with the non-human or ill-fitted for psychedelia, so a more primal persona is given.

Psychedelic experience enables one to inhabit beings that still share a more intimate connection to the pastoral dimension. All of this pleases Gautier to the point of

uncontained laughter. Un-phased by the distortions appearing to him, Gautier seems to accept these visions as matter-of-fact, as so commonplace that they are dismissible with laughter. This is a recurring phenomenon noted throughout psychedelic experiences: that knowledge about the world becomes so apparent and intuitive that the individual is humored by it.

#### Nature as Absent in the Industrial Society

The absence of the natural world has a grave effect on urban authors. Sharpe interprets in *Unreal Cities* that these writers construct “a landscape of desire, born of the need to escape or remake the disorder of the actual city” (41). It claims there is no landscape in the urban city; there are only crowded structures inhabited by equally crowded people.

Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil* (1857) shows concern in *The Enemy* that the poet of the city might not have the resource to satiate the pastoral world of his mind. Baudelaire writes: “And who knows if the flowers in my mind/ In this poor sand, swept like a beach, will find/ The food of soul to gain a healthy start? (lines 9-11, p. 29). Baudelaire’s first line places the natural world as secluded in his mind. Flowers are nowhere to be found in the physical world of the city. He must cultivate his own garden within himself. He wonders though, if he can provide enough nutrients from the harsh urban world for his mind’s flowers. Further, the flowers here do not grow in their natural soil; they have, instead, been displaced to the vacant beach. The call for a “healthy start” here is indicative of the current state of the urban psyche – ill and dead-ended.

Baudelaire's later text *Artificial Paradises* (1860) elaborates how the urban individual on psychedelic substances (again, primarily opium and hashish here) experiences an effort to overlap the natural with the urban. The components of city life become distorted metaphors for components of the natural world. Baudelaire recalls:

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling and saw a setting sun as red as molten metal: this was the gold of the ceiling. But I then supposed, because of the trellis, that I was in a sort of cage or a house open to space on all sides. Only the bars of my magnificent prison separated me from the outside ... I thought that I might remain imprisoned for some time, for thousands of years perhaps, in that splendid cage, in wild landscapes graced by glorious horizons. (55)

There is a simultaneous sense of freedom and suppression here. Baudelaire acknowledges that he is housed in a room, yet there is a sense of openness to a pastoral reality. The glimmering ceiling is equated to the more authentic glowing source of the setting sun. Baudelaire describes a trellis (meant to direct and contain nature) surrounding his room as a cage to bar him from nature. However, within this cage and within his mind, he encounters "wild landscapes" and "glorious horizons" of the forests and pastures now so distant.

There is an inevitable return to the bustling city though. One moment the psychonaut is cruising his imaginary sea, and then in another instant he can be resurfaced and made aware again of his physical body seamlessly. De Quincey writes, "[In] a moment, all had vanished; thick darkness came on; and, in the twinkling of an eye, I was far away from the mountains, and by lamp-light in Oxford-street" (429). Amid ominous smog, he is thrust out of the pastoral dimension of his mind and back into the industrial zone. The mountain he was just atop has vanished and he is beneath the artificial glow of the streetlight.

## Nineteenth Century Connections to Nature through Psychedelia

In man's reunion with nature, there is an experience of equality and comradery with the earth. Baudelaire's *Correspondences*, for example, describes this dynamic:

Nature is a temple, where the living  
Columns sometimes breathe confusing  
speech; Man walks within these groves  
of symbols, each  
Of which regards him as a kindred thing. (*Flowers of Evil* lines 1-4, p. 19)

The pastoral connection to nature is demonstrated, first, in nature being immediately measured as a superior place. Not only superior, indeed divine. It is a temple housing structures that emit "confusing speech." These "living columns" are similar to the psychoactive plant materials alive in the earth which construct sacred nature described here as a "temple." The psychoactive drugs derived from nature also "breathe confusing speech" to the individual as many experiencers remark on an intake of flooded, patch-worked information. Man reads the signs embedded within the natural world. For instance, Baudelaire refers to nature as "groves of symbols," which I find suggestive of the myriad symbolic visions present in the psychedelic trip. The presence of symbols around man in nature implies that an unspoken language is inherent in nature. Nature's symbols view man "as a kindred thing," indicating that man is also a temple built on confusing speech. In Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradises* there is communication with the natural world in his hallucinations. He states:

Chattering monkeys and mischievous satyrs seemed amused by this prisoner stretched out and condemned to helpless captivity. But all of the mythological divinities gazed at me with charming smiles, as if urging

me to be patient and to endure the spell; and the pupils of their eyes slid sideways, as if in an attempt to hold my gaze. (*Artificial* 55)

There is a psychedelic pastoral conversation occurring in the gaze of the creatures. The beasts are telepathically sharing information with the psychedelic adventurer. Here, though, the adventurer is viewed as a prisoner by the primal personas. They view him as a beastly captive imprisoned to his civilization. They endeavor the subject to fully take them in, to absorb the otherworldly realm in their “charming smiles.”

#### Rural Paradises Sought: Retreat from the Urban

Paradise desires are particularly heightened in citizens of industrialized cultures because the city comes to feel utterly dystopian. Returning to *The Country and the City*, Williams puts forth, “When the pressure of a system is great and is increasing, it matters to find a breathing-space, a fortunate distance, from the immediate and visible controls” (107). Williams argues that the city does not have room for breathing-space – as breathing-space does little for modern production. Independence and individuality do not keep a city running; it is the combined effort of thousands of elbow-to-elbow people. As I said before, these people form one machine (recalling the phrase “cogs in a machine”), and those who realize it find themselves trying to unscrew from the system. Williams detects that, “What was drastically reduced, by enclosures, was just such a breathing-space, a marginal day-to-day independence, for many thousands of people” (107). Pinpointing the concept of “enclosure,” Williams suggests that city dwellers confront a cabin-fever phenomenon of being in the city.



Psychedelics present their taker a door to any conceivable paradise, even ones unknown and perhaps unrecognizable. “Thou only givest these gifts to man,” De Quincey even proclaims of opium, “and thou hast the keys of Paradise, oh, just, subtle, and mighty opium” (399). There is a startling veneration of opium’s power of transportation. In relation, Mickel extends that psychedelics not only provide refuge from “the humdrum existence of everyday life,” but also the passage into “the pleasurable, vicarious existence where the brighter hues of the sunny oriental paradise offered a world of unending charm” (91). A vicarious existence is necessary for the city dweller. Baudelaire’s poem *A Former Life* published in *Flowers of Evil* depicts an Arcadian past remembered by the poet:

In surges rolled the images of skies;  
With solemn, mystic force the sea  
combined Its harmonies, all-  
powerful, sublime,  
With sunset colours, glowing in my eyes.

So there I lived, in a voluptuous calm  
Surrounded by the sea, by splendid blue (lines 4-9, p. 31)

A sense of nostalgia central to pastoral thought is significant in this passage. The title recalling a former life is suggestive of man’s break with the natural world after the rise of industry. A grasp on paradise has since been abandoned for the city.

Another poem from this collection, *Epigraph for a Condemned Book*, beckons the urban individual towards paradise. The forsaken knowledge within the condemned book, though, appears synonymous with the psychedelic exploration of the mind. It is ourselves from whom we are willing condemned, and it and it is ourselves that we need to decode and cherish as the true paradise. Baudelaire writes:

But if your eye can brave the depths  
And not be lost in gulfs or skies,  
Read me, and learn to love this text;

O questing soul who suffers and  
Keeps searching for your paradise  
Have pity on me ... or be damned! (lines 9-14, p. 331)

Baudelaire demonstrates an urgency to engage in the condemned routes of pastoral knowledge housed in the psychedelic mind. There is an appeal to efforts of rediscovering or rebuilding new paradises in the “suffering soul” of the city occupant. Of Baudelaire’s poetry, Sharpe deduces in *Unreal Cities*, “Baudelaire refigures in the most elemental sensory terms the search for heavenly answers beyond the unreal city. And within this transcendental frame rages the ongoing battle to open a space of light and harmony amid the urban storm” (55). Baudelaire locates paradise in the experience of the body – the “elemental sensory terms” – because that is where the psychedelic encounter dumps its information.

A prime example of the way in which psychedelics instill the individual with insight is Baudelaire’s *Artificial Paradises*, in which he imagines:

Hashish covers this mind with a magic lustre, colors it in solemnity and lights all of its depths. Landscapes of lace, receding horizons, perspectives of cities bleached in white by the lurid light of storms, or kindled into flame by the luminous passion of sunsets, depths of space, allegory for the depth of time ... in short, everything, the very universality of existence rises up before you in unimagined glory. (63)

The mind appears to Baudelaire as endowed with a supernatural keenness from the effects of the hashish. He says that the “depths” of the mind will be illuminated; thus, the individual is given opportunity to step inside of and investigate corners of self.

Baudelaire continues by describing various visions of the city being cast out by the natural world. He describes a lightning storm illuminating the city and obscuring it from view, as well as a mighty sunset that appears to enflame the city beneath it. He concludes that the user is presented with essentially everything, or all that can be known – this being the preternatural.

Thomas De Quincey advocates this notion in his *Confessions of an English*

*Opium Eater*:

[Opium], on the contrary (if taken in a proper manner), introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony ... [it] communicates serenity and equipoise to all the faculties, active or passive: and with respect to the temper and moral feelings in general, it gives simply that sort of vital warmth which is approved by the judgment, and which would probably always accompany a bodily constitution of primeval or antediluvian health. (390)

De Quincey posits that a monitored regiment of opium is effective in maintaining a sense of the psychedelic pastoral balance to which I continually refer. He touches upon a sort of archaic knowledge of the prehistoric human condition that comes from transportation to the moment of our fruition. Through psychedelic training, De Quincey believes that paradise is absorbed into the self as a warmth recalling Gautier's "emerald fire." The psychedelic pastoral mind becomes that sought out paradise space.

Moving Forward: The 1960s American Hippie Movement

The tendency towards psychedelic escape from the frustrating limits of industrialism finds another surge of interest following the Second Industrial Revolution, which fostered the rise of technologies such as electricity, the telephone, and the

automobile. In her article, “Artificial Paradises: Baudelaire and the Psychedelic Experience,” Catherine B. Osborn traces the influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century French psychedelic enthusiasts to the American hippie movement of the 1960s. Osborn points out, “[Baudelaire’s] analysis of the motivation of the addict and of the effect of the drug upon him sheds considerable light on the aspirations and psychic processes of our present-day acid-heads” (660). The hippies following the World Wars are a reaction to the absence of the natural world and values and sentiments associated with the pastoral conception of nature. Further, Osborn determines of the psychedelic user:

If only for a few hours he wants to escape from his mud dwelling and conquer Paradise with a single blow. The feeling of these Paradisiac moments seems to be regained under the psychedelics. When our present-day acid-heads speak of the Great White Light, they must be describing Baudelaire’s Paradisiac moments. (668)

Thus, the same information is shared with the hippies that was with the French opium and hashish users roughly a hundred years earlier and Blake before that.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### PSYCHEDELIC PASTORALISM IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century America, in which the majority of psychedelic literature emerged, had already suffered the Second Industrial Revolution (aka the Technological Revolution) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, two devastating World Wars with the Vietnam War not far from view, and increasingly narrow societal norms and ever-dimming world- and self-views. Advances in science and technology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw a shift in the nature of psychedelic drugs. These materials and practices were no longer limited to primitive or marginalized cultures; they had also entered mainstream scientific and clinical studies. This began with Hofmann's accidental ingestion of LSD in 1938 and subsequent adventures of psychologists, scientists, and even countercultural hippie youths reaching back to the more "primitive" or "pastoral" cultures in the Amazon, the East, and Mexico.

#### Aldous Huxley: the Father of Sixties Psychedelia

Literature and literary studies even found intersections with psychedelic research through author, thinker, and drug enthusiast, Aldous Huxley. With the help of

psychologist, Dr. Humphrey Osmond, in March 1953, Huxley began his experiments with mescaline that would inspire numerous novels and psychedelic accounts. In Hofmann's preface to a collection of Huxley's psychedelic writing, *Moksha*, he writes, "It was the endeavor of Aldous Huxley to show how the inward power of these sacramental drugs could be used for the welfare of people living in a technological society hostile to mystical revelations" (xii). Huxley wanted to bring the power of Blake's project to the 20<sup>th</sup> century society. He saw psychedelic drugs as the modern means of opening the doors to the pastoral mind proposed by Blake. And Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* certainly did open the door for many in its "widespread readership within the counterculture, especially among those hippies searching for a love-based alternative to conformist, impersonal society" (Hamilton 84). Early figures of the hippie era, like Timothy Leary, saw inspiration in Huxley, who, according to Leary, "had taken mescaline in a garden and shucked off the mind and awakened to eternity" (*Moksha* 180). Further, Tom Wolfe of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* in 1968, which recounts the psychedelic era, wrote of Huxley:

We're shut off from our own world. Primitive man once experienced the rich and sparkling flood of the senses fully. Children experience it for a few months – until 'normal' training, conditioning, close the doors on this other world, usually for good. Somehow, Huxley had said, the drugs opened these ancient doors. And through them modern man may at last go, and rediscover his divine birthright. (44)

Wolfe emphasizes the fulfillment of primitive man juxtaposed with the ennui and discontentment central to civilized man. The social animal has lost something in his transition away from wilderness. Wolfe perceives that now absent thing as the ancient

ability to more fully perceive one's world. There is a sense of pastoral nostalgia present in Wolfe's equating of primitivism to a child's innocence; that is, before one is told what and how to perceive, the child is open to their inherent pastoral intuition. Wolfe also invokes the image of doors so persistent in psychedelic imagery. The state of the child represents the clean doors of Blake (although Wolfe uses the binary of open versus closed, rather than clean versus dirty); they have not yet been stained by what Wolfe calls conditioning. Moreover, that "divine birthright" to which Wolfe alludes is the same as the pastoral construct of a lost paradise condition. Drugs, then, have given Huxley a means of diminishing the normative influences of his society for the underlying pastoral foundation within himself.

Psychedelic narrative yearns to portray the same sort of access to nirvana within the drug experience. Where pastoralism configures nirvana as a space in nature and believes it to be accessible through more simplistic (i.e. primitive) lifestyles, psychedelia suggests that nirvana is a sort of supreme clear-headedness (i.e. the unconditioned child's state) accessible through psychoactive natural matter. Huxley expresses desire in *The Doors of Perception* for a former paradise in admiring a vase containing "a full-blown Belie of Portugal rose, shell pink with a hint at every petal's base of a hotter, flammier hue; a large magenta and cream-colored carnation; and, pale purple at the end of its broken stalk, the bold heraldic blossom of an iris;" he considers: "I was not looking now at an unusual flower arrangement. I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation – the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence" (5). Huxley's psychedelic experience of the flower vase reunites him with the moment of his creation.

In realizing his position as a human, Huxley experiences an accelerated version of a child's psychological progression. Yet, for a moment, he is the unknowing child, aware of himself and his place in the world and society. He is brought back into Eden – into the instant the first human beheld Earth. Huxley becomes Adam: the original pastoralist.

Further, observing flowers in an outdoor garden, Huxley recalls how the flowers “still trembled on the brink of being supernatural, the pepper trees and carobs along the side streets still manifestly belonged to some sacred grove. Eden alternated with Dodona. Yggdrasil with the mystic Rose” (29). The natural world takes on a celestial aura in the psychedelic experience. One flower in nature appears to mirror the whole of Arcadia: first, he says that Eden becomes Dodona; that is, the abstract Arcadia is portrayed in the ancient Greek oracle to the Mother Goddess, who embodies fertility in nature. Next, he adds that Yggdrasil doubles for the mystic Rose. Yggdrasil is a large ash tree in Norse cosmology that reaches into Heaven and is the center of the nine worlds believed by the Norse to exist. Huxley links this tree with the mystic rose, which in Christian theology is used to name the Virgin Mary and refers to the thorn-less roses housed within Eden. These various symbols of paradise are united in one pastoral experience within the flowers of the garden. The distinct cultures associated with each image merge into one Arcadian universe of the literary pastoral. All of these signs and images of paradise point to a way of perceiving something, rather than one determinable location. The pastoral paradise is the unattainable human condition. Literature seeks it in myths and tropes; yet, many authors believe that psychedelics can give us a sense of a lived experience of paradise without traversing the edges of the world.



Huxley's work includes numerous accounts of absorbing pastoral knowledge from psychedelic paradise spaces. First, he describes flowers as breathing "with no recurrent ebbs but only a repeated flow from beauty to heightened beauty, from deeper to ever deeper meaning" (*Doors* 5-6). Nature, in this instance, is meaning; it is that of which the world is composed. The pulse of nature is sensed as an on-going stream of signification – that is, pure expression and being-ness. The flowers become a window into the essence of the world. They represent perpetual transcendence: the experience of boundless space moving through infinity. This is exemplified in *Heaven and Hell*:

I looked at a film of sand I had picked up on my hand, when I suddenly saw the exquisite beauty of every little grain of it; instead of being dull, I saw that each particle was made up of a perfect geometrical pattern, with sharp angles, from each of which a brilliant shaft of light was reflected, while each tiny crystal shone like a rainbow ... I saw in a vivid way how the whole universe was made up of particles of material which, no matter how dull and lifeless they might seem, were nevertheless filled with this intense and vital beauty. (47)

The seemingly infinitesimal grain of sand reflects the atmospheric blueprints unseen in normal vision. The psychedelic lens enables Huxley to see the pastoral paradise as a map encoded with the composition of things. Structure itself becomes three-dimensional and able to be seen clearly. Psychedelics magnify the simplicity valued in the pastoral mode into the complex nature of the physical world. Later, Huxley reflects:

Drooping in green parabolas from the hedge, the ivy fronds shone with a kind of glassy, jade-like radiance. A moment later a clump of Red Hot Pokers, in full bloom, had exploded into my field of vision. So passionately alive that they seemed to be strained upwards into the blue. Like the chair under the laths, they protected too much. I looked down at the leaves and discovered a cavernous intricacy of the most delicate green lights and shadows, pulsing with undecipherable mystery. (*Doors* 28)

Again, Huxley experiences flowers as illuminations of the life source. They portray microcosms of the universal design that one can witness under psychedelic influences. Huxley says that they protect too much, meaning that they contain the model of the universe. He sees this layout engraved in the “cavernous intricacy” of the leaves. The scheme of the things appears woven into the texture of the natural world, and is viewable through the ultra-pastoral glasses given in the psychedelic experience.

### The 1950s Beat Movement

At the same time that Huxley was experimenting with psychedelic drugs, the American Beat Movement was finding similar escapes into consciousness through mind-altering substances. According to Hamilton’s encyclopedia, the Beats were existential wanderers who “explored their minds through mysticism, drugs, and experimentation, searching for enlightenment, inveighing against civilization’s hypocrisies and brutality,” and this meant, “embracing the body and the holiness found in everything, including the sordid and the obscene” (22). The Beats were obsessed with the seemingly grim and grotesque because it was all they could find outside of the artificialities of the mainstream consumer culture.

In 1956, beat poet Allen Ginsberg composed *Howl* in response to the grief he witnessed. He saw the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as a time when heightened curiosity about the self was in stark contrast to the dehumanizing industrial advances in play. He writes:

I saw the best minds of my generation  
destroyed by madness, starving hysterical  
naked,  
dragging themselves through the negro streets

at dawn looking for an angry fix  
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly  
connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night ... (lines 1-6, p.  
9)

Ginsberg speaks of the 1950s society as maddened and un-nurtured by the urban environment. The “ancient heavenly connection” for which they burn is indicative of the severed relationship between man and the former, now primal world. In vice, they seek reunion with “starry dynamo in the machinery of night,” meaning they are eager to transcend the industrial pit for the lost psychedelic link with the universe. Later, opening Part II of *Howl*, Ginsberg laments, “What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open/ their skulls and ate their brains and imagination?” (lines 1-2, p. 21). He comments on the way in which industrial progress effectively diminishes the individual’s selfhood and creates a city of automatons.

#### Military Interests in Psychedelic Drugs

One example of the techno-industrial advances threatening individual liberation and creativity was the military’s interest in psychedelic drugs as chemical warfare materials. The dominating effects on people’s will and intentionality struck the curiosity of governmental powers seeking effective warfare strategies over mass groups.

Grinspoon and Bakalar reveal that “the United States Army and the CIA also investigated them in ethically dubious and sometimes outrageous experiments as incapacitating agents for chemical warfare” (61). The military hoped that the altered state brought on by psychedelic drugs would be useful in willing enemies or perhaps immobilizing enemies

for takeover. Metzner says, however, “it was the capacity of LSD to tap into the hidden mystical potentials of the human mind that ruined its applicability as a weapon of war” (20). This means, instead of incapacitating individuals in order to direct their will, the LSD was opening their minds to a higher level of intuition and knowledge. LSD was making individuals more attuned to their pastoral world and the balance within it; it may be able to pacify people, but it was not able to stupefy and dull individuals to their surroundings in the way that the military had hoped. Metzner determines that this is because, “Rather than making subjects predictably submissive to mind-controlling programming, LSD had the unnerving propensity to suspend the existing mental programming and thereby release one into awesome worlds of cosmic consciousness (20). The “cosmic consciousness” that the psychedelic experiencer is released into is comparable to the psychedelic pastoral state. It is a cerebral communion with our ideals of nature and our original bond with that space. Military forces cannot control the LSD user, because he or she would not be able to take such industrial and societal structures seriously; these things would appear to be a flimsy farce within the hidden pastoral forest.

Ironically, many believe that it was the military’s interest in psychedelia that opened it to the countercultural scene of the 1950s and 60s. The sanctioning of the governmental project named MK-ULTRA is considered the primary mode by which American youths were initiated into the psychedelic world, and the famed American author, Ken Kesey, acted as the mediator between psychedelia and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century counterculture. Adam Gorightly’s 2009 news piece, “Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg, Jerry Garcia – CIA MK-ULTRA Medical Guinea Pigs,” outlines that “while a Wallace Stegner

Fellow at Stanford University (1959-1961),” Ken Kesey “offered himself as a human guinea pig in an MK-ULTRA subproject utilizing such psychedelics as LSD-25, psilocybin, and mescaline inside the walls of Menlo Park Veterans Hospital.” Gorightly goes on to determine, “It was via Ken Kesey, who disbursed smuggled quantities of then-legal LSD to his intellectual cohorts at Stanford’s Penny Lane, that the psychedelic Sixties was born.” It was Kesey’s familiarity with the consciousness-expanding capabilities of psychedelics that inspired him to share these materials with the suffering post world war youths of America. While the military hoped that these materials would benefit and bolster the American military’s warfare tactics, these drugs actually offered a means of pastoral attunement and mental escape from the war-torn world of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Tom Wolfe’s *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* also describes Kesey’s obsession with altering the minds and perspectives of 1960s countercultural youth. Wolfe notes:

He [Kesey] talked about something called the Acid Test and forms of expression in which there would be no separation between himself and the audience. It would be one experience, with all the senses opened wide, words, music, lights, sounds, touch – *lightning*. (8)

In a time of vast and utter separation and disillusionment, Kesey wanted to reunite the hippie audience with the pastoral world from which William Blake claims modern individuals are shut away. “Don’t say stop plunging into the forest,” Kesey proclaims, “But somebody has to be the pioneer and leave the marks for others to follow” (Wolfe 30). And Ken Kesey was the pioneer for the hippie movement. He was responsible for popularizing the psychedelic practice and lifestyle, thus moving psychedelia “out of the

psychiatric clinics and laboratories and triggered a series of profound cultural transformations the full dimension of which have yet to be fully appreciated” (Metzner 287). Ken Kesey, then, liberated psychedelia from the confines of science and modern warfare and into the hands of mentally starved American youths whose experiences were primarily of wartime and urban devastation. The bestowment of psychedelia onto the counterculture youth of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century incited the rise of a subculture that has seen numerous revivals ever since – the hippie culture.

### Evolution of the Hippie Aesthetic

The 1960s American hippie movement can still be considered the most prominent moment of psychedelic pastoral thought. The hippies used psychedelic drugs to break away from modern techno-industrialism and the oppressive belief systems and consumerist ideology that it endorses. The retreat evolved into literal psychedelic pastoral communes where hippies could relinquish mass society for rural, tribal lifestyles. Terry Gifford’s explanation of pastoral gives credence to the hippie aesthetic in suggesting the pastoral as “a mode of political critique of present society, or it can be a dramatic form of unresolved dialogue about tensions in that society, or it can be a retreat from politics into an apparently aesthetic landscape that is devoid of conflict and tension” (11). The hippie movement exemplifies Gifford’s view of pastoral as a means of critiquing and rebelling against one’s current socio-economic conditions. Hippies sought retreat to natural lifestyles in the face of global technological homogenization only bringing more strife to the West.

An appropriation of Eastern culture was a large facet of Western psychedelic retreats that saw the East as more primitive in their spirituality. Following the lead of mainstream figures such as The Beatles and Timothy Leary and company, countercultural youths of the 1970s took to the East upon what became the Hippie Trail. This trail marked a path from Western hotspots such as Amsterdam or the UK, southeast through Afghanistan and Pakistan, and finally reaching its destination in India. An article by Agnieszka Sobocinska, scholar of Australian studies, entitled, "Following the 'Hippie Sahibs': Colonial Cultures of Travel and the Hippie Trail," explains how the movement of Western rebellious youths overseas in the East signifies the privileged state of the West in entering into and making a self-interested project of other countries. The Hippie Trail also highlights the West's admiration and exoticizing of the East for their more primitive, nature-based ideologies. Sobocinska defines the Hippie Trail as follows:

A loosely defined movement with both cultural and political offshoots, the counterculture was motivated by widespread dissatisfaction with the perceived conservatism of Western society and its conventions, and characterised by youth, rebellion, self-expression and the performance of personal freedom. Many of those heading to Asia did so seeking temporary respite from the perceived monotony of middle-class life in Europe, America or Australia. Others travelled for more prosaic reasons: by the late 1960s, Asia was seriously fashionable.

The Hippie Trail was the ultimate pastoral retreat and return in that dissatisfied youths were able to literally escape the urban atmosphere for the more simple and agrarian cultures of the East. Westerners, with all their modern advances, were afforded the privilege to enter into other landscapes and piecemeal an identity from these other cultures. Many, however, did not make the appropriate return to the West and eventually

dwindled their resources before turning to street begging, which is a perversion of pastoralism amid the cityscape in that hippies desire a simple, pastoral lifestyle financed by the money of Eastern city dwellers.

The return from the East has had enduring effects on Western aesthetics and popular culture as trends such as “Afghan coats, Tibetan prayer beads, Nepalese scarves and batik t- shirts [became] the height of fashion across Europe, North America and Australia in the early 1970s.” The Eastern appeal was further exemplified by experimental texts like *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass (formerly Dr. Richard Alpert) in 1978, which is a series of drawings in Eastern Hindu styles that are accompanied by inspirational idioms as seen in Figure 3.



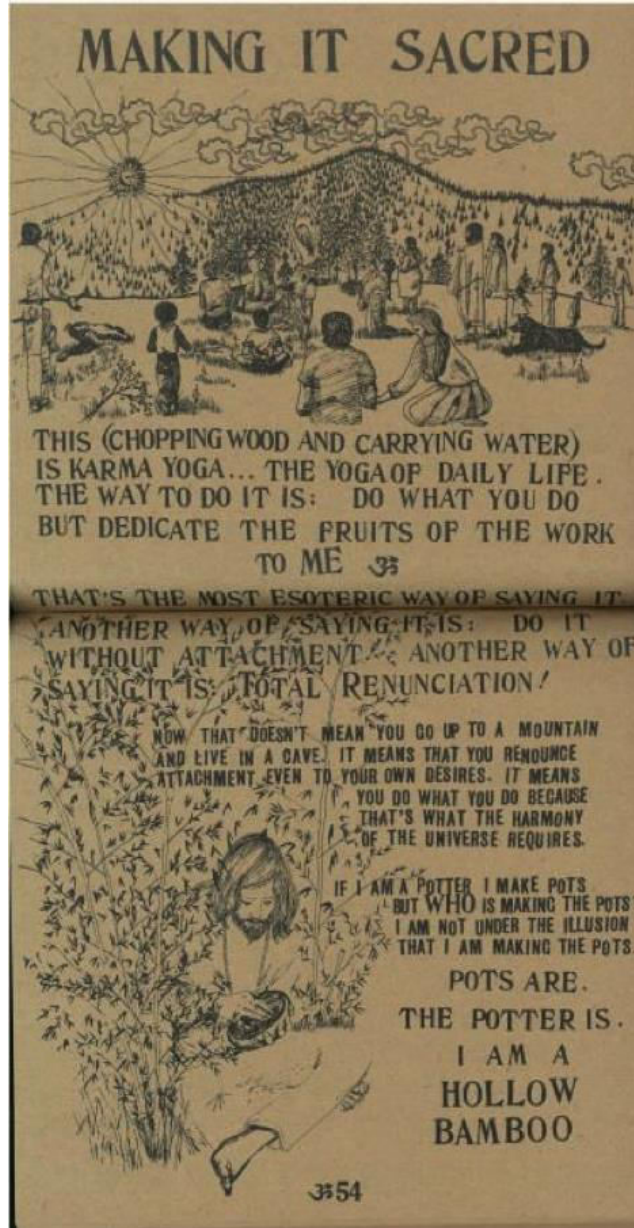


Figure 3

Ram Dass titles the page “Making It Sacred,” and tells his readers that the menial tasks of the landsman are the true religion available to man: “This (chopping wood and carrying water) is ... the yoga of daily life” (54). Religion, then, is in the work that we do for and with the natural world; it is not through the dominator religions popular to the Judeo-

Christian West. The images surrounding these words envision a community in tune with the natural world and in praise of that world. There is a man encapsulated in greenery with the following quote beside him: “Now that doesn’t mean you go up to a mountain and live in a cave. It means that you renounce attachment even to your own desires. It means you do what you do because that’s what the harmony of the universe requires” (54). Ram Dass invokes the necessary pastoral retreat and return here. He claims that hermitage is still egoism and self-involvement; rather, we must work the earth, not hole ourselves away within it.

What Ram Dass emphasizes is that hippies were dissatisfied with modern notions of progress and profitability in the West that they saw as counterproductive and counterintuitive to how humans were supposed to live in the natural world. Timothy Miller’s second edition of *The Hippies and American Values* attests:

Sensitive personas, counterculturalists argued, had real trouble coexisting with the jive crap of American life – the race for money and status, the dehumanization that pervaded technological society. Dopers thus were Luddites who symbolically smashed the machines with their substances.  
(6)

The hippie culture was in stark contrast to the ever-developing techno-industrial progress; rather, industry was the enemy of hippies seeking pastoral beginnings.

This rural lifestyle afforded for the hippie culture was a retreat back to their nostalgic youth. The hippie movement speaks to Emerson’s suggestion, “In the woods, is perpetual youth” (1284). Hippies hoped that remaining in the woods would prevent them from having to enter into the mainstream society – the work force, the real world, etc.

“The implicit purpose of the hippie style” Grinspoon and Bakalar explain, “was to

prolong the freedom and playfulness of childhood as far as possible into adulthood: to make the culture a youth culture” (71). This desire to maintain their youth is equivalent to the pastoral nostalgia that places our primitive origins as the sacred space to which we can scarcely, or perhaps never fully, return. They go on to say that the hippies sought “to live in holy poverty, scorning money, property, and upward mobility ... they would retreat through psychedelic drugs to a lost state of innocence, a time before time began when the creation was fresh and the earth a paradise” (71-72). This is highly pastoral in that, according to Empson, one major objective of pastoral thinking is to “take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one” (114). Hippie youths did not believe themselves to have a very fulfilling life within the normative notions of progress and refinement only limiting our human creative capabilities. Psychedelic drugs, therefore, were used as a means of uncovering that inhibited creative genius within. Likewise, Emerson says, “The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward sense are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of adulthood. His intercourse with heaven and earth, becomes part of his daily food” (1283). This resounds with the hippie desire to retain one’s youth by never leaving the forest for the city; that is, by reconnecting with the natural world, one prolongs succumbing to the modern ideals of citizenship and societal responsibilities.

The Back-to-Earth Movement of the 1960s is another prime instance of the hippies’ commitment to pastoral retreat in areas primarily in the mid-West and on the West Coast. This movement, according to Hamilton’s encyclopedia of 1960s counterculture, began with “a desire to escape crowded, impersonal, polluted cities and

live close to nature, peacefully and harmoniously. In rejecting middle-class materialism and trying to live off the land, some back-to-earth hippies formed communes, others established family homesteads (15). Not only were hippies aesthetically and ideologically retreating to nature, many were performing literal pastoral retreats. Miller attributes these relocations to “the hippie preference for the natural over the artificial, the organic over the plastic” (78). He continues, “In the country a clan could grow and consume its own food free of contaminants, breathe clean air, be naked at will, and be close to nature and to the cosmic forces. Getting clean and pure and back to basics was a major part of the communal agenda (78). What psychedelics did, then, was teach the hippie youths that “human beings were an integral part of nature, not its masters, and one was thus obligated to adapt oneself to the flow of things instead of interfering with it and trying to conquer it, which was perceived to be the traditional Western way of dealing with nature” (Miller 92). Therefore, psychedelics readjust the individual’s perspective back to its original pastoral status. They undo centuries of conditioning by Western ideals and replace those faulty concepts with the forgotten symbiosis to the natural world. Humans are in nature; there can be no authority over nature because it is inseparable from the human mind.

## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### A PROPOSITION FOR PSYCHEDELIC PASTORALISM

Psychedelic drugs have always and will continue to infiltrate the literary world. What their appearance throughout Western society since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century has shown us is that mind-alteration and mental play have been pivotal to humanity since its origins in hunting-gathering and small tribal societies prior to commercial agriculture and notions of natural resources. Huxley believes that we have an “urge to escape from selfhood and the environment [that] is in almost everyone almost all the time” (*Doors* 30). And, as a result, Daniel Pinchbeck says in *Breaking Open the Head*, “Artists and intellectuals [search] for antidotes to the suffocating materialism of the West” (115). Psychedelic drugs, then, have become the penultimate antidote for Western materialism in that they open the individual to alternative spaces to view the world and the lived experience.

The psychedelic experience takes the individual outside of the material world into the cerebral pastoral space of the psyche. Emerson claims, “By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause” (1293).

The psychedelic pastoral works to envision these degrees through literature merging the psychedelic experience with pastoral sentiments. Boon's *The Road to Excess* claims that "Literature and drugs are two dynamically developing domains of human activity that have coevolved alongside and interpenetrated with many other such domains, human or not" (5). That being so, scholarship must unearth the intersections of these two disciplines to consider why writers have often turned to drugs and why drugs appear to be an ideal mode of expression for the writer. Harold E. Toliver's *Pastoral Forms and Attitudes* says of the pastoral literature, "As one of our more habitual fictions, pastoral is a vital instrument in taking the measure of reality and proposing new ways of seeing it" (208). The psychedelic experience takes one to the space which pastoral literature attempts to envision; therefore, the psychedelic pastoral becomes the utmost space for "a discovery of unfamiliar dimensions of nature and a common sacred ground in the landscape" (Toliver 11). Psychedelia offers the altered mind as one of these viable "unfamiliar dimension of nature" that Toliver values in pastoral discovery.

An introduction to psychedelic pastoral theory is necessary to more fully understand our on-going fascination with mental escape and newfound practices of manipulating our being-in-the-world. My intention is to propose an interdisciplinary study of psychedelic pastoral theory. The primary purpose of this theory is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the creative mind and the pastoral mode. The pastoral assumes that we are always trying to recover the contentedness that we assume was experienced in our original interdependence with the natural world; comparatively, the psychedelic also assumes that we are always trying to recover the contentedness that came before

socialization and integration into Western civilization. Therefore, these are both narratives of recovery; what we seek to recover, then, is some perceived original state.

Psychedelic pastoral theory is concerned with discovering avenues of mental play that open the individual to alternative thinking-spaces; these are spaces that enable individuals to replenish and reorient themselves for reentry into the real world. Both theories share the task of uniting the individual with whatever wild (i.e. free) space they desire. This space is the natural world for the pastoralist and the visionary world for the psychonaut. What psychedelic pastoral theory would look like, then, is a duality of compassion for the natural world from which we have been disconnected alongside an understanding of how that paradise space to which we seek return can only be truly located in the mind. By coming to better understand how psychedelic drugs foster a more fulfilling connection to these paradises, the West might begin to reconsider those organic doorways into the pastoral vision that is so central to our sense of self as a Western society in whole.

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