

The Door in the Wall

Jay Stevens

**Psychedelics in the 1950s. An excerpt from
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There is no way of determining who was the first American to take LSD. But one of the earliest was a Boston doctor named Robert Hyde, who practiced at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. One of Hyde's colleagues, a psychiatrist named Max Rinkel, had obtained some LSD and was curious whether it really did make a normal person crazy for a few hours. Rinkel didn't phrase it quite that way, of course. What he was interested in was model psychoses, test-tube schizophrenias that might shed a little light on the etiology of madness.

Hyde was Rinkel's first guinea pig. With the others gathered around, he emptied the brown ampule of Delysid into a glass of water and sat down to wait. And wait. Growing impatient, Hyde announced he was going to do his evening rounds; the others could tag along if they wished, but it certainly didn't feel like anything much was going to happen. What followed was fascinating. Right before their eyes, Hyde, the even-keeled Vermonter, turned into a paranoiac, as a swarm of little suspicions—Why are those people smiling? Was that a door closing?—began eating away at his composure.

Rinkel reported on his LSD work at the 1951 APA Convention in Cincinnati. He had found, he said, remarkable congruence between LSD-inspired model psychoses and schizophrenia: We noticed, predominantly, changes similar to those seen in schizophrenic patients. The subjects exhibited preeminently difficulties in thinking, which became retarded, blocked, autistic, and disconnected.... Feelings of indifference and unreality with suspiciousness, hostility, and resentment also approximated schizophrenic phenomena. Hallucinations and delusional disturbances were much less prominent...

But these were relative conclusions, Rinkel was quick to stress. For every person who became autistic, another turned manic, making jokes and puns that were completely out of character; for every bout of hostility, there was a corresponding moment of deep ecstasy. About the only generality that could be made was that normal people did not remain normal after taking LSD: they changed, and in that sense what happened could be classed as abnormal.

But were they crazy? Were these true model psychoses? Or were the researchers projecting their own desires onto what they were seeing? These weren't easy questions to answer, but as time went on, and as more and more researchers began studying LSD, they discovered that they

were creating a lot of the negative reaction. LSD made one remarkably sensitive to nuance. If the examining psychologist was cold or abrupt, then the patient often responded with hostility or hurt. Conversely a warm, gentle doctor could provoke assertions of love and well-being that went far beyond the bounds of respectability.

The tests were a particular sore spot. Just as the LSD state reached full throttle, out came the personality tests, the Rorschach, the TAT, the Bellevue Blocks, and Draw-A-Person Test. Frequently the research subjects became angry and intractable at this point, claiming, just the way schizophrenics did, that the questions were boring, stupid, irrelevant. "In the LSD test situation," warned Rinkel, "subjects appeared more interested in their own feelings and inner experiences than in interacting with the examiner, confirming behaviorally the test results, which indicated increasing self-centeredness." Many years later, a former school psychologist named Arthur Kleps, appearing before a Congressional hearing, offered one of the better explanations for why people taking LSD found tests irritating: "If I were to give you an IQ test and during the administration one of the walls of the room opened up, giving you a vision of the blazing glories of the central galactic suns, and at the same time your childhood began to unreel before your inner eye like a three-dimension color movie, you would not do well on the intelligence test."

But a science has to use the tools available to it; besides, the tests bore out what everyone hoped, that LSD really was creating model psychoses. Researchers began referring to it not as a hallucinogen, which was its proper medical classification, but as a *psychotomimetic*, a mimicker of madness.

By the early Fifties there were a dozen pockets of LSD research around the country. Most followed Rinkel's work with model psychoses, although a few confined themselves to animal toxicology studies, and at least one was pursuing Sandoz's other suggestion and using LSD in a therapeutic setting. But all were impressed by the drug's sheer power and the astonishing effects it produced, not just in normal folks, but in crazy people as well. Startling things happened when you gave LSD to mental patients. One catatonic took the drug and three and a half hours later began bouncing around the ward, laughing uproariously. In the afternoon she played basketball. That night she danced. But the next morning she was her old catatonic self again. Or there was the case of the hebephrenic schizophrenic that usually spent her days giggling and chattering inanities about the birds and the flowers. Thirty minutes after receiving 100 micrograms of LSD she became dead serious, all the laughter gone from her voice. "This is serious business," she told her ward doctor. "We are pathetic people. Don't play with us." Later she assaulted the hospital aides and made sexual overtures to the chief nurse.

It was fascinating stuff. But what did it all mean? What happened after LSD or mescaline passed through the blood/brain barrier? Did it interfere in some fundamental way with the normal neurochemistry? And if it did, might not the brain produce its own LSD-like metabolites? This, anyway, was what a lot of researchers were asking themselves. Was there an organic basis for madness, and if there was, who was going to find it?

A number of theories were ventured, but the one that concerns us here is the adrenochrome theory of two English psychiatrists, Humphrey Osmond and John Smythies.

The first schizophrenic Humphrey Osmond ever treated was a girl who told him that whenever she looked in the mirror, what she saw was an elephant. As soon as she left, Osmond trotted off to find his superior and tell him of this very odd delusion. "Well you know she has schizophrenia," his boss had said. "What's that?" Osmond had asked. He'd heard of it, of course. What he wanted were the answers to the usual first questions—symptoms, treatment, etiology. But what he discovered was that nobody could tell him anything substantive. There were lots of theories, but no hard data that did for schizophrenia what Freud and his followers had done for the mechanism of repression, for the dynamics of neuroses. Tired of his questions, Osmond's boss finally suggested that he look up a Jungian analyst named Anthony Hampton, who in turn suggested that he read a book by Thomas Hennell called *The Witnesses*.

Alongside Clifford Beers's *The Mind That Found Itself*, Hennell's book was one of the more evocative descriptions of what it was like to suffer and recover from extreme psychosis. Hennell captured perfectly the gradual inflation of his own disease. The nocturnal noises. The odd subjectivity of objects. The contradictory feeling of great personal destiny coupled with a growing certainty that one's ego was shredding away. The symptoms were a bit like an orchestra tuning up, first the strings, then the woodwinds, last the brass. As anyone who has attended a concert knows, the tuning up is nothing compared to the full orchestral blast. For Hennell the crescendo came on a day when he decided to walk into Oxford. He noticed that the other pedestrians were giving him meaningful looks, as though they knew something he didn't. As dusk arrived, Hennell saw that the fields beyond the hedgerow were beginning to boil, a bit like a Van Gogh painting, while up in the sky the stars were wheeling about, again a bit like a Van Gogh painting. Hennell only had a second to savor these weird perceptions before a squad car of secret police roared up, clapped him into a van filled with meat, and drove him off to a secret prison.

Although Osmond reread *The Witnesses* many times, its net effect was to leave him more perplexed than ever about the nature of schizophrenia.

After his apprenticeship ended, Osmond took a job at St. George's, one of London's famous teaching hospitals. There he met a rather exotic—exotic in terms of Osmond's Scotch upbringing in the Surrey downs—junior resident named John Smythies. Smythies had grown up in India during the twilight of the Raj, where his father had been chief forester. It was Osmond's impression that young Smythies had had numerous exotic adventures before being dispatched to Rugby and Cambridge, for the intellectual tempering all proper English gentlemen underwent. Smythies's passion was the nature of mind, and he was not at all reticent about the fact that he considered psychiatry merely a handy way to investigate what was really a philosophical problem. This, plus his habit of speaking in brisk declaratives prefaced by the phrase "it's obvious," did not endear Smythies to his superiors, most of whom were old-time clinicians with a deep distrust of theory. But Osmond thought Smythies "not much less bright than he thought he was," and they got on famously.

Smythies had a number of eccentric enthusiasms—parapsychology was one—and one day he showed up at St. George's with a book by Alexandre Rouhier, a contemporary of Beringer's, who had written a book on peyote called *Le Peyotl*. On one of its pages was a molecular formula for

mescaline.

The formula reminded Smythies of something, but he couldn't put his finger on what it was. Osmond also had a feeling of vague recognition. Then they showed the picture to a former biochemist who said it looked sort of like thyroid and sort of like adrenaline, with the nod probably going to the latter. This similarity between adrenaline and mescaline suggested an intriguing hypothesis: what if, in stressful situations, adrenaline got transformed into something chemically akin to mescaline. Wouldn't that account for Hennell's boiling fields and whirling skies, for the elephant in the mirror? It was known that certain plants were capable of such a metabolic transformation, known as transmethylation, but there was no evidence that animals were capable of transmethylation.

Obtaining some mescaline from Lights Chemical, Osmond and Smythies began testing their hypothesis. Osmond took 400 milligrams of mescaline one afternoon in Smythies's rooms, which were down a back alley off Wimpole Street. A tape recorder had been borrowed to record his thoughts. Osmond found it menacing. First it glowed a deep purple, then a cherry red. Putting his hand close to it, it felt as though someone had thrown open the door to a blast furnace. For the first time Hennell made sense. Schizophrenics weren't talking in similes and metaphors—there was no *as if* involved in the mad state—they were talking about reality, and it was scientific arrogance to dismiss it as delusion.

Once his astonishment had cooled, Osmond turned to the philosophical ramifications. If what we took to be objective reality was so fragile that it could be swept away by 400 milligrams of mescaline, then perhaps the vitalists who had argued that the brain was merely a mechanism to stabilize an anarchic world were correct. Perhaps the notion of objective reality was a paradox.

Smythies and Osmond published a small essay on these matters in 1952 called "A New Approach to Schizophrenia." In it they theorized that the body, confronted with an anxious state, might react by producing an endogenous hallucinogen, in this case one derived from adrenaline. The hallucinogen would cause the perceptual world to change, leading to more stress, more adrenaline, more of the natural hallucinogen, and ever deeper levels of psychosis. The only way to break this cycle would be for the sufferer to literally turn off reality: to retreat into another world. This, paradoxically, was the body's only way, short of death, of preserving its own sanity.

What was particularly elegant about this theory, which they called the M factor theory, was the way it combined both a neurological and a psychological dynamic, thus marrying what were usually two mutually exclusive bodies of research.

Having imagined this hypothetical chemical, the M factor, the next step was either to isolate it in its natural state or to make some up in the lab. It was a dilemma not unlike that faced by the American astronomer W. H. Pickering, when he had deduced in 1919 that the solar system had to contain another planet, as yet undiscovered, which Pickering confidently named Pluto. Eleven years later Pluto was found exactly where Pickering had predicted it would be. But the tools of astronomy, as Osmond and Smythies quickly learned, were far more sophisticated than the tools of neuropharmacology. The mysteries of outer space were child's play compared to the complexities of inner space. They approached some chemists at Imperial Chemical—"the chaps

who had done the original work on synthesizing penicillin"—and asked them to work on a series of compounds intermediate between adrenaline and mescaline. The chemists tried, but soon gave up: however slight the differences were on paper, they were insurmountable in the lab.

So they decided to concentrate on the amenochromes, which were formed when adrenaline decomposes naturally. One of these amenochromes, adrenochrome, seemed a likely candidate, as it had a molecular structure surprisingly similar to mescaline.

Osmond swallowed his first adrenochrome in 1952. After ten minutes the ceiling changed color, and whenever he closed his eyes he was overwhelmed by a swarm of dots, which merged and fled with the kind of shifting pointillism one finds in schools of fish. Someone pulled out a pack of Rorschach cards, and Osmond astounded himself with the inventive shapes he was able to discover. Walking back down the corridors of the hospital, Osmond was amazed at how sinister they seemed: what did all the cracks on the floor mean? And why were there so many of them? His colleagues were delighted with his behavior—this certainly was a model psychosis—and Osmond watched them celebrating as though from behind a thick glass wall.

Osmond was no longer in England when he had his adventure with adrenochrome. In mid-1952 he had accepted a job in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, as Clinical Director of Saskatchewan Hospital. The place was touted as the finest mental hospital on the prairies, although this was something of a joke since it was the *only* mental hospital on the prairies. Actually the place was so rank, so depressingly nineteenth-century-madhouse, that when Osmond and his colleagues received the APA's Silver Plaque award for most improved mental hospital, American customs declared the "before" pictures to be obscene and special dispensation had to be obtained before they were allowed into the country.

It was Osmond's job to clean up this mess without unduly rattling the Old Director, who was supposed to remain on as a patriarchal figurehead until retirement. But the Old Director resented this new crop of bright boys, with their talk of insulin treatments and electroshock and the search for the mysterious M factor. Whenever possible he countermanded Osmond's innovations.

Work on the M factor was proceeding slowly. In the absence of Smythies, who was scheduled to arrive in Saskatchewan in a few months, Osmond had begun working with a psychiatrist affiliated with Saskatchewan University named Abram Hoffer. Hoffer had a passing acquaintance with Heinrich Klüver, who had suggested that sometime he might want to look into mescaline as "quite the most interesting thing around." When Smythies finally arrived he brought along some notes for an essay, which, after some input from Osmond, was published under both their names in the *Hibbert Journal*. Smythies had been reading up on eighteenth-century medicine, a period of fanciful theories and bitter polemics, with little regard for the facts. It was, Smythies thought, a period with remarkable similarity to twentieth-century psychology. What was needed was a new model of scientific progress, one along the lines that Karl Popper had suggested, which saw science proceeding from Orthodoxy (the accepted theory of the known facts) to Heresy (a new ordering of the facts, often of greater inclusiveness) and thence to a New Orthodoxy, and so on through further heresies and better orthodoxies.

Mescaline was mentioned exactly twice. The first instance came in the context of an analysis

of the psychobiological explanation of schizophrenia. "No one is really competent to treat schizophrenia unless he has experienced the schizophrenic world himself," they wrote. "This is possible to do quite simply by taking mescaline." The second mention was in the context of a new theory of mind, which henceforth would have to account for three new sets of facts:

- A) The recent development in the study of the design and behaviour of electronic computing machines, and the study of analogous brain mechanisms.
- B) The recent advances in parapsychology. We refer to the establishment of Extra-sensory perception as scientific fact.
- C) The nature of the phenomena witnessed under the influence of mescaline. One would have thought that anyone, concerned in devising systems of psychology based on the concept of the unconscious mind, would have utilized such a prolific source of material as mescaline offers, but no one has yet done so, although Rouhier made this suggestion as long ago as 1922.

One day, out of the blue, a note arrived from Aldous Huxley congratulating them on their sound reasoning and inviting them to drop by and see him should they be in Los Angeles in the near future. Huxley also expressed a willingness to try mescaline.

Although Osmond and Smythies were flattered by praise from such an illustrious intellectual, the probability that either would be passing through Los Angeles in the near future was almost nil, however willing they might have been to escape the bitter Canadian winter. But then fate intervened. Tensions at the hospital had reached such a level that the politicians in charge of the Saskatchewan mental health program felt it was time to have it out with the Old Director. For practical reasons, it was felt that Osmond should be absent during this confrontation and arrangements were made for him to attend the upcoming APA convention in Los Angeles. Which was why, in early May 1953, Osmond found himself flying south, carrying not only a rare invitation to stay at the house of Aldous Huxley, but a small vial of mescaline as well.

Aldous Huxley was fifty-eight when he dashed off that characteristically enthusiastic note to Osmond and Smythies. He had been a featured player on the literary stage for thirty-two years, his reputation secured by a quartet of satirical novels begun when both he and the century were in their twenties—exercises of such brilliance that André Maurois, the French belle lettrist, lauded Huxley as "the most intelligent writer of our generation," by which he meant Huxley's mind held more information in perfect equilibrium than anyone else around.

He was supposed to have read, while still in short pants, the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which was certainly conceivable from the volumes of essays that flowed from his pen, and paid his rent for most of his life. He seemed to know something about everything, which might lead one to think he was either a bore or a dilettante, but he was neither. His opinions, whether the subject was molecular biology or the Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca, were so

precociously sharp that art critic Kenneth Clark once grouched that after a lifetime studying Piero, in the end he seemed to know "far less than Aldous had learnt in a few weeks, by some miraculous combination of intellect and intuition."

Once, vacationing in Italy, Huxley happened to stumble across the filming of *Helen of Troy*, one of those excessive Hollywood costume dramas of the 1950s. Now this production, on this particular day, had a particularly pressing problem: the script called for a *bacchanale*. But neither the director, a midwesterner, nor the assistant director, a New Yorker, were exactly sure what a *bacchanale* was. Enter Aldous Huxley. Who, as the assistant director later told the story, "went on for hours relating what he knew about bacchanales. As a result our bacchanale was so successful that the crowd people could not stop when the director cried 'cut.'"

That was the quintessential Huxley: amusing, full of exotic lore made even more exotic by his own exotic physique: six four and so thin it was as though a flagpole had animated itself. When Aldous was young most of his friends thought he looked like a grasshopper, but as he matured he was usually compared to a waterbird, a heron or egret. He had a long, wide face that was always a decade younger than his calendar age, topped first by brown, then silver hair. But his most compelling features were his blue eyes, one sightless, the other nearly so, and his conversation, which flowed with such grace it was easily the most athletic aspect of a decidedly unathletic man. Huxley would lean back in his chair, fix his myopic blue eyes above and beyond one's head and then let his thoughts unwind "without interruption until he had turned over every stone to discover the strange facts hidden beneath them, or had followed the labyrinth... and had unraveled the truth at the end of it." Unlike a lot of champion talkers, he was also an avid listener, with an insatiable appetite for information, for gossip, stories, books, politics, science, scandal, and facts, the more exotic the better, murmuring "most extraordinary" whenever a choice tidbit presented itself.

Had Aldous Huxley died at thirty-five, shortly after the publication of his fifth novel, *Brave New World*, his place in English literature would have been secure. Somerset Maugham might have placed him alongside himself, in the first seats of the second row; Scott Fitzgerald could have lamented the premature closing, after a rousing first act, of another promising career. But Huxley didn't die—he changed, which is sometimes worse. From the mid-Thirties on he immersed himself in mysticism and oriental philosophy. His novels, when he stirred himself to produce one (which he did at regular intervals for the simple reason that novels earned more than essays), were really philosophical essays dolled up in fictional garb, like something Voltaire or one of the other philosophes might have written. "Nobody since Chesterton has so squandered his gifts," wrote the critic Cyril Connolly in *Enemies of Promise*, which was ironically, an inquiry into why he, Connolly, had squandered his own gifts.

But the feeling that something alarming had happened to Aldous was widespread. To André Maurois, the new incarnation was "an astonishing reversal of his thought, and disturbing to anyone as close to the earlier Aldous Huxley as I had been." Few of his early admirers dared or cared to follow him down the paths that led first to *The Perennial Philosophy*, his compilation of the mystical components underlying all religion, and thence to his suggestion to Osmond and

Smythies that he was not adverse, indeed he was most eager, to try mescaline, a drug that presumably made one crazy.

The consternation over this transformation dogged Huxley until the day he died, which was the same day John Kennedy died, November 22, 1963. When the obituary writers came to summarize his life in the twenty or thirty column inches reserved for the passing of Great Men, their inability to rationalize the whole was obvious. What they didn't realize was that Huxley's life was less a career than a quest for... what? The perfect synthesis of science, religion, and art? The uniting of the inner man and the outer man? "My primary occupation," Huxley once wrote in one of his approximately ten thousand letters, "is the achievement of some kind of over-all understanding of the world... that accounts for the facts."

He was born Aldous Leonard Huxley on July 26, 1894, in the county of Surrey, England, the third son of Dr. Leonard Huxley, educator, editor, and minor literary figure, and the grandson of T. H. Huxley, eminent biologist and one of the most famous men in Victorian England. Known as "Darwin's Bulldog," T. H. was the man who had demolished Bishop Wilberforce in the famous Oxford debates over Darwin's theory of evolution. He personified the scientific rationalist, and he eloquently argued its case in newspapers and magazines, and from lecterns throughout the English-speaking world. His collected essays, filling nine volumes, began appearing in the year of his third grandson's birth, and just a few months before his own death at age seventy.

"Clear, cold logic engines," were what T. H. demanded from his son and grandsons. As Aldous's older brother, Julian, once defined it, the Huxley tradition was one of "hard but high thinking, plain but fiery living, wide intellectual interest and constant intellectual achievement."

Huxley's mother, Julia, came from equally impressive stock. She was the niece of poet Matthew Arnold and granddaughter of the moralist and educator Dr. Thomas Arnold, one of the eminent Victorians later eviscerated by Lytton Strachey in the book of that name. Julia Huxley was an educator who founded Prior's Field, a girls' school just a few meadows away from Hillside School, where young Aldous received his first education.

He was, by all accounts, a brilliant, unathletic, aloof student, whose capacity for detachment unnerved his peers. "Aldous possessed the key to an inviolable inner fortress," said his cousin Gervas, who also attended Hillside. "Never can I remember him losing his control or giving way to violent emotion as most of us did." He "possessed some innate superiority and moved on a different level from us other children," according to his older brother, Julian. He was always thinking, measuring, comparing, assessing. Once his godmother, after observing him staring fixedly out a window, asked what on earth he was thinking about and received the single word skin in reply.

So he was an odd child, even a little scary. Some years later the English science fiction writer Olaf Stapledon published a book called *Odd John*, which was an attempt to imagine what an intellectual superman, a true *Übermensch* to use Nietzsche's much debated term, would really be like. The resulting portrait bears a striking resemblance to the adolescent Aldous Huxley, with the profound qualification that Odd John was never tested by personal tragedy the way Huxley was.

Beginning with his entrance to Eton, Huxley's detachment was shattered by three tragedies. When he was fourteen his mother died. When he was sixteen he contracted a streptococcus infection that destroyed the cornea in his right eye and left the other clouded to the point of blindness. The condition was so serious that Huxley was forced to learn Braille which he shrugged off with the wry joke that now he could read with impunity after lights out. He was also forced to give up his dream of studying biology, in preparation for a medical career. Adapting a typewriter with Braille keys, he began tapping out poems and stories.

Finally, two years after his blindness lifted and a year after matriculating at Balliol College, Oxford, in the same August that saw the beginning of World War One, Huxley's middle brother, Trev, committed suicide.

"There is, apart from the sheer grief of the loss, an added pain in the cynicism of the situation," Aldous wrote to cousin Gervas. "It is just the highest and best in Trev, his ideals, which have driven him to his death, while there are thousands who shelter their weakness from the same fate by a cynical, unidealistic outlook on life. Trev was not strong but he had the courage to face life with ideals—and his ideals were too much for him."

This was not a mistake Aldous intended to make. At Oxford he buried his idealism under a cloak of aesthetic dandyism, affecting yellow ties and white socks, and instead of the usual classical reproduction above the fireplace, installing a poster of bare-breasted bathing beauties—French of course. He moved a piano into his room and began banging out American jazz. And he started spending weekends at Garsington, a manor house some six miles from Oxford that Phillip and Ottoline Morrell maintained as a country retreat for the Bloomsbury crowd. A typical Garsington houseparty mingled the likes of Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Bertrand Russell, the Woolfs—Leonard and Virginia—with assorted other aristocrats of the artistic and intellectual beau monde. Young Huxley held his own amid this galaxy of wits, and was considered by them an intellectual comer and promising poet. When he published a chapbook of poems entitled *The Defeat of Youth* in 1918, tout Garsington joined in his praise.

Garsington was also where Huxley met his future wife, Maria Nys, a waifish Belgian war refugee who was one of Lady Ottoline's charges. Besides being more than a foot shorter than her future husband, Maria's temperament—intuitive, magical, sensuous—was the exact opposite of Aldous's clear cold logic engine. Igor Stravinsky once said of Maria: "knowing nothing, she understands everything." And one of the things she understood was people. Maria had great psychological acuity, something her husband was almost totally without. Aldous called her his "personal relationship interpreter," and he used to quiz her thoroughly about the people they met at Garsington.

Their partnership—they began living together in 1919 and were married a few months later—produced one child, a boy, Matthew, and at least eight novels. The first of these, *Chrome Yellow*, was published in 1921, and was followed at two-year intervals by *Antic Hay*, *Those Barren Leaves*, and *Point, Counterpoint*. Opening the boards of that first book, none of Huxley's friends could have been prepared for what they found inside. The gentle, abstracted poet of lines like

No dip and dart of swallows wakes the blank
Slumber of the canal:—a mirror dead
for lack of loveliness remembered

turned into an assassin when he wrote fiction. ("I have done an admirable short story," Huxley once wrote to his brother Julian's future wife. "So heartless and cruel that you would probably scream if you heard it: the concentrated venom of it is quite delicious.") Sure the writing sparkled and the plot unfolded with professional ease, but there was something acid and unsettling about the way the stories portrayed the emptiness, the artistic and moral pretences of the very friends who were now reading the book. The only thing that saved Huxley from the anger that later greeted Evelyn Waugh's similar lampoons was the fact that Huxley dissected his own pretensions with equal ferocity. He never stinted on himself.

Huxley's fiction had a liberating quality that the poet Stephen Spender once described as "a kind of freedom which might be described as freedom from: freedom from all sorts of things such as conventional orthodoxies, officious humbug, sexual taboos, respect for establishments." But there was also an undercurrent of yearning beneath Huxley's mocking detachment, a yearning for a new and more fulfilling orthodoxy, and this too caught the spirit of the times. It was a thirst many quenched with Marxism or fascism or extreme aestheticism, while others turned to science and the religion of progress. But these apparently weren't options for Huxley. It would be too strong to say that he was an unhappy man, here at the height of his literary success, but he was a deeply dissatisfied one. He had become "a kind of amphibious creature, rejecting emotional contacts with skillful evasions, using his intellectual equipment as a shield."

Huxley dealt with this angst by moving frequently, living in Belgium, France, Spain, and Tunisia, and Italy, where Maria and he became friends with D. H. Lawrence. As the Twenties drew to a close they semipermanently established themselves at a villa in Sanary, France, among the mix of artists and idle rich lucky enough to live on the Côte in the years immediately preceding the Crash of '29. From Marseilles to Antibes, the Midi was an expanded version of a Garsington weekend. It was familiar fauna, and one might have expected a continuation of what the London *Times* described as "the many-toned wit... the learning, the thought, the richness of character."

But Huxley gave his readers instead the anti-utopian *Brave New World*. *Brave New World* was Huxley's first stab at themes that would occupy him for the rest of his life: the gap between technology and human wisdom; the misapplication of evolution; the failure of education to create a whole man; the increasing centralization of power, with its elevation of ends over means. It was also his most savage book, consigning the human species to the trash heap, albeit a comfortable, pleasurable trash heap. In a world in which science allows you to customize the ultimate in bread and circuses, argued Huxley, the concept of coercion becomes meaningless. One of the brilliant elements of *Brave New World*, indeed the one that made the whole vision of state-controlled euphoria plausible, was the drug *soma*. In terms of pharmacological reality, soma was a combination of three different kinds of mind drugs: on one level it was a pleasant and entertaining hallucinogen, on another a tranquilizer like Librium or Valium, on a third a sleeping

pill. There was nothing coercive about soma use: diehard individualists had the option of relocating to several offshore islands.

But soma was only a symptom of Huxley's larger theme, which was the machining of human nature. The genius that had allowed the smart monkey to tame the natural world was beginning to focus on itself. And unless something was done to alter the monkey's fundamental psyche, the consequence was going to be a scientific hell that called itself paradise.

Huxley's intellectual companion during these years, and perhaps his mentor, certainly one of the fulcrums upon which his interests were shifting, was a London literary boulevardier named Henry Fitz Gerald Heard—Gerald to his friends. Five years older than Huxley, Heard was the son of an honorary canon of the Church of England. Educated at Cambridge, with a degree in history, he had spent the First World War in Ireland, helping Sir Horace Plunkett in his attempt to organize the Irish farmers into agricultural cooperatives, a scheme that foundered when a bomb placed by Irish freedom fighters destroyed Sir Horace's residence and very nearly destroyed Gerald, who had been working in the house alone. Concluding that a civil service career was uncongenial to his health and his nature, Heard decided to concentrate on writing, and in the mid-Twenties published an eccentric but erudite little tome called *Narcissus: An Anatomy of Clothes*, which traced the historical relationship between architecture and clothing.

Anyone wishing to dip into the yellowing pages of *Narcissus* will discover the donnish Gerald, the one who could stun everyone to silence with his ability to remember everything he had ever read about everything and his willingness to explain it all to you in great detail. It was a recipe for a boorish windbag, and that might have been Heard's fate had he not also been one of those classically racy English eccentrics who pen mysteries in which Anglican clerics use Arabian spells (authentic, of course) to destroy their rivals. To one segment of the reading public he was Gerald Heard, mystic and philosopher, the author of *Pain, Sex and Time, Is God Evident, A Preface to Prayer*; while to another, less exalted group of readers he was H. F. Heard, creator of such macabre entertainments as *The Black Fox*, *the Great Fog*, and *Doppelgangers*, a book which the *Saturday Review* described as "strange and terrible... as repellently fascinating as the discovery of a cobra in one's bed."

Perhaps it was the actor in Gerald who made the intellectual such a compelling presence, but an astonishing number of people considered Heard to be the most brilliant man they had ever met, outshining even Huxley, who himself gave Heard the compliment of "knowing more than any one I know." A typical Heard soliloquy rambled "like a river over a vast area of knowledge... past the shores of pre-history, anthropology, astronomy, physics, parapsychology, mythology and much else." Christopher Isherwood, who knew him slightly in London and became better acquainted after both emigrated to Los Angeles in the late Thirties, once described Gerald's life as "an artistic performance expressed in a language of metaphors and analogies."

Unfortunately, the brilliant Heard, the voluble Heard, was missing from the written Heard. His writing tended to be pedantic, "practically unreadable" according to Huxley.

Heard met Huxley in 1928, when he was working as editor of the *Realist*, a literary magazine whose contributors included H. G. Wells, Rebecca West, Arnold Bennett, and the two Huxleys,

Julian and Aldous. Heard began accompanying the successful young novelist on nocturnal strolls across London, from which he deduced that his young friend was suffering from a routine literary affliction:

The style is formed, the specific frame of reference and interpretation of life is clear, and a public has gathered to buy the wares this craftsman knows how to produce in steady supply. And then suddenly the formula seems false, the angle hopelessly inaccurate, the analyses contemptibly shallow. Huxley's family mores and his ancestral genii were challenging his own personal genius. Satire could entertain; it could not assure. The sardonic, to keep its edge, must sharpen on the whetstone of the full truth of man—man, the one unfinished animal; man the incomparably teachable; untaught, less than a beast; ill-taught, worse than a beast; well-taught, the one creature of infinite promise, of superhuman potential.

Those last sentences are classic Heard, and they point us toward the real significance of Huxley's affection for this potentially rival polymath. Because what was about to happen between the two men was a form of intellectual seduction, and an ironic one at that, as T. H. Huxley's grandson was seduced by a deviant form of the evolutionary argument.

Without bogging down in a lengthy discussion of scientific politics in the late nineteenth century, it is important to understand that there were two interpretations of evolution. The first, following Darwin, believed that natural selection was directionless, the product of random mutations; man was a biological fluke. The second interpretation, deriving from Lamarck and championed by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, smuggled teleology back into the evolutionary drama. Bergson called his philosophy vitalism, and argued that evolution was not directionless but was controlled by a creative life-force, an *elan vital* which sought ever higher expressions of complexity and competence. In the insect world, for example, this *elan vital* achieved its highest state with ants and bees, while among mammals it was that ever-curious, ever-experimenting species *Homo sapiens* who best expressed this upward drive.

Of course once it had been decided that there was a pot of gold at the end of the evolutionary rainbow, it was hard not to speculate about the nature of this treasure. Friedrich Nietzsche meditated on the *elan vital* and came up with the *Übermensch*, the overman, a race of supermen who, depending on the luck of the variables, would either be mystic-saints or tyrant-creators. For Bergson only the first was a possibility: the universe was "a machine for the production of gods," he wrote.

But how was man going to become like unto gods? Further physical transformation was doubtful and pretty much beside the point, but what about further mental development? The growth of psychology in the late nineteenth century, with its emphasis on the unconscious, prompted a number of intellectuals to theorize that consciousness was the probable area of emergent evolution. Just as man had gone from simple consciousness to self-consciousness, perhaps at some point he would jump from self-consciousness to... *cosmic consciousness*? At least that's what a Canadian psychologist named Richard Bucke proposed in 1901. From a state of "mere vitality without perception," *Homo sapiens* had evolved to simple consciousness, which

was characterized by perception, and thence to self-consciousness, whose distinguishing feature was the ability to image thoughts using language, and that refinement of language, mathematics. Bucke believed that *Homo sapiens*, having attained self-consciousness some three hundred thousand years ago, was now at a point where his ability to process concepts was such that he was about to push through to a new level, to the cosmic level.

Speculating that certain members of the species would probably make the jump to each level of consciousness before the rest, Bucke compiled a list of those whom he felt exhibited cosmic consciousness: the Buddha, Jesus, Plotinus, William Blake, Honore Balzac, Walt Whitman. Using eleven criteria, Bucke attempted to prove that each of these forerunners had undergone a comparable mental experience: that each, usually in their thirties, had experienced an intense white light followed by a massive intellectual and moral illumination.

Bucke's own brush with cosmic consciousness happened late one night after an evening of philosophical debate with his friends. He was returning to his lodgings in a hansom cab when he found himself "wrapped in a flame-coloured cloud":

For an instant I thought of fire, an immense conflagration somewhere close in that great city; the next, I knew the fire was within myself. Directly afterward there came upon me a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life.

Bucke's book, *Cosmic Consciousness*, made a deep impression on William James, America's foremost psychologist. While the average individual was under no compulsion to accept these extraordinary mental states as superior, wrote James, a blanket denial of their existence was equally ridiculous. "No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question—for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality."

James also noted, in passing, that in India the pursuit of cosmic consciousness, of mystic moments such as Bucke's, was a well-established science.

Although it was Darwin's interpretation of evolution that triumphed in the laboratories and the classrooms of the twentieth century, the heresy of Bergson and Bucke kept resurfacing in odd configurations. After the First World War it turned up in Europe in the guise of gurus from the East, men like Krishnamurti and Georges Gurdjieff, who advertised practical techniques for tapping into the mind's higher powers. For a few years London and Paris, Berlin and Vienna, were virtual supermarkets of the esoteric, boasting dozens of semisecret schools—theosophists, Buddhists, Vedantists, dark occultists in the Alistair Crowley mold. In Germany the mysterious Thule Society gave birth to the National Socialist Party and Adolph Hitler, who had his own special interpretation of the evolutionary curve *Homo Aryan* should follow.

In England, among the Oxbridge demimonde that Heard and Huxley were part of, this evolutionary romance generally took the form of believing a way had to be found to heal the gap between *Homo faber*, man the wielder of increasingly ingenious and dangerous tools, and *Homo sapiens*, man the conceptualized man the smart monkey who had mastered the planet but not his own inner flaws—flaws that were now threatening to bring the whole evolutionary game to a precipitous close. It was one thing for the smart monkey to pick up clubs and spears and go about bashing craniums over questions of power, territory, and sexual prerogative. But to exhibit the same behavior when the clubs had turned to machine guns and Big Berthas was the maddest kind of folly.

Whether by accident or design, there was no shortage of gurus who seemed to speak directly to this desire. When Ouspensky, the chief disciple of the mysterious Armenian teacher Georges Gurdjieff, arrived in London, he advertised himself with a series of lectures called *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. Man is not a completed being, Ouspensky told his audience. "Nature develops him up to a certain point and then leaves him, to develop further, by his own efforts and devices... evolution of man in this case will mean the development of certain inner qualities and features which usually remain undeveloped, and cannot develop by themselves."

So this was the riddle Heard placed before Aldous Huxley: was there a mechanism that could be tripped, a sense that could be awakened, a door that could be found that led to these higher states?

Starting in the late Twenties (and ending only with their deaths) the two polymaths embarked on a grand tour of the esoteric. They chanted and meditated, they counted breaths and tried to shed their old conditioning; they studied hypnosis and the Gurdjieff technique—"too much nirvana and strawberry jam" was Aldous's airy opinion of Ouspensky, indeed of most of the gurus they met. Of course, as Robert de Ropp, a follower of Ouspensky observed, neither Heard nor Huxley were ideal students, both being rather "too fond of their own opinions to work under the direction of someone else."

They began formulating their own philosophy in the late Thirties, beginning with Heard's *Third Morality*, followed by Huxley's *Ends and Means* and *The Perennial Philosophy*. Their system, greatly compressed, went something like this: detachment is the essence of wisdom. The wise man participates passionately in the game of life, but at the same time remains aloof, free of entangling emotional or material ties. This science of detachment forms the basis of all religion, and it reaches its culmination in those moments of brilliant illumination that the mystics speak of.

Like Bucke, Huxley was impressed with the similarities between widely divergent mystical experiences: if you filtered out the particular religious dogma, what you had left was a physiological occurrence that appeared to be universal, that appeared to be wired into the very structure of the mind itself, waiting for a moment of deep meditation, fever or death, perhaps a blow to the head, perhaps the reflection of a cloud in a stream... there was no rhyme nor reason to what could trigger these astonishing events.

Following Bergson, Huxley also believed that the brain and the central nervous system

operated as a vast filter that reduced the flood of sensory data to a manageable trickle. This was not a difficult or even a debatable concept. We have all experienced moments, pausing in the midst of reading the newspaper or tying our shoelaces, when we become aware that a bird is singing nearby. Then, turning back to our task, the bird again disappears. The soundwaves of birdsong still enter the ear, but the brain edits them out, thus allowing us to concentrate on the task at hand. No doubt such an editing process had been vitally necessary for us to survive on a hostile planet. But by the twentieth century (felt men like Huxley and Heard) it had become a detriment to further evolution. A way had to be found to bypass the reducing valve and tap the unlimited potentials of the brain's 20 billion neurons. This was where the saints and mystics became important. Somehow, along with the occasional artist and scientist, they had chanced upon a way of circumventing the brain's central program.

Whether the answer turned out to be a form of physical therapy like that of the Indian yogis, or something entirely different, Huxley believed that a way could be found to standardize the mystical experience. As Heard described it, "His biological background made him believe it must be physiological; his metaphysical aspiration let him hope it would transform the psyche."

That the answer might come from the field of psychopharmacology was a possibility that Huxley did not rule out. In an essay written at Sanary around the time he read Lewin's *Phantastica*, Huxley had mused that should he ever become a millionaire he would "endow a band of research workers to look for the ideal intoxicant."

If we could sniff or swallow something that would, for five or six hours each day, abolish our solitude as individuals, attune us with our fellows in a glowing exaltation of affection and make life in all its aspects seem not only worth living, but divinely beautiful and significant... then, it seems to me, all our problems would be wholly solved and earth would become a paradise.

This was grand, heady stuff. But unfortunately it was only theory. At no time, despite their exertions, did Heard or Huxley find the key that unlocked the overmind. As Huxley later confided to Humphrey Osmond, "It seems the great Huxley brain is exceptionally stable."

Huxley and Heard left England for America in 1937, eventually settling in Los Angeles, where they became familiar presences on the local spiritual scene, studying Vedantic Hinduism at an ashram in Hollywood. The ashram was under the supervision of a canny, charismatic teacher, Swami Prabhavananda, who some years earlier had been ordered to Los Angeles by his teacher to fulfill the larger karma of introducing the inner disciplines of the East to the materialistic West. To leave not only his native land, but the contemplative solitude of the ashram, for Hollywood, California—it was not a task Prabhavananda had welcomed. But he had come and prospered, confirming the shrewdness of his teacher's foresight.

The ashram, in classic Southern California fashion, was shaped like a miniature Taj Mahal, and was surrounded by lemon trees and young girls meditating in saris. Prabhavananda was fond of tea parties, during which he would debate Huxley and Heard, and later Alan Watts, on various doctrinal points. The swami counseled asceticism in all things, including sex. And Gerald agreed wholeheartedly. Los Angeles represented a sea change for him, a chance to re-create himself in a

more appropriate image. He grew a goatee and discarded his suits and flannels in favor of dungarees and work shirts. He became obsessed with meditation, hastily terminating conversation so he could prepare for his twelve o'clock contemplation, or his six o'clock contemplation, or whatever contemplation was impending. He was ridding himself of the three main obstacles to enlightenment, he told Huxley: addictions, possessions, and pretensions. But for his lack of personal humility, Gerald would have been an excellent monk. Indeed the one quibble he regularly had with Huxley was over the latter's sociability: Gerald felt that time was too precious to waste on those who were not on the same path, a fundamentalist perspective that was very impractical for a novelist with a limited gift for characterization to begin with. "I am some kind of essayist sufficiently ingenious to get away with writing a very limited kind of fiction," Huxley ruefully admitted in one of his letters.

Actually, writing was the one constant in both their lives. With the exception of several film scripts, Huxley kept to his routine of a novel every two years, with a book of essays in between. And H. F. Heard scored his greatest literary success in 1946, when he won the three-thousand-dollar Ellery Queen Prize for a futuristic whodunit called *The President of the United States, Detective*.

They wrote and they waited; and then in early 1953 Huxley happened to read an article by Humphrey Osmond and John Smythies in the *Hibbert Journal*...

"But Aldous, what if we don't like him? What if he wears a beard?" was Maria's comment when Huxley announced that he had invited an unknown chap named Osmond, a psychiatrist no less, for a visit. The offer of room and board chez Huxley was a rare ticket; even Julian, when he was in town, stayed at a local hotel.

The possibility that Osmond might be a tedious bore hadn't occurred to Huxley, and after a few moments' thought he arrived at a simple solution. "We can always be out," he said.

Osmond, some three thousand miles away, was having similar fears. What if he couldn't play in Huxley's intellectual league? What if he came off as a tedious bore? "You can always arrange to stay late at the APA," his wife said.

He need not have worried. The one thing Huxley prized most in a fellow conversationalist was intellectual breadth, and Osmond had plenty of that. Like Heard, he could turn on a conversational dime and launch into a disquisition on, say, scurvy, that was so vivid one would almost swear he had shipped with Da Gama when half of that gentleman's crew perished. Maria, watching Aldous warm to the younger man, confided to Osmond: "I knew you'd get along. You're both Englishmen."

Huxley accompanied Osmond to several APA sessions, which he found deadly dull, and amused himself by genuflecting whenever Freud's name was mentioned. The subject of mescaline didn't arise until two days before Osmond was to leave, and then it was Maria who broached the subject, having decided that the famous British reticence was going to prevent the two men from discussing what was certainly uppermost in Aldous's mind. Osmond admitted that he had brought some mescaline with him; while Huxley conceded that he had borrowed a tape

recorder to preserve a record of the experiment.

The next day, May 4, 1953, Osmond dissolved some mescaline crystals in a glass of water and nervously handed it to Huxley. Outside it was one of those perfect LA mornings, blue and warm, with just a trace of smog hanging over the San Bernardino valley. What if the drug worked too well, Osmond thought to himself. Although Smythies and he had begun to appreciate that there was more to the mescaline experience than simple psychosis, that didn't diminish the possibility that the next six hours might be absolutely hellish. And Osmond didn't relish the possibility that he might become infamous as the man who drove Aldous Huxley crazy.

On the other hand, what if nothing happened? It was beginning to dawn on Humphrey that Huxley had some rather idiosyncratic notions about what he hoped to achieve in the mescaline state. Nowhere was this more explicit than in the letter Osmond had received confirming his invitation to stay with the Huxleys while at the APA. After the usual pleasantries, Aldous had launched into a critique of what he called the Sears & Roebuck culture:

Under the current dispensation the vast majority of individuals lose, in the course of education, all the openness to inspiration, all the capacity to be aware of other things than those enumerated in the Sears-Roebuck catalogue; is it too much to hope that a system of education may someday be devised which shall give results, in terms of human development, commensurate with the time, money, energy and action expended? In such a system of education it may be that mescaline or some other chemical substance may play a part by making it possible for young people to "taste and see" what they have learned at second hand, or directly but at a lower level of intensity, in the writings of the religious, or the works of poets, painters and musicians.

Osmond was using mescaline as a mimicker of madness; Huxley wanted to incorporate it into the curriculum.

The minutes passed slowly—too slowly for Huxley, who told Osmond he expected to enter what he called the Blakeian world of heroic perception. What actually happened was much more mundane. The lights danced. The insides of his eyelids dissolved into a complex of gray squares that occasionally gave birth to a blue sphere.

Then, ninety minutes into the experience, Huxley felt himself pass through a screen, at least that's what it seemed like, and suddenly he was seeing "what Adam had seen on the morning of creation." It was as though, born myopic, he had just put on his first pair of glasses. The colors, the shapes, the sensuous mysteriousness of his flannel trousers. Later Aldous would pun that he had seen "eternity in a flower, infinity in four chair legs, and the Absolute in the folds of a pair of flannel trousers."

He kept murmuring, "This is how one ought to see."

Mescaline, Huxley decided, intensified the visual at the expense of the temporal and spatial. There was a pronounced loss of will, which gradually expanded into a loss of ego. And as the ego

relinquished its grip, all sorts of useless data, biologically speaking, began to seep into the mind.

From the house, with its suddenly cubist furniture, they wandered into the garden. For the first time Huxley felt the presence of paranoia, and beyond that, madness. "If you started the wrong way," he told Osmond, "everything that happened would be proof of the conspiracy against you. It would all be self-validating. You couldn't draw a breath without knowing it was part of the plot."

"So you think you know where madness lies?" Osmond asked.

"Yes."

"And you couldn't control it?"

"No, I couldn't control it," Huxley said. "If one began with fear and hate as the major premise, one would have to go on to the conclusion."

But then the shadow passed. From the garden they moved to the street, where a large blue automobile touched off gales of laughter. Fat and self-satisfied, it seemed to Huxley that the car was a self-portrait of twentieth-century man; for the rest of the day he giggled whenever he saw one. Aldous was having a wonderful time. After years of theorizing that each of us carries a reservoir of untapped vision and inspiration, he had suddenly stumbled across it at the advanced age of fifty-eight.

It was a little like that classic moment in children's literature when the hero walks outside one morning and discovers a door, where yesterday there was only blank wall. And beyond that door, a garden of infinite dimension, infinite adventure.

The Door in the Wall - Part II

Huxley was jubilant.

Mescaline was "the most extraordinary and significant experience available to human beings this side of the Beatific Vision," he cabled his New York editor, Harold Raymond, adding that he was working on a long essay that would raise "all manner of questions in the fields of aesthetics, religion, theory of knowledge." He planned to call this essay *The Doors of Perception*, after Blake's observation that

If the doors of perception were cleansed
everything will appear to man as it is, infinite.

Destined to become the most famous volume on the psychedelic bookshelf, *Doors* took Huxley a month to write, and when he was done he had a blow-by-blow account of that afternoon with Osmond—events like the Dharma body of the Buddha manifesting itself in the garden hedge—tempered by liberal speculation as to what it all might possibly mean in terms of human psychology.

What it all meant, Huxley thought, was that Bergson and the English philosopher C. D. Broad had been correct when they suggested that the brain operated as a vast reducing valve, "shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful." Like the Freudian ego, this reducing valve was constantly beset by the raging tides of Mind-At-Large, which was what Huxley called Jung's archetypal unconscious plus Freud's pathological unconscious plus Myer's treasure house plus all the other unconsciousnesses yet to be named. And like Freud's ego, this reducing valve was not watertight: its seal was susceptible to pressure.

"As Mind at Large seeps past the no longer watertight valve," he wrote, "all kinds of biologically useless things start to happen. In some cases there may be extra-sensory perceptions. Other persons discover a world of visionary beauty. To others again is revealed the glory, the infinite value and meaningfulness of naked existence.... In the final stage of egolessness there is an 'obscure knowledge' that All is in all—that All is actually each." Which was why bookjackets gleamed with godliness and an innocuous canvas chair in the garden "looked like the Last Judgment."

There was nothing unique about Mind at Large: the smart monkey had been vacationing there for millennia—the number of hit or miss techniques could've filled a small booklet. But suddenly, with mescaline, mankind had lucked upon a technology. For the first time a science of the Other World was possible. Perhaps.

In his excitement over all the possibilities, educational and mystical and philosophical, Huxley skated past a few rather large problems with a nod and a wink. For example, one of the things he

particularly liked about mescaline was the way it undercut verbal concepts. Words became superfluous. You didn't need to intellectualize about love or sadness or death, because you felt those emotions with every cell of your body. And that was a very useful condition in a culture that was increasingly dominated by its verbal constructs. "We can easily become the victims as well as the beneficiaries of these systems," Huxley wrote in *Doors*. "We must learn how to handle words effectively; but at the same time we must preserve, and, if necessary, intensify our ability to look at the world directly and not through that half opaque medium of concepts, which distorts every given fact into the all too familiar likeness of some generic label or explanatory abstraction."

But if mescaline's ability to transport the user to an area of experience that was preverbal or antiverbal was a major plus, it was also a major drawback. You tried to pour language over it, but the words just slid away, like water off a duck's back. It was almost as if the highest tools of self-consciousness were inadequate when it came to capturing Bucke's cosmic realm. Of course part of the problem was that Huxley was pouring English, which lacked any kind of appreciation for these matters: Sanskrit, as Gerald loved to point out, was a far superior language, with over forty different words for alterations in consciousness.

How could you create a science out of something you couldn't even talk about? Huxley didn't bother to explore this central paradox, although its influence is apparent in the essay's rather tame imagery. Later, having learned the lesson of Freud and Jung that inner dynamics are best expressed through metaphors and parables, Huxley grew more bold in his descriptions of what life was like beyond the Door in the Wall. In one of his first public talks, he likened the personal ego to the Old World. Using mescaline, he said, it was possible to sail beyond the horizon, "cross a dividing ocean, and find ourselves in the world of the personal subconscious":

... with its flora and fauna of repressions, conflicts, traumatic memories and the like. Traveling further, we reach a kind of Far West, inhabited by Jungian archetypes and the raw materials of human mythology. Beyond this region lies a broad Pacific. Wafted across it on the wings of mescaline... we reach what may be called the Antipodes of the mind. In this psychological equivalent of Australia we discover the equivalents of kangaroos, wallabies, and duck-billed platypuses—a whole host of extremely improbable animals, which nevertheless exist and can be observed.

You might note that Huxley's central conceit here is that of a trip. That's what it felt like. A trip to what the spiritualists had called the Other World, which lay just beyond the deceptive boundary of everyday consciousness.

The Doors of Perception was published in the spring of 1954 to generally perplexed reviews. Had anyone else written a book recommending mescaline as "an experience of estimable value to everyone and especially to the intellectual," declared *The Reporter's* Marvin Barrett, it would have been dismissed "as the woolgathering of a misguided crackpot. But coming ... from one of the current masters of English prose, a man of immense erudition and intellect who usually

demonstrates a high moral seriousness, they deserve more careful scrutiny." Barrett called around until he found some Lab Madness researchers who were using mescaline as a psychotomimetic. They were "less enthusiastic than Dr. Huxley and the Indians," he reported. "In controlled experiments they have found that mescaline more often than not produces symptoms unpleasantly similar to those of schizophrenia."

The critical response to *Doors* was almost an echo of the *British Medical Journal's* condemnation of Havelock Ellis for his enthusiastic endorsement of peyote. In effect, Huxley's knuckles were rapped, and another black mark was added to the "whatever happened to Aldous" column. "How odd it is that writers like Belloc and Chesterton may sing the praises of alcohol (which is responsible for about two-thirds of the car accidents and three-quarters of the crimes of violence) and be regarded as good Christians and noble fellows," Huxley complained, "whereas anyone who ventures to suggest that there may be other and less harmful short cuts to self transcendence is treated as a dangerous drug fiend and wicked perverter of weak-minded humanity."

But *Doors* sold, slowly but steadily. Someone was reading it.

Osmond read it and was delighted. Since that May afternoon he and Huxley had exchanged numerous letters (learn how to type! Huxley implored, "It took two days of intensive work to decipher your last letter.") concerning future mescaline experiments, but time and commitments had prevented a second rendezvous. Aldous was genuinely fond of his young friend, and he had high hopes that Humphrey would "do work of fundamental importance," provided an adequate source of funding was discovered so that the mescaline experiments could continue in proper scientific style. "Perhaps we could write a play together," Huxley joked in a letter. "And make enough to finance your research and our second childhood."

They finally got together again in December 1954. Huxley had wanted to test the effects of mescaline in the desert east of Los Angeles away from the comical cars and the smog. But when Osmond arrived he found Aldous too ill to travel. So he contented himself with giving the drug to Gerald and photographer George Huene, another friend of Aldous. The reactions couldn't have been more different. Huene's experience was similar to Aldous's, with the mescaline enhancing all of the aesthetic tendencies that had made him a photographer. But Gerald... Gerald was another case altogether. Strange mediumistic voices spoke through him, and he claimed to have glimpsed the Clear Light of the Void, which was the phrase the Tibetans used for that moment of complete understanding when one comprehends the Big Picture. Years later, addressing some students, Gerald gave the following description of what usually happened to him in the Other World. First, he said, there would be a hum, a vibration spreading out from the furniture until everything in the room, heard included, was caught in its rhythm, pulse after pulse, until the ego began to "melt like an iceberg that has gotten into tropical seas." And then, in a flash, the Door in the Wall would slide open, and wherever you were—in a room, lying on the grass, walking on the beach—would be magically transformed. "You may have to stop and linger there for a time like a child in a garden," Gerald told the kids. While lingering you would probably notice the shadows, and after that, the realization that the world was boundless. Which did not mean it was pointless.

At its center was the Pure Void, which Heard described as a blazing central sun surrounded by an ocean of darkness that one crossed with respect, for it was here that the fears were most profound. "The little man meeting Pan feels panic," Gerald liked to say.

But what Heard didn't say that day was that the panic of the darkness was nothing compared to the terror of the Void. According to the *Bardo Thodol*, the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, which was probably the most thorough guide to these regions ever written, the soul beheld unvarnished Reality at its peril: confronted with the Void, it went howling back to the wheel of life, gratefully chaining itself to another reincarnation.

That no two people found themselves in the same part of the Other World was one of the troublesome aspects of mescaline. Why did Gerald immediately find the mystic path, while Aldous and Huene couldn't, no matter how diligently they searched? And why did some people have absolutely hellish experiences? Huxley pondered, but produced no solutions to these questions in his second long mescaline essay, *Heaven and Hell*. He decided that there had to be a basic distinction between visionary experience and true mystical experience—in the first, one was aware not only of the opposition between Heaven and Hell, but of the fact that only the slenderest of gaps separated these two states. In some people, he wrote, the ego doesn't melt like an iceberg in tropical waters, but expands to the point of suffocation: "Negative emotions, the fear which is the absence of confidence, the hatred, anger or malice which exclude love [these] are the guarantee that visionary experience, if and when it comes, shall be appalling."

With mystical experience, such distinctions were meaningless.

At one point during Osmond's December visit Maria drew him aside and confessed that she would soon die of cancer. Aldous was refusing to accept the reality of her disease, she told Humphrey, please look after him when I'm gone. Osmond was so moved by her calm acceptance of her own death that he went off and wept for half an hour. How would Aldous cope? For thirty years Maria had been his surrogate eyes. She had been cook, typist, secretary, chauffeur—at Sanary she had piloted their red Bugatti with such enthusiasm that Aldous had written an essay declaring speed to be the only new sensation of the twentieth century.

Maria died in February 1955. During her last hours, "with tears streaming down his face and his quiet voice not breaking," Aldous read to her from the *Bardo Thodol*, interweaving the ancient Tibetan text with lyrical descriptions of their shared past. With Lawrence in Italy. Summers at Sanary. The weekends at Garsington when they had first met while the rest of the world was falling apart on the Somme. Their trips to the California desert. The white snowcapped mountains of the Sierras. "Go toward the light," Aldous kept murmuring. "Those last three hours were the most anguishing and moving of my life," Matthew Huxley later wrote to his wife; while for Gerald they were proof that Aldous had indeed come back through the Door a changed man; that he was able to cope with Maria's death so calmly was wholly attributable, Gerald felt, to the wisdom he had gained from mescaline.

The mescaline served Huxley in another capacity as well, filling his period of bereavement with new faces and exciting plans. Because of *Doors* and *Heaven and Hell*, which appeared in 1956, he found himself at the center of a peculiar movement, part religious, part scientific, which

for the first time since the 1880s was mounting a concerted assault on Mind at Large. "Things keep cropping up," he wrote Harold Raymond. "Work at Boston, work at Chicago, work in Buenos Aires. In connection with the last, a very able Argentinian-Italian suddenly swam into my ken a day or two ago. It turns out that he is the greatest authority on the chemistry of cactus alkaloids, including, of course, mescaline."

Huxley was invited to the American Psychoanalytic Association's annual convention, where he was the only nondoctor to participate in the panel on psychotomimetics. His reception by "the Electric Shock Boys, the Chlorpromaziners, and the 57 Varieties of Psychotherapists," was not effusive—compared to that of the Lab Madness Lobby. What might have been called Aldous's Visionary Potential Party was limited to himself, Osmond, Heard, and a small population of peripheral "crackpots" like the parapsychologist Andraj Puharich, who had already entertained Aldous at his Glen Cove, New York, headquarters. The specifics of Puharich's "strange household" are worth recording for the insight they provide into this parascientific fringe movement. Besides Puharich and his wife, who had behaved in a "conspicuously friendly way" with a girl named Alice, the ménage had consisted of Elinor Bond, doing telepathic guessing remarkably well, but not producing anything of interest or value in the mediumistic setting she gave me; Frances Farelly, with her diagnostic machine—which Puharich's tests have shown to be merely an instrument, like a crystal ball, for concentrating ESP faculties; Harry, the Dutch sculptor, who goes into trances in the Faraday cages and produces automatic scripts in Egyptian hieroglyphics; Narodny, the cockroach man, who is preparing experiments to test the effects of human telepathy on insects.

"It was all very lively and amusing," Huxley wrote to Eileen Garrett. "And, I really think, promising; for whatever may be said against Puharich, he is certainly very intelligent, extremely well read and highly enterprising. His aim is to produce by modern pharmacological, electronic and physical methods the conditions used by the shamans for getting into a state of traveling clairvoyance and then, if he succeeds to send people to explore systematically the Other World."

Actually, Huxley and Osmond had proposed something similar to the Ford Foundation, although they had worded it differently. What they had proposed was that mescaline be given to a hundred world-class scientists, artists, and philosophers in hopes that a definitive answer might emerge to such questions as: *Could mescaline free the mind from its habitual patterns? Did it truly allow for an expansion of sensibilities?* Although Aldous was friends with Robert Hutchins, the Ford Foundation's director, his scheme was promptly rejected, causing him to fume that "the Mesozoic reptiles of the Ford Foundation are being as Mesozoic as ever. The Trustees are so frightened of doing anything unconventional—for whenever the Foundation gets any adverse publicity, people go to the nearest Ford dealer and tell him that henceforth they will buy Chevies—that the one overriding purpose is now to do nothing at all."

Other foundations were approached with equally negative results.

It is difficult to tell, judging from the polite prose of his letters, whether Huxley's frustration was beginning to erode his enthusiasm. In any case it didn't matter. Because just as things

appeared at a standstill, along came a fresh explosion of interest named Al Hubbard—Captain Al Hubbard, "Cappy" to his friends.

The initial connection was made through Osmond, who one day received a mysterious invitation to lunch at the Vancouver Yacht Club with one A. M. Hubbard, flamboyant president of the locally based Uranium Corporation. Through a curious chain of events, Hubbard had learned of Osmond and Smythies's work with mescaline, had obtained a supply of the drug himself, and had experienced a mystical vision of such profundity that he had decided to devote his considerable store of personal energy to spreading the word about mescaline and the Other World.

Hubbard reappears throughout our story as a kind of peripatetic imp, so it will help to have an image of the man firmly in mind. He was small and stocky with a large round head and a razor crewcut. As he aged, he resembled nothing so much as the caricatured red-neck Southern sheriff, a resemblance that was enhanced by his eccentric habit of wearing a security officer's uniform complete with sidearm. The gun, he used to kid Osmond, fired armor-piercing bullets, the better to shoot out the engine block of any pursuing car.

Over the years bits and pieces of Hubbard's past came to light, usually through the office of Al himself, although no two of his versions were ever exactly the same. Still, it was an astonishing story. Hubbard always claimed he was just a barefoot country boy from Kentucky, and that was true, but in his first public incarnation, in December 1919, he was Seattle's boy inventor, a young Thomas Edison who had invented what the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* claimed was a perpetual motion machine. Hubbard called it an atmospheric power generator. Whatever its name, it was small enough to fit in the hand, had no moveable parts or battery, and could power a lightbulb for days. To publicize his device, Hubbard took a boatload of journalists and future backers on a cruise of Seattle's Lake Union in a boat powered by nothing more than an electric motor and Hubbard's mysterious 11-X 14-inch box.

The Seattle community took a proprietary interest in their young genius, and in 1920 the town fathers appointed a committee of elders to shepherd the "young scientist"—Hubbard had outgrown the boy inventor label—through the labyrinth of corporate offers and patent red tape. When Al arrived in Washington to file his patent application, the local stringer for the *Post-Intelligencer* reported that he was "lodging quietly at a medium priced hotel and avoiding all publicity."

Hubbard eventually sold 50 percent of his patent rights to Radium Chemical Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and that was the last anyone ever heard of the Hubbard Energy Transformer.

Beginning in the late Twenties the specifics of the Hubbard saga begin to blur. Around the time Huxley and Heard were embarking upon their search for the key to higher consciousness, Al was becoming involved in the charterboat business, running liquor down from Canada. In one version he is supposed to have perfected an early radar device modeled after the theories of Nicola Tesla, which he was selling to the rum runners. Whatever the truth, Seattle's boy inventor eventually went to prison. From there things get even murkier. As Hubbard told the story, he was

approached in the early days of WWII by members of an unofficial intelligence unit and asked to secretly run war materials up the West Coast of America to Canada, where they were shipped overland and put aboard boats bound for England and the Battle of Britain. Whether such a program existed, and whether Hubbard was part of it, is unclear. Certainly for the rest of his life he exhibited enough familiarity with spies and spying that most of his friends believed he had once been, and perhaps still was, one. Al loved the intelligence game and he frequently boasted that his trips to Washington were not routine business jaunts: he used them to break bread with the shadow government that really ran things. By then he had become A. M. Hubbard, president of Vancouver's Uranium Corp., friend to the industrial and political elite of Western Canada, a rich entrepreneur, with his Rolls Royce, his airplane, and his island sanctuary in Vancouver Bay.

But if there was one thread that connected the barefoot boy inventor of nineteen to the spy and CEO of middle age, it was Catholicism. Hubbard was an ardent Catholic, with a lifelong interest in mysticism and the Other World.

"What Babes in the Wood we literary gents and professional men are," Aldous wrote to Osmond after his first meeting with Hubbard. "The great World occasionally requires your services, is mildly amused by mine; but its full attention and deference are paid to Uranium and Big Business. So what extraordinary luck that this representative of both these Higher Powers should (a) have become so passionately interested in mescaline and (b) be such a very nice man."

In another letter, this one to Carlyle King, a literary acquaintance of Osmond's, Huxley was even more explicit in his hopes: "Some new developments might be taking place quite soon in the mescaline field, owing to the appearance on Osmond's, Gerald's and my horizon of a remarkable personage called Captain Hubbard—a millionaire businessman—physicist, scientific director of the Uranium Corporation, who took mescaline last year, was completely bowled over by it and is now drumming up support among his influential friends (if you have anything to do with uranium, all doors, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff's to the Pope's, are open to you) for a commission to work on the problems of psychopharmacology in relation to religion, philosophy, ESP, artistic and scientific invention etc. Hubbard is a terrific man of action, and results of his efforts may begin appearing quite soon."

Hubbard and Huxley: the English prince and the American frog, the polished dialectician and the blunt instrument, the murmured "most interesting" contrasting with the good-old-boy bark, "I'm just a son of a bitch." They were a genuine odd couple, and naturally they were genuinely fond of each other. Al was a can-do kind of guy, with just the right amount of country-boy slyness. Little problems, like the perpetual scarcity of mescaline, disappeared almost immediately. Hubbard didn't waste time going through proper medical channels; he found out who the main suppliers were and placed an order they couldn't refuse. When he heard about LSD in early 1955, he called up Sandoz and requested forty-three cases, which Sandoz promptly shipped. And when Canadian customs seized the shipment because Hubbard's papers weren't in order, Sandoz actually supplied him with the proper forms. Later Hubbard would boast that he had stockpiled more LSD than anyone else in the world, and those who knew him tended to believe it. As far as Al was concerned this was just heads-up business: whoever controlled the

supply controlled the market.

Huxley took his first LSD trip a few days before Christmas 1955, when Hubbard dropped by Los Angeles to run a session for him and Gerald. Gerald, as usual, was full of spirits and inner voices, while Al amused himself by attempting to telepathically connect with the others. It was a game he and Osmond had begun to play, but Aldous found it silly. "Certainly if future experiments should turn out to be like these last two, I should feel that such experiments were merely childish and pointless," he wrote Osmond. But if Huxley was irritated with Hubbard, it was largely because thanks to Al he had finally broken through the visionary layers, into that realm of pure oneness that Gerald had been enjoying since day one; thanks to Al, Huxley had finally escaped from the land of platypuses and wallabies.

Everyone had assumed that Hubbard, being a businessman, would prove most useful as a financier and diplomat with the various government bureaucracies. But the truth was Hubbard had an intuitive feel for the Other World that rivaled even Gerald's; in fact it was Al who first figured out there were ways to move a person from one part of the Other World to another. Al had a system. He always kept certain pictures handy, along with a few specific pieces of music that he would play on the stereo. And damned if it didn't work. For instance, if you found yourself caught in the shadows of the pathological unconscious and were starting to panic, Hubbard would gently show you an engraving of a cute little girl lost in a forest, and as you stared intently at this drawing you could just make out that the clouds were shaped like ... a guardian angel! Silly, perhaps, but soothing. Which was not the case with the perfect diamond that Al would hand you at the height of a trip, and suggest you spend a few moments gazing into its depths. The perfect diamond was like entering an air-lock that shot you forward into a different part of the labyrinth. Later, at the height of his powers, Hubbard actually designed a whole experience around Death Valley, which he considered an extraordinary power spot.

Like so much in this story, Hubbard's system was not unique. Go to any library and you could find a sizable section of anthropological monographs dealing with shamanic healing rites, in which the shaman manipulated the healing trance with a grab bag of odd cues and devices, like blowing tobacco smoke across a sick native's brow. But it was unique in terms of Western psychotherapy—unique and illegitimate. Not that Hubbard cared a whit what the scientific community thought, at least not yet. The only reason to use mescaline or LSD as far as he was concerned was to receive the Beatific Vision, which for Hubbard was primarily a Catholic experience, although he was not obnoxiously partisan. If a Methodist happened along, Al made sure they took the Methodist trip; if a Christian Scientist came by, he did his best to promote the Mary Baker Eddy experience.

Huxley initially had been skeptical of the reports coming out of Vancouver that had Al evoking the Beatific Vision in dentists and lawyers. But in October 1955, in the company of a young psychotherapist named Laura Archera who was shortly to become his second wife, he decided to give the Hubbard techniques a try. As he later wrote Osmond, "What came through the closed door was the realization ... the direct, total awareness, from the inside, so to say, of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact. The words, of course, have a kind of indecency and must

necessarily ring false, seem like twaddle. But the fact remains..."

Huxley was overwhelmed to the point where he decided his previous experiments, the ones recorded in *Doors* and *Heaven and Hell*, had been nothing but entertaining sideshows—"temptations to escape from the central reality into false, or at least imperfect and partial Nirvanas of beauty and mere knowledge." And this raised a troublesome point. Was it better to pursue a course of careful psychological experimentation such as they had proposed to the Ford Foundation, or was Hubbard correct, was the real value of LSD and mescaline its astonishing ability to stimulate the most basic kind of religious ecstasy? Describing this dilemma to Osmond, Huxley wrote:

My own view is that it would be important to break off experimentation from time to time and permit the participants to go, on their own, towards the Clear Light. But perhaps alteration of experimentation and mystical vision would be psychologically impossible; for who, having once come to the realization of the primordial fact of unity in love, would ever want to return to experimentation on the psychic level?... My point is that the opening of the door by mescaline or LSD is too precious an opportunity, too high a privilege to be neglected for the sake of experimentation. There must be experimentation, of course, but it would be wrong if there were nothing else.

Thanks to Hubbard's system, a question began to take shape in Huxley's mind. *Was it possible to use these new mind changers to stimulate a subtle but revolutionary alteration in the way the smart monkey perceived reality?* At what point, provided you selected the right mix of brilliant, influential people, and gave them LSD or mescaline in a carefully controlled setting, doing everything possible to lead them to the Clear Light, at what point would the culture begin to shift to another tack? If you initiated the best and the brightest to the Other World, and let the knowledge filter down... It was an appealing speculation, and the more Aldous thought about it, the more convinced he became that it was not too farfetched. If one moved cautiously, doing nothing to startle the philistines...

But first there was a practical matter to solve. "About a name for these drugs—what a problem!" he wrote to Osmond. One couldn't call them psychotomimetics or hallucinogens or any of the other approved synonyms. A completely new name was needed, and having perused his Liddel & Scott, Aldous felt he had a worthy candidate: *phanerothyme*, meaning to make the soul visible. He enclosed the following ditty in his letter:

To make this trivial world sublime
Take half a gramme of phanerothyme

But Humphrey didn't particularly like *phanerothyme*, so he created his own word, *psychedelic*, and sent Aldous an answering rhyme:

To fathom hell or soar angelic
Just take a pinch of psychedelic

Al Hubbard always operated on the theory that if you bothered to make appointments you'd never get anywhere in life. He preferred to materialize on the doorstep, and he was a sufficiently roguish charmer to get away with it.

He materialized on doorsteps all over the world, wherever a researcher was working with LSD or mescaline. Hubbard was constantly on the go, visiting with Osmond in Saskatchewan, then down to Los Angeles to see Huxley and Heard, then across the continent—New York, Boston, Bethesda, D. C.; then off to Europe to check on progress there, then back again to repeat the circuit: vetting new researchers conducting sessions for interested professionals, brainstorming on the best way to "launch" the psychedelic movement; paying his way with the latest experimental wrinkles, the most delicious gossip, and of course his inexhaustible supply of experimental substances, which he stored in a large leather bag.

One of Al's favorite break-the-ice devices was carbogen, a mixture of carbon dioxide and oxygen, which came in a small portable tank. Carbogen was what therapists referred to as a potent abreactor: ten or fifteen lungfuls and you tended to relive your childhood traumas. And judging on how well you handled them, Al would either offer to run an LSD session for you, or he wouldn't.

Being a charge-ahead kind of guy who didn't write many letters, Hubbard hasn't left any neat synopsis of the world LSD scene, circa 1956, the year the first International Symposium was held. In general though, the trend was away from the Lab Madness boys, the psychotomimeticists, and toward therapy, which had been, after all, Sandoz's first recommendation:

To elicit release of repressed material and provide mental relaxation, particularly in anxiety states and obsessional neuroses.

To attribute this change of direction solely to Captain Hubbard's efforts would be an overstatement; Al was more like the membrane without which osmosis can't occur. He was a traveling symposium; it was from Hubbard that many researchers first learned the cardinal rule of set and setting, which stated that the LSD state was contingent on the mindset of the person taking the drug and the setting in which the experience occurred. To drive someone crazy with LSD was no great accomplishment, particularly if you told the person he was taking a psychotomimetic and you gave it to him in one of those pastel hospital cells with a grim nurse standing by scribbling notes. But to use the drug for subtler ends called for an understanding of how ambiance was heightened in the psychedelic state: how certain pieces of music—Bach, for instance—came across under LSD as so holy it was almost as though God was humming the tune, while others—Berlioz, say—made you sick to your stomach with its sugary pretensions; how people under LSD liked to sprawl around with plenty to look at, with paintings and scratchpads that would end up filled with the most perplexing scrawls, as though a class of

kindergartners had used the room, and not one relatively mature adult, how the most minor mood changes on the part of the therapist (irritation, anxiety, humor) could have startlingly major effects on the patient.

By 1956 the question "what's in the unconscious?" had fragmented into a host of subsidiary questions as therapists realized that the Dark Room, like a grandmother's attic, was crammed with treasure. In this trunk, Jungian archetypes; in that one, lovely Freudian neuroses that could be tracked all the way back to the moment when the patient, standing in her cradle barely one year old, had watched her parents making love. Instead of having to walk, the therapist could fly. And while that presented a new set of problems—for one thing, LSD sessions lasted a wearying three to four hours—it didn't diminish the excited feeling that they were on the edge of Something Big. Whenever LSD researchers got together the conversation quickly turned anecdotal, as one eye-widening story followed another "... and suddenly I found myself giving birth to myself. I could actually feel myself floating around in the amniotic fluid, then I was flushed down the vaginal canal, thinking 'this is it, I've died and now I'm being reborn.'"

It was like belonging to an elite fraternity. "When you made contact," remembers Oscar Janiger, "it was like two people looking at each other from across the room, and with a sort of nod of the head... like 'Welcome brother, you have now entered the Mysteries.' That's all. That was your ticket of admission. Nothing else. That knowing look."

Oscar Janiger was a Beverly Hills psychiatrist who preferred research to analysis, although he did just enough of the latter to pay for the leisure to indulge in the former. He also taught a few courses at a local university, and it was there, in 1954, after a lecture synopsisizing the Osmond/Smythies adrenochrome thesis, that he was approached by a young man named Perry Bivens. Bivens was a professional diver. He worked for Ivan Tors, the producer of *Sea Hunt*, and he had his own private decompression chamber that he had built himself. It was while perfecting the chamber that Bivens had discovered he could alter his consciousness simply by changing the mix of gases.

Bivens invited Janiger to try the chamber, which he did to rather disturbing effect. Although he could intellectualize for hours about the fragility of what man calls reality, Janiger was unprepared for just how fragile it really was. Bivens would twiddle a few knobs, and the next thing the doctor knew he was gasping with laughter or roaring with energy. Then the air would be flushed out and a new combination introduced.

After a few sessions in the chamber, Bivens casually mentioned that he knew of something much better, a drug called LSD.

Janiger, Bivens, and their wives took the LSD at Janiger's vacation home at Lake Arrowhead. A short while into the experiment Bivens's wife had disappeared into a bedroom. She returned a few minutes later wearing a purple sweater, skintight vermilion pants, yellow ballet slippers, and a long mauve scarf. And then, an intimation of things to come, she began to dance.

Driving back to Los Angeles, Janiger felt like Moses coming down from the mountain, except in his case what he lacked was the tablets—or ampoules. I've got to get my hands on some more LSD, he thought. I'll go crazy if I can't figure out an experiment that will satisfy Sandoz. But

what kind of an experiment? Janiger had no interest in experimental lab work, giving LSD to snails and fish and making voluminous notes on their reactions. Nor was he interested in the Lab Madness rigmarole of personality and intelligence tests. After puzzling over the problem for several weeks, he arrived at a simple solution: why not just give LSD to volunteers and let them do whatever they wanted? Provide them with paper, pencils, typewriter, tape recorder, and leave them alone—a completely naturalistic study. Much to his surprise, Sandoz agreed, and within a few weeks he had his own supply of LSD.

One of Janiger's few rules was that everyone had to have a baby-sitter, someone who would remain with them throughout the experience. No one could baby-sit unless they had already taken LSD. Other than that, the emphasis was on recording what was happening, getting it down on paper or tape before it evaporated—reams of paper, spools of tape. The volume would have been overwhelming had not Janiger been a popular lecturer with access to a willing labor pool of students who were cajoled into culling the reports and underlining salient reactions like "the room is breathing." The underlined statements were then typed onto cards, and the subjects were called back in and asked to sort them into groups ranging from statements that were "most relevant" to their own experience, to those that were "least relevant."

Except for the time one of the volunteers eluded his baby-sitter and got loose on Wilshire Boulevard, it was all pretty straightforward. That day the subject just flew out the door before anyone could react; he was nowhere to be found by the time Janiger reached the street. The whole office fanned out looking for him, but he had vanished. Certain his career was about to share a similar fate, Janiger was walking back to his office when he heard whistling. Glancing up, he saw the subject sitting in a tree. "Why don't you climb down from there," Janiger suggested in his most persuasive psychiatric voice. But the volunteer said, "Oh no, I'll fly right down."

Situations like this were one of the reasons why Janiger had insisted that his baby-sitters take LSD—because only after you had been there could you realize just how much sincerity was implied in the response, "I'll fly right down." The subject really thought he was a bird, which meant that Janiger had to convince him to climb down using logic a bird would accept. So he built a nest out of sticks and stones, and with a little persuasion coaxed the man down to sit on it.

One day a painter volunteered, and Janiger gave him an Indian kachina doll to sketch. As the LSD took hold the sketches became emotional, fiery, a mixture of cubism, fauvism, and abstract expressionism that convinced the artist he had made an artistic breakthrough. Word of the Beverly Hills shrink who had a creativity pill swept through the local bohemian art scene like a Malibu brush fire. Within days Janiger was besieged by painters and sculptors, all begging for an opportunity to expose their artistry to LSD.

At first he was reluctant. Too many artists would spoil the experiment's balance. But then the beauty of what had befallen him became apparent: art was a universal language, it was active rather than reflective, it was concrete. Instead of having to rely on posthumous statements about the room changing color and the chairs becoming the Last Judgment, he could let each artist sketch the same kachina doll: a sketch before taking LSD, a sketch in the middle of the experiment, and so on. That way he would have a simple yet elegant example of how LSD

changed perception. Watching them work, Janiger realized that artists had always been the natural constituency for consciousness-changing drugs. The unconscious was their medium, and they would do anything to improve their access. One only had to think of Coleridge and opium, Balzac and hashish, Poe and laudanum—the list was endless.

Although the painters worked out fine, in the end they were insufficient: the art was expressive, the painters weren't. They had such a hard time articulating what was happening inside their heads that Janiger decided he needed a writer or two to flesh out his findings. Gil Henderson, one of the painters, suggested the novelist Anaïs Nin. This was an inspired suggestion, for not only was Nin conversant with the language of psychoanalysis, but also for two decades she had been conducting her own idiosyncratic raids on her unconscious in the form of a series of surrealistic novels.

Nin has left us a record of her LSD trips in her famous diary. She describes how, at one point, the room had dissolved into pure space, revealing the "images behind images, the walls behind the sky, the sky behind the infinite"; how she had begun to weep, copious tears flowing down her cheeks, while at the same instant she had been aware of a comic force behind the tears. And the two feelings, weeping and laughter, tragedy and comedy, had alternated at a dizzying pace. "Without being a mathematician I understand the infinite," she had told Janiger, who reminded her of a Picasso painting, an asymmetrical man with one large, prying eye. Prying into her very soul.

What part of the mind was being stimulated so that the concept of infinity could be grasped on an emotional level? Where was the place where objects suddenly became alive, where the room began to breathe? Finding the answers to these questions was the most exciting thing Oscar Janiger could imagine.

And he wasn't alone. For some reason—the presence of Huxley? Southern California in general?—the Los Angeles LSD scene was particularly fertile. One day it seemed there were only five researchers working with the drug, the next day ten, the day after that twenty, all exchanging those knowing looks.

One of Janiger's counterparts was Sidney Cohen, a psychiatrist attached to the Los Angeles Neuropsychiatric Hospital, which was part of the Veterans Administration. Cohen had obtained his first LSD fully intending to pursue the model psychoses work of Max Rinkel and the other Lab Madness researchers, but his own personal experience with the drug had caused him to change direction.

"I was taken by surprise," he recollected a few years later at an LSD symposium. "This was no confused, disoriented delirium, but something quite different. Just what it was I could not say." It refused to be Englished. Or easily psychologized. "Though we have been using the available measuring instruments, the check lists, the performance tests, the psychological batteries, and so forth, the core of the LSD situation remains in the dark, quite untouched by our activities," he confessed.

But while the core remained impenetrable, researchers like Cohen were busily building a body of data describing what happened when the typical therapy patient took LSD. Miraculous and

disturbing things happened. Sometimes the patient got trapped on a paranoid merry-go-round, and went round and round until the session had to be terminated with the antipsychotic thiorazine, a drug that effectively counteracted the effects of LSD. But just as often, after twisting and turning through the labyrinth of their unconscious, they suddenly stumbled onto a part of the Other World that was conflict-free, and all their pathologies vanished like startled birds. "It is as though everything that bothered them has been transcended," remarked Cohen's colleague, the psychologist Betty Eisner. Cohen made a particular study of this anomaly, which he called the "integrative experience":

The integrative experience should be described further because it has not been a matter for scientific scrutiny and the semantic difficulties are considerable. There is usually a perceptual component which consists of looking upon beauty and light. Affectually there is a feeling of great relaxation and hyperphoria. The patients describe an insightfulness into themselves, an awareness of their place in the environment, and a sense of order in life. These are all fused into a very meaningful episode, and it is believed that this can be significantly therapeutic.

The key to the integrative experience, to the extent that one existed was set and setting. With proper preparation and the skillful manipulation of mood enhancers, particularly music, Cohen found he could induce an integrative experience with fair regularity. But he also discovered that while enormously helpful, the integrative experience was not a miracle cure. A patient might experience that pure redemptive light one month and yet be right back where he had started from the next, nurturing the same family of neuroses that had brought him into therapy in the first place. But when Cohen mentioned these limitations to his more enthusiastic colleagues, he was usually dismissed as stuffy old Sid, middle-of-the-road Sid.

But however cautious he might have been about LSD's ultimate utility, Sidney Cohen was instrumental in turning on not only his colleagues, mostly psychiatrists and psychologists, but a few writers and scientists as well. During one stretch his office was full of analysts from the Rand Corporation, the semisecret think tank located in Santa Monica. One of them, Herman Kahn, took LSD and lay on the floor murmuring "wow" every few minutes. Later he claimed he had spent the time profitably reviewing bombing strategies against mainland China.

One of the psychologists whom Cohen introduced to LSD was a man named A. Wesley Medford. With a friend, a cancer specialist and radiologist named Mortimer Hartman, Medford began spending his weekends experimenting with the drug. Gradually others joined in, until their private weekend investigations resembled what in left political circles would have been called a cell—a cell not of the class wars, but the consciousness wars. All sorts of crazy things started happening to the Wesley group. Astral projection. Past lives. Telepathy over vast spaces. Enhanced intelligence. The sense that they could link up into a multiple mind, a Group Mind. Although all the experiments that they designed to test these newfound powers failed—remember Weir Mitchell with his poems and psychology papers—it didn't dampen the group's ardor, and the rest of the LSD research community watched in bemused fascination as the Wesley group grew in intensity and then came apart amid denunciations and recriminations. It seemed LSD also

enhanced some of the negative personality traits that make it difficult for people to get along with each other.

Wesley returned to his former practice, warning that LSD was uncontrollable. But not Hartman. LSD had lit a fire under Hartman; he couldn't leave it alone. Teaming up with a psychiatrist named Arthur Chandler, who had joined the Wesley group late in the game, Hartman opened an office in Beverly Hills and launched a five-year therapeutic study that had Sandoz's blessing. Even though Chandler had the therapeutic credentials, it was Hartman who ran the office. "He was the sparkplug," remembers Oscar Janiger. "He was always needling Chandler, who was a pragmatic cookbook kind of guy, an old-line psychiatrist. But Chandler also provided a drag, otherwise Hartman would have been another Leary, getting grandiose and messianic. They were a perfect team." Although Hartman was sincerely interested in conducting a legitimate research study for Sandoz, he was also aware that LSD therapy had the potential for a healthy financial return, particularly if inroads could be made into the analysis-prone film colony.

Of all the actors, writers, musicians, and directors who passed through Chandler and Hartman's portals, the most famous was Cary Grant. Grant took LSD more than sixty times, and although he was considered one of Hollywood's most private stars, he found his enthusiasm for the drug hard to contain. It finally overflowed during the filming of the movie *Operation Petticoat*. The scene was appropriately bizarre. There was Grant sitting on the deck of the pink submarine that was Petticoat's principal set. He had an aluminum sheet attached to his neck to facilitate his tan and he was chatting with two reporters, both of whom were prepared for the usual hour of teeth pulling that an interview with Grant required. But today Cary was totally relaxed, a condition he attributed to the insights he had achieved using an experimental mind drug called LSD.

"I have been born again," he told the astonished reporters. "I have been through a psychiatric experience which has completely changed me. I was horrendous. I had to face things about myself which I never admitted, which I didn't know were there. Now I know that I hurt every woman I ever loved. I was an utter fake, a self-opinionated bore, a know-all who knew very little.

"I found I was hiding behind all kinds of defenses, hypocrisies and vanities. I had to get rid of them layer by layer. The moment when your conscious meets your subconscious is a hell of a wrench. With me there came a day when I saw the light."

Although Grant, his lawyers, and MGM all tried to kill the story, it appeared in print on April 20, 1959, and while it didn't alter Grant's popularity one iota, it was an enormous shot in the pocketbook for LSD therapists like Chandler and Hartman. Suddenly everyone in Hollywood wanted to be born again.

Whether it was Chandler and Hartman that Aldous Huxley had in mind when he dropped the following note to Osmond is unclear, but they certainly fit the general description. "What frightful people there are in your profession," Huxley had written. "We met two Beverly Hills psychiatrists the other day, who specialize in LSD therapy at \$100 a shot—and, really, I have seldom met people of lower sensitivity, more vulgar mind! To think of people made vulnerable by LSD being exposed to such people is profoundly disturbing."

There was a lesson here, but, with the possible exception of Anaïs Nin, no one noticed.

Thanks to her sessions with Dr. Janiger, Anaïs Nin had a front-row seat as the psychedelic movement was born in a handful of fashionable Los Angeles drawing rooms, midwived by Huxley, Heard, Hubbard, and the dozens of researchers (like Janiger) and others (like Nin) who had been drawn into the sublime quest of exploring the Other World. Attending their impassioned get-togethers, Nin was reminded of André Breton and his band of surrealists who had alternately shocked and delighted Paris in the Twenties and Thirties. Breton had been another believer in the revolutionary potentials of the unconscious, but lacking a tool like LSD he had been forced to rely on trances and automatic writing to make his case. Nevertheless Nin sniffed his presence in the excited speculations of Heard and Huxley, although the setting was a far cry from the noisy cafes of Montparnasse.

At first it was all talk, talk, talk, in a variety of dialects. The psychologists talked psychology, the mystics talked theology, a smattering talked parapsychology, while polymaths like Huxley and Heard danced from one vocabulary to the other, equally at home with the integrative experience or the Hindu samadhi. Misunderstandings were frequent, as was an inevitable partisanship; what kept things congenial was the bemused understanding that they were all talking about the same thing. When it came to the Other World, everyone—the psychologists, the writers, the artists, even the mystics—enjoyed amateur status. This had been a little hard for some of the medical men to swallow, as they tended to take a proprietary attitude toward drugs; some of the more hard-nosed had come in for a lot of criticism along the lines of, "My God, get it out of those sterile rooms and stop asking those stupid questions." But years of conditioning couldn't be shed overnight. Sterile rooms and questionnaires were the only scientific tools they had, and it was difficult to see how you could jettison them and still expect to solve the mystery.

From midnight discussions it was a short step to... *drug parties* would be the phrase used today. No one came right out and said, "Why not drop by my house tonight and we'll take LSD." The invitation was usually couched in terms like, "Why not come over and we'll conduct a modest ESP experiment." But the result was the same. Eventually a series of evening salons sprang up in some of Los Angeles's wealthier neighborhoods, bringing together the likes of Huxley, Heard, Hubbard, Nin, Oscar Janiger, Sidney Cohen, etc. "Our parties were meaningful and very special," Nin confided to her diary. "We shared our esoteric experiences. These experiences should have remained esoteric."

Nin was probably one of the first people in America to worry that LSD was getting out of hand. A couple of things bothered her. She was worried, for example, by the arrogant assumption of so many of the psychologists that in a year or two they would have the Other World neatly dissected and defanged, sterilized, objectified, another head for the trophy rooms of science. Nin had no doubt that the human spirit would elude the men in the white coats, but she did worry about the kind of unintended damage the pursuit might bring. Nevertheless, that didn't mean she endorsed the Huxley plan of introducing psychedelics to the Best and the Brightest. The more she watched the spread of LSD, the more convinced she became that there was a reason why the quest for higher consciousness had always been the province of small esoteric mystery cults: you couldn't mass produce the mystical: too many initiations, too many complex rituals were

required. Sure a drug like LSD opened the Door, affording instant access to parts of the unconscious that might otherwise have taken years to achieve either through meditation or psychotherapy. But was a shortcut the best and safest way to visit the Other World? Nin didn't think so. But when she argued this point with Huxley, he responded rather irritably, "You're fortunate enough to have a natural access to your subconscious life, but other people need drugs and should have them."

It was Huxley's opinion that *Homo sapiens* didn't have the luxury to ignore any shortcuts. When he had written *Brave New World* in the early Thirties, he had imagined it taking place in the far distant future of A.D. 3500. But here it was less than a quarter of a century later, and the world was catching up to his satirical portrait. The ideal of a perfectly managed society, which was the beating heart of corporate liberalism, could have been lifted right out of the first chapter, with its insistent message—"conform, conform, conform"—murmuring from the Pavlovian television screens and from the tabloids' worshipful hagiography of the Organization Man. "Conform, or else has become something of an eleventh commandment," observed psychiatrist Robert Lindner in a little book called *Must We Conform?* Huxley explored the astonishing way life was imitating his art in a series of essays collected and published under the title *Brave New World Revisited*. Of particular interest to him was the skyrocketing popularity of tranquilizers like Miltown and Elavil. These, Huxley felt, were worthy forerunners of a true soma, in that they stanch the flow of unhappiness that was an inevitable byproduct of "conform, or else."

Given the cultural situation, Huxley felt, the rapid and efficient development of psychedelics became crucial. Gerald Heard believed much the same thing, only he tended to replace Huxley's sociological arguments with larger cosmic ones. For Heard it was the forces of light versus those of darkness, Eros against thanatos, with the forces of darkness manifested in the Bomb, the proliferation of mental illness, the slide toward regimentation, while the forces of light had to make do with LSD. LSD proved once and for all that the mind contained higher powers; they should be catalogued and inventoried; and then they should be released on a wide scale. "We may be very grateful that our opponents so long have been content to be ignorant and bigoted materialists," he said.

Neither Huxley nor Heard ever sat down and drew up a formal blueprint for how the anxious present might become the psychedelic future, although Huxley was thinking of writing a reverse *Brave New World*, in which a psychedelic system of education would result in a true utopia. But that was fiction—and rather difficult fiction, he discovered, as most of his early attempts ended in the wastebasket. What Huxley and Heard seemed to be aiming for was a kind of gradual osmosis, particularly among the scientific community. If they could get science on their side, if they could map and inventory the Other World using the accepted tools of scientific truth, always careful not to alarm the philistines with grandiose claims, then there might be a chance... and the way to accomplish this was to recruit as many of the Lab Madness boys and the LSD researchers to their point of view as was humanly possible, and then let them turn on the Best and the Brightest under the guise of legitimate research projects.

"The man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the

man who went out," Huxley had written in the last paragraph of *Doors*. "He will be wiser but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance..." He will also, like Paul on the road to Tarsus, be open to a different vision.

It is important to understand that Huxley wasn't proposing a wholesale migration to the Other World. He was very selective. When the novelist Christopher Isherwood, a close friend of Heard and a disciple of the same Swami Prabhavananda who had tutored Huxley in Vedantic Hinduism back in the Forties, came to them for mescaline he was turned away as too unstable. Annoyed, Isherwood later obtained some mescaline on his own and tried it one day in London. He went to Westminster Cathedral "to see if God was there." He wasn't. In fact, his absence was so profound that Isherwood began to giggle uncontrollably and had to remove himself to a discreet nook until he could regain his composure. There wasn't a whisper of the eternal spirit in that immense, drafty space.

But if a likely candidate appeared on their horizon, he was usually accommodated. This was the case with Alan Watts, a slightly younger member of Isherwood's generation (b. 1915) and a former Anglican minister turned freelance philosopher. Watts was something of a special case, as he had spent his adolescence in the same theosophical circles that Huxley and Heard had investigated in the Thirties. He was a protégé of Christmas Humphreys, the English barrister who also ran London's Buddhist Lodge. When Watts was unable to attend Oxford, Humphreys and his friends began schooling young Alan in "every occult and far-out subject under the sun." And Watts responded by becoming a prodigy. Already at nineteen, when he published his first book, his trademark style was fully developed. Watts could take the most abstruse topics and render them as clear as a pane of glass. This was less a matter of prose than a quality of mind: about the time he was drawn into Huxley's psychedelic scenario, Watts had a radio show in San Francisco. Little old ladies would call up from Oakland and ask him the most godawful things—how Zen satori was related to the Catholic concept of grace, for instance—and Watts wouldn't even blink. He'd open his mouth (which always contained a cigarette; he amazed the engineers by being able to talk and smoke them at the same time) and perfectly formed sentences would pour out for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes, and then, just as the engineer was about to give the off-air sign, he would tie the ends of his answer up into a neat little bow and sign off. Watts's loquacity made him a great favorite of the LSD researchers; there wasn't a drug in the world, he used to boast to them, that could shut him up.

Watts wasn't an immediate convert to Huxley's high opinion of psychedelics. It struck him as "highly improbable that a true spiritual experience could follow from ingesting a particular chemical. Visions and ecstasies, yes. A taste of the mystical, like swimming with waterwings, perhaps." The first time he took LSD he had a "hilariously beautiful" but "hardly what I would call mystical" time. But then he took it again, and this time he had a full-blown mystical illumination that was as embarrassing as it was enlightening—embarrassing because that moment of cosmic Oneness was something Watts had devoted his whole adult life to finding, and now he had achieved it not through proper spiritual discipline but because he had poured an ampoule of twentieth-century science into a glass of distilled water; and it was enlightening because what

came through the Door wasn't Zen Buddhism, which was Watts's specialty, but something with an unmistakable Hindu cast, as though Hinduism "was a local form of some undercover wisdom, inconceivably ancient, which everyone knows in the back of his mind but will not admit."

Oscar Janiger always thought that the arrival of Alan Watts was a key moment in the psychedelic chronology, because Watts's influence lay in a different direction from that of Huxley and Heard. From his base in San Francisco he had considerable influence with the young bohemians, among them a cousin of Janiger's named Allen Ginsberg, who were beginning to look eastward for their spiritual values.

Unquestionably a momentum was developing, but its direction was a bit difficult to ascertain. Up in Canada Osmond had begun giving LSD to terminal alcoholics with promising results, but he was also doing such things as calling up his old school chum and member of Parliament, Christopher Mayhew, with the suggestion that Mayhew use his connections to entice the BBC into making a short science film about mescaline. Mayhew had offered himself as guinea pig and a BBC film crew had been dispatched to his house in Surrey to film Osmond giving him 400 milligrams of mescaline hydrochloride. What followed was by now fairly predictable: at irregular intervals Mayhew kept slipping through the door of temporal and spatial reality and arriving at a place of "pervasive pure light, like a kind of invisible sunlit snow." Although Osmond's watch indicated that these voyages lasted mere seconds, to Mayhew they seemed to go on forever.

"I'm off again for a long period," he would suddenly announce, interrupting one of Osmond's intelligence tests. "But you won't notice that I've gone away at all."

"When are you coming back?" Osmond would ask.

"I am now in your time," Mayhew would respond, to be followed a few minutes later by another "Whoops I'm off again."

Like Aldous, Mayhew also had a glimpse of the dark part of the Other World. "There were occasions when I knew with terrible vividness what being mad was like," he confided in an account of his experience that was published in the London *Observer*.

To give another illustration of how things were developing: in 1954 Gerald Heard gave a lecture in Palo Alto to an organization called the Sequoia Seminar. Sitting in the audience was an engineer named Myron Stolaroff. Stolaroff was in charge of long-range planning at Ampex, which was one of the first of the high-technology companies to emerge in the valleys south of San Francisco. Stolaroff had heard Gerald speak several times before and considered him one of the world's outstanding mystics. So when Heard began rhapsodizing about the effects of certain mind-altering drugs, Stolaroff was predictably upset. "I thought you went to all these places anyway," he asked. "Why do you take this?" And Heard had replied, "Oh, but it just opens the doors in so many ways to so many vast dimensions."

Whether he admitted it to himself or not, Myron Stolaroff was hooked, and a few months later, in Los Angeles on business, he visited Heard and had another long discussion about these new mind drugs. At one point Hubbard's name had come up, and Heard had implied that if Stolaroff wished to try any of these substances, Al was the man to guide him through the experience. So Stolaroff had written Hubbard and one day Al had turned up on the doorstep, bounding into

Myron's office with a tank of carbogen, a "fun-loving guy" who "radiated an enormous energy field." After the formal introductions were over, Hubbard had suggested that Stolaroff take a few lungfuls of the carbogen, and twenty or thirty breaths later the director of long-range planning was abreacting all over his office.

Stolaroff, who had been skeptical of a lot of Gerald's claims, was convinced. He arranged to visit Vancouver at the earliest opportunity for one of Hubbard's patented LSD sessions—by 1959 Hubbard was claiming he had conducted seventeen hundred LSD sessions.

It was a terrible experience. During those hours in Hubbard's apartment, Stolaroff relived his birth, the actual physical birth, gasping and writhing for what felt like days, until he broke through to the world, which actually smelled of ether. Although it was a torturous few hours, Myron emerged from the LSD womb convinced that many of his personal eccentricities and neuroses could be traced back to the trauma of his birth. This was not a radical possibility as far as psychoanalysis was concerned; Otto Rank, one of Freud's last disciples, had explored the effects of birth on the emerging psyche in numerous articles. But it would have taken psychoanalysis years to attain the level that LSD had reached in one climactic rush. Stolaroff returned to Ampex convinced that LSD "was the greatest discovery that man had ever made."

Over the next few years Myron and Al grew increasingly close. Stolaroff was a businessman, an engineer, a manipulator of things, not words, and he was a welcome change from the hyperintellectuality of the Heard-Huxley-Osmond circle. Gradually a fantasy took shape out of their late-night confabs: using LSD, they would turn Ampex into the most creative, successful, and lucrative corporation in the world. They would use the drug to stimulate not only creative insight, but also mental health, doing away with all that debilitating egotism and neurosis, the petty jealousies, the failures of communication. Using LSD, they would foster an environment in which individuality would flower and mesh with the budding genius of everyone else's individuality, thus creating a corporation that served the impossible task of enhancing not only the individual, but the group as well. And the bottom line would be: lots of money for everyone.

Hubbard was a perfect example of how reality can warp the best-laid fantasies. It had seemed a simple enough task back when it had first popped into Huxley's mind—just turn on enough people of sufficient caliber to tip the cultural balance—but he had forgotten that not everyone might share his Oxbridge assumptions. Huxley preferred a kind of quiet diplomacy that would spread the word "in the relative privacy of learned journals, the decent obscurity of moderately highbrow books"; American TV, with its audience of "Baptists, Methodists and nothing-but-men plus an immense lunatic fringe," should be avoided at all costs. But decent obscurity was not Al's forte. He seemed determined to sell LSD as a specifically Catholic nostrum. "Would it not be best to let Hubbard go his own way within the Church?" Huxley wrote Osmond. "It is evidently there that he feels increasingly at home. It is evident, too, that his loyalty to the Church makes him increasingly anxious to use LSD-25 as an instrument for validating Catholic doctrines and for giving new life to Catholic symbols." But the irritation lasted only until their next dinner, when Hubbard again charmed Huxley with his geniality and vigor. "Please ignore what I wrote in my last letter about him," he told Osmond, adding, "I still have doubts about the general validity of

his methods."

But Hubbard's methods generally worked, and in late 1957 his campaign within Vancouver's Catholic hierarchy won a rather astounding victory in the form of a notice issued by the Cathedral of the Holy Rosary, which read, in part:

We are aware of man's fallibility and will be protected in our studies by that understanding and recognition of the First Cause of all created things that govern them. We therefore approach the study of these psychedelics and their influence on the mind of man anxious to discover whatever attributes they possess respectfully evaluating their proper place in the Divine Economy. We humbly ask our Heavenly Mother the Virgin, help of all who call upon her to know and understand the true qualities of these psychedelics, the full capacities of man's noblest faculties and according to God's laws to use them for the benefit of mankind here and in eternity.

Today the Catholic hierarchy of western Canada, tomorrow the first psychedelic corporation—Al's aspirations certainly weren't modest. But in this case the one precluded the other. Although Myron Stolaroff had laid the groundwork perfectly, persuading Ampex's new general manager to overlook Al's flaws and give LSD a chance, the result was disastrous. The general manager was Jewish. The last thing he wanted to do was look at pictures of Jesus Christ, but that's what Hubbard kept waving at him.

We could continue in this vein for another hundred pages, describing all the little eddies that sprang up in LSD's wake, and perhaps we should describe just one more, as it shows how far afield the psychedelic message was ranging. In 1958 Gerald and Sidney Cohen traveled to Arizona to run a session for Henry Luce, founder and president of Time-Life, Inc., and Luce's wife, the cosmopolite Clare Booth Luce. At one point during the evening the tone-deaf and unflamboyant Luce wandered out into the yard, conducting an imaginary symphony; and later on a short colloquy with God assured him all was well with the American Century.

The only problem that anyone could foresee was the possibility that somewhere down the road LSD might turn out to be physically harmful. One couldn't forget Freud, who had thought cocaine an innocuous panacea and had become addicted. But even if this happened, it wouldn't be fatal: "If the psychologists and sociologists will define the ideal," Huxley said, "the neurologists and pharmacologists can be relied upon to discover the means whereby the ideal can be realized." LSD and mescaline were just the tip of the psychedelic iceberg.

The first new psychedelic to surface was DMT, an abbreviation of dimethyltryptamine. It was introduced into the Los Angeles scene by Oscar Janiger. Besides exploring the possibilities of LSD, Janiger had been intrigued by the Osmond/Smythies thesis that psychoses might be caused by a metabolic malfunction of the adrenal system. Just as serendipity had led the two Englishmen to the molecular similarity between adrenaline and mescaline, Janiger had stumbled across a similar connection between brain tryptamines and a South American vine used in shamanic rites called ayahuasca. The psychoactive element in ayahuasca was dimethyltryptamine. Janiger searched the medical literature for any references to DMT. He found only two, both in

Hungarian. Surmising that the Hungarians must have tried DMT and lived to write their monographs, Janiger had a local laboratory make a batch, and one afternoon while he was alone in his office he filled a syringe and shot it into his arm—"a dangerously stupid, idiotic thing to do."

Compared to DMT, LSD was like a lazy summer picnic. Janiger felt like he was inside a pinball machine, bombarded by flashing lights, clanging bells, infernal messages. There was no insight. He was lost, disconnected, and when he later regained consciousness (the DMT lasted only thirty minutes) he was convinced he had been "totally stark raving crazy." Which was terrific! Perhaps he had found the elusive M factor.

Janiger gave DMT to Bivens, who agreed that it was too much; then he called up Alan Watts and bet him that he had a drug that could finally shut him up. Watts took the bet and the DMT, and for thirty minutes he lay there staring at Janiger, who kept repeating, "Alan, Alan, please say something. Talk to me. Your reputation is at stake." But Watts never said a word. The next time Al Hubbard passed through town, Janiger gave him a supply of DMT for his leather bag and asked him to distribute it along the circuit. "This isn't a gift," he said. "I want reports back." Everyone who took DMT agreed that it was a hellish half hour, with absolutely no redeeming qualities.

The same couldn't be said, however, about psilocybin, which descended on the psychedelic scene like an eager debutante from a well-known society family, in this case, Sandoz Pharmaceuticals.

A rather odd set of circumstances led Sandoz to psilocybin.

To begin at the beginning would be to start on a forest path in the Catskills in the summer of 1927, at the moment when Valentina Wasson spied some mushrooms growing in the woods and ran to pick them. Her new husband, for they were on their honeymoon, watched aghast as she "knelt in poses of adoration before one cluster and then another of these growths." When it became clear that no amount of argument could deter her from cooking them for dinner, Gordon Wasson began to prepare himself for the new status of widower, for there was little doubt in his mind that by morning she would be dead.

She wasn't, of course. Born in Russia, Valentina Wasson had been raised a mycophile, a lover of mushrooms, and she was knowledgeable in the specifics of their use. Gordon, an Anglo-Saxon, represented the other extreme, a mycophobe, a hater of mushrooms. Being educated sorts—Gordon was a Harvard man and financial correspondent for the New York *Herald Tribune*; Valentina a pediatrician—they began to analyze the different cultural heritages that could have produced such opposite reactions. Was it possible to imagine a similar disagreement over lichen or walnuts? In fact, once they had delved a little deeper, they discovered that whole areas of Europe could be designated either *mycophile* (the Slavic countries, with pockets in Bavaria, Austria, and Italy, and parts of southern France and Spain) or *mycophobe* (the rest of Europe). Appetites whetted, they plunged into an investigation that would continue for the rest of their lives.

In 1928 Gordon Wasson gave up journalism for banking, and took a job in the securities division of Morgan Guaranty. When an act of Congress prohibited banks from owning stock, he transferred to the regular staff of the bank, where he eventually rose to the position of vice president. During these years whatever spare time the Wassons had was devoted to their mycological quest. They tramped all over Europe, combing the language for echoes of the split that must have occurred millennia ago. They sought out uneducated peasants and interviewed them regarding the local fungi.

Gradually a thesis emerged. The Wassons began to suspect that a mushroom had played a formative role in the Ur-religion of tribal Indo-Europe. Their prime candidate was the fly amanite, considered by mycophobes to be the most poisonous mushroom of all, although there was no solid evidence that anyone had ever died from eating a fly amanite. What did occur was a species of delirium that, to quote from Cooke's *Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi* (pub. 1862), caused one to "prophesy wildly, engage in feats of prodigious physical exertion, and enjoy illusions of miraculous mobility and metamorphosis." Lewis Carroll apparently knew his Cooke—in *Alice in Wonderland* the caterpillar is puffing a hookah atop a fly amanite, which Alice promptly eats with memorable results.

Because the thesis that a narcotic mushroom lay at the heart of Indo-European culture was a trifle radical, the Wassons confided in very few people. One of their confidants was Robert Graves, the English poet who was living in balmy isolation on the island of Majorca. The Wassons had become friends with Graves when they collaborated on the historical question of which mushroom the Roman Empress Agrippina had used to poison the Emperor Claudius, the main character in Graves's most popular novel, *I, Claudius*. Marshaling the available evidence, they decided that she had probably served him a dish of his favorite mushroom, *Amanita caesarea*, a harmless and tasty fungi except when it is stewed in the juice of *Amanita phalloides*, the only lethal mushroom available to Agrippina. Because a man poisoned with *phalloides* lingers on for five or six days, they concluded that a booster poison, most likely colocynth, had to have been administered via enema; and within hours Claudius was dead, and his stepson Nero was the new emperor.

In September 1952 Graves came across a magazine story that mentioned the discovery of "mushroom stones" at various archeological excavations in Guatemala and Mexico. The archeologists speculated that the stones had been objects of worship, or at least adoration, which suggested the existence in pre-Columbian times of a mushroom cult. Although the Wassons had planned to confine their study to Eurasia, they left for Mexico at the first available opportunity.

What they found was much more tangible than their European hunt through old folklore and linguistic probabilities. A number of sixteenth-century Spanish chroniclers had actually mentioned the existence of a narcotic mushroom known in the native Nahuatl as *teonanacatl*, or "God's flesh." And the Franciscan friar Bernard de Sahagun had even gone so far as to describe the alleged effects of *teonanacatl*:

Some saw in a vision that they would die in war. Some saw in a vision that they

would be devoured by wild beasts.... Some saw in a vision that they would become rich, wealthy. Some saw in a vision that they would buy slaves...

As far as de Sahagun was concerned, this was devil's work, and the Catholic Church had moved vigorously to suppress the mushroom cult.

The Wassons were banking on the possibility that the cult had not been eradicated in the sixteenth century, but had gone underground. There was some evidence that this might be the case. In 1936 a team of American anthropologists working in the remote village of Huatla de Jimenez reported that they had been allowed to observe, but not participate in, a ceremony that involved psychotropic mushrooms.

For three years the Wassons followed rumors, cultivated sources, and learned the Indian dialects. In Huatla de Jimenez they became friends with Eunice Pike, the local missionary and someone who was rumored to know quite a bit about the mushroom cult. Only "when evening and darkness come and you are alone with a wise old man or woman whose confidence you have won, by the light of a candle held in the hand and talking in a whisper, you may bring up the subject," Wasson wrote. What they whispered was tantalizing. According to Wasson's sometimes fanciful sources, *teonanacatl* were gathered before sunrise at the time of the New Moon; they were picked in some areas only by virgins, who wrapped them in banana leaves and took them to the cathedral, where they were left on the altar to be blessed. Then they were passed from *curandero* (medicine man, healer, shaman, etc.) to *curandero*. Listening to these whispered stories, the Wassons felt like "pilgrims seeking the Grail," an apt analogy, as the mushroom cult was proving comparably elusive. Wasson described the frustration this way:

Perhaps you will learn the names of a number of renowned *curanderos*, and your emissaries will even promise to deliver them to you, but then you wait and wait and they never come. You will brush past them in the marketplace, and they will know you but you will not know them. The judge in the town hall may be the very man you are seeking; and you may pass the time of day with him, yet never learn that he is your *curandero*.

In the summer of 1955 the Wassons hired a muleteer who knew his way around the Oaxacan mountains and set out for Huatla de Jimenez. There, as the twenty-ninth of June became the thirtieth, Gordon became the first outsider to "partake in the agape of the sacred mushrooms." He later coined the word *bemushroomed* to describe the state he passed into. Strange information flowed through his mind, visions that seemed the "very archetypes of beautiful form and color" and ideas that reminded him of the "Ideas that Plato had talked about"—ideas that impressed the banker from Morgan Guaranty not as the fantasies of an "unhinged imagination," but as a glimpse of a higher order of reality, against which our daily lives are "mere imperfect adumbrations."

The Wassons kept quiet about their discovery and returned to Huatla de Jimenez several more times. On one occasion they were accompanied by a photographer named Allan Richardson, who photographed the mushroom ceremony; on another they brought Roger Heim, a famous mycologist and the director of France's National Museum of Natural History. Heim succeeded in

identifying the mushrooms as a member of the Strophariaceae family, genus *Psilocybe*, but was stymied when it came to isolating the active element. That problem he passed along to Albert Hofmann at Sandoz Pharmaceuticals, who reluctantly agreed to do what he could. "I wanted to assign the investigation to one of my co-workers," Hofmann would ruefully write in his autobiography. "However, nobody showed much eagerness to take on this problem because it was known that LSD and everything connected with it were scarcely popular subjects to the top management."

In 1958 Hofmann announced that he had synthesized two new substances: psilocybin and psilocin, both of which were indole compounds with a marked similarity to the neurotransmitter serotonin; LSD now had some less potent cousins.

News of the Wassons' discovery spread slowly but steadily. Robert Graves, writing to Martin Seymour-Smith, mentioned that his "mushroom man is very elated since he actually found the mushroom oracle I sent him after in Mexico, and ate the sacred mushrooms and had them analyzed—and there's the next wonder drug to watch out for. He thinks they were what the worshippers ate at the Eleusinian mysteries to get such terrific visions." When Aldous Huxley learned of it, Wasson's office in the Morgan bank became a stopover on the psychedelic circuit. Osmond, Huxley, and Hubbard all made pilgrimages to hear about being bemushroomed (Hubbard couldn't get over the fact that Wasson had a private dining room with private waiters), but their attempt to recruit the banker failed. Wasson was too absorbed with his own theories, his own discoveries. He "likes to think that his mushrooms are somehow unique and infinitely superior to everything else," Huxley confided to Osmond after lunching with the banker at his "Temple of Mammon." "I tried to disabuse him. But he likes to feel that he had got hold of the One and Only psychedelic—accept no substitutes, none genuine unless sold with the signature of the inventor."

That particular visit to the Temple came in June 1957 at a time when the Wassons' magnum opus about the Indo-European mushroom cult, *Mushrooms, Russia and History*, had just appeared in a limited edition of 512 copies, each costing \$250. It was a prodigious work of scholarship, but for all its philological and folkloric mastery it was the Divine Mushroom of Mexico that gave the thesis its plausibility. "We have now learned," the Wassons had written, "that many species of these strange growths possess a power such as early man could only have regarded as miraculous. Indeed they may have given to him the very idea of the miraculous, and inspired many of the themes that come down to us in our heritage of folklore.... We have suggested that the divine mushroom played a vital part in shaking loose early man's imagination, in arousing his capacity for self-perception, for awe, wonder, and reverence. They certainly made it easier for him to entertain the idea of God."

Had Wasson's public exposure been limited to half a thousand copies of a book costing the equivalent of two weeks' pay, our story might have been different. But one day, while recounting his Mexican adventures during lunch at the Century Club, Wasson was overheard by an editor at Time-Life, who invited him to write the experience up and submit it to *Life* magazine, which had

a running feature devoted to true-life adventures. Wasson's account of the mushroom ceremony was published, along with Allan Richardson's pictures, in the July 1957 issue of *Life*, where it was read by millions, and in particular by a young psychologist named Frank Barron, who was best friends with another young psychologist named Timothy Leary.

But these are reverberations that properly belong to the future. A better question, for the present, might be: Who was James Moore, and why had he been so eager to accompany Gordon Wasson into the Mexican outback in the summer of 1956?

As far as Gordon Wasson knew, James Moore was a professor at the University of Delaware. Moore had written to him in the winter of 1956 expressing an interest in the chemistry of Mexican fungi, and upon learning that Wasson was planning another expedition to Huatla de Jimenez that summer had asked to tag along. To sweeten his unsolicited presence, Moore had mentioned a foundation that might underwrite the whole trip, the Geschickter Fund. And sure enough, the Fund had ponied up two thousand dollars to cover expenses. In retrospect, it was barely enough to cover the irritation of Moore himself.

The man was a complainer. Apparently he had thought a trip to Huatla de Jimenez would be little different from a jaunt to Acapulco; in any case he was unprepared for the diarrhea, the dirt floors, the monotonous food. "I had a terribly bad cold, we damn near starved to death, and I itched all over," was Moore's memory of the journey. To which Wasson has replied: "He was like a landlubber at sea. He got sick to his stomach and hated it all."

Moore's complaints quickly alienated him from the other members of the expedition, among them Roger Heim, the eminent French mycologist. While Moore grumbled, the others reveled in the raw primitiveness of the adventure. Moore even found the mushrooms a disappointment. While the others soared—"I had the most superb feeling, a feeling of ecstasy," reported Wasson—Moore felt nothing save a disorientation that was compounded by the droning Indian dialects, the dirt floor, and the anarchy of his bowels. Already a thin man, he discovered upon his return to Delaware that he had dropped fifteen pounds. It took him a week to regain his strength, but when he had, he notified Botner that he was ready to work on the bag of mushrooms he had brought back from Huatla de Jimenez.

Botner was Moore's case officer at the Central Intelligence Agency.

While Heard and Huxley had been searching for a substance that would open the Door to the mind's higher powers, the Central Intelligence Agency had been looking for a mind-control drug—a Manchurian candidate, to borrow the phrase popularized by Richard Condon's bestselling novel of 1959. Ironically both groups were working the same turf, looking for the answer in that class of drugs that Osmond called psychedelics.

To understand why the CIA was looking for a mind-control substance, it is necessary to backtrack to World War II and reprise what happened at Dachau, where the medical arm of the German air force had carried out some curious experiments with mescaline. As later synopsised in an intelligence report by the U.S. Naval Technical Mission, the Nazis were looking for a drug that could "eliminate the will of the person examined." Under the auspices of SS-

Hauptsturmführer Dr. Plottner (later a professor at the University of Leipzig), mescaline had been mixed with coffee or liquor and given unobtrusively to the subjects. Then the subjects were interrogated. According to the Nazi documents, while unable to impose their will upon the subjects, the doctors had been able to elicit the most intimate sort of personal details.

Although the Nazi mescaline experiments occupied only a few paragraphs in the nearly three hundred-page report—most discussed the famous ice water experiments and other tortures in the name of science—they were paragraphs that struck a responsive chord in the OSS, for the simple reason that the OSS had also been seeking a truth drug. Under the guidance of Winfred Overholser, the director of Saint Elizabeth's, Washington's famous mental hospital, an OSS drug squad had field-tested a number of compounds, including mescaline and scopolamine. Their best luck had come with concentrated liquid marijuana, of all things, which they had injected into cigarettes. They had first used this method to crack the reserve of one August Del Gracio, who was described in the files as a "notorious New York gangster," but its most rigorous test came in a program designed to cleanse the armed forces of suspected communists. Overholser's team would arrive at the interrogation room with a pack of doctored cigarettes and a big pitcher of ice water—intense thirst being a sign that the marijuana was working. Except for one nonsmoker, they broke every soldier they interrogated.

When the CIA was chartered in 1947, it revived its wartime predecessors' fascination with truth drugs like scopolamine and liquid marijuana. And it also authorized an ambitious search for new and better mind drugs. Within the Technical Services Staff, the Agency's gizmo and gadget boys, was a small semisecret subsection known as the Chemical Division. The Chemical Division was run by a Cal-Tech chemist named Sid Gottlieb, a club-footed square-dance enthusiast who rose every morning at dawn to milk his pet goats before driving to the office and a day filled with mind warfare and germ weapons. Gottlieb also had a pronounced stutter and a patron in the higher reaches of the Agency, a man named Richard Helms. Enamored with the possibilities of chemical warfare on the consciousness level, it was Helms who persuaded Allen Dulles, the then director of the CIA, to authorize the investigation of a variety of "biological and chemical materials."

On April 13, 1953, while Huxley was dashing off that enthusiastic note to Osmond concerning mescaline, the CIA formally approved MKULTRA, and diverted \$300,000 to fund its initial investigations. Although MK-ULTRA investigated drugs as diverse as nicotine and cocaine, a large part of its interest and excitement centered on LSD. Indeed, the CIA considered LSD to be of such promise that in November 1953 they sent two men with a black bag full of cash to buy up Sandoz's entire supply, which they thought was ten kilos.

The ten-kilo figure was the result of faulty arithmetic. When the two agents arrived in Basle with their satchel containing \$240,000, they learned that Sandoz's total output since 1943 was a mere forty grams—not even two ounces. Still, a bargain was struck. The Swiss agreed not only to supply the Agency with 100 grams of LSD a week, but also keep them apprised of who else was requesting the drug.

Nevertheless, the CIA was uneasy about having to rely entirely on the neutral Swiss, and

privately they began pressing the American chemical company of Eli Lilly to come up with a rival synthesis. One of the reasons LSD was so expensive and rare was because it required a supply of ergot fungus, which was notoriously difficult to cultivate. The obvious answer was to come up with a synthesis that bypassed ergot completely, using synthetic corollaries, and in October 1954 Eli Lilly announced that they had succeeded in creating an LSD made totally from available chemicals. Besides giving the CIA a domestic supplier, the Lilly synthesis meant that unlimited supplies of LSD were now available. And this, as the memo to Allen Dulles noted, meant that LSD could finally be taken seriously as a chemical warfare agent.

Because the CIA lacked the manpower to run all the complicated behavioral and physiological experiments that Gottlieb had in mind, the Agency turned to the psychological community, particularly to those Lab Madness researchers who were already investigating LSD's relation to mental illness. Most were eager to help, provided the Agency picked up the tab. They had few moral qualms: if the CIA wanted to finance basic research in an area ignored by traditional organizations like the National Institute of Mental Health, where was the problem?

Hiding itself behind two respectable fronts, the Josiah Macy Foundation and the Geschickter Fund for Medical Research, the CIA began funneling dollars to an intercontinental network that rivaled the one being forged by Huxley and Hubbard. Early on they contacted Rinkel and Hyde at Mass. Mental Health, and with Hyde as the principal contact began pouring as much as \$40,000 a year into LSD work. Similar approaches were made to Harold Abramson in New York, Carl Pfeiffer at the University of Illinois, and Harold Hodge at the University of Rochester. In general the money was earmarked for research that most scientists, in any other climate but that of the Cold War, would have found ethically shady. Harold Abramson, for example, received \$85,000 to produce

operationally pertinent materials along the following lines: a. Disturbance of Memory; b. Discrediting by Aberrant Behavior; c. Alteration of Sex Patterns; d. Eliciting of Information; e. Suggestibility; f. Creation of Dependence.

In another CIA-funded experiment, seven drug addicts at a Lexington, Kentucky, hospital were given LSD for seventy-seven days, with dosages doubled and quadrupled as tolerance built up.

Not all the research was done in the hinterlands, though. Within the CIA itself, Gottlieb and his associates were taking LSD regularly, tripping at the office, at Agency parties, measuring their mental equilibrium against those of their colleagues. Turn your back in the morning and some wiseacre would slip a few micrograms into your coffee. It was a game played with the most exalted of weapons, the mind, and sometimes embarrassing things happened. Case-hardened spooks would break down crying or go all gooey about the "brotherhood of man." Once or twice things went really awry, with paranoid agents escaping into the bustle of downtown Washington, their anxious colleagues in hot pursuit. After one spectacular chase the quarry was finally run to ground in Virginia, where they found him crouched under a fountain, babbling about those "terrible monster(s) with fantastic eyes" that had pursued him across Washington. Indeed every

car he met had sent a jolt of terror through his body.

It was in this spirit that Gottlieb's group invited their unsuspecting opposite numbers in the Army Chemical Corps for a three-day working holiday in November 1953. Naturally there was going to be some carousing, and naturally in some cases the punch would be spiked. Although Gottlieb had been instructed to clear any outside use of LSD with his superiors, he apparently considered the Army scientists to be exempt from that ruling. They were pros and as such would be a worthy test for any mind-control drug.

The party would have been a great success if only one of the Army scientists, a Dr. Frank Olson, hadn't committed suicide two days later. Thinking he had lost his mind, Olson had jumped out of a New York hotel room window. The flap inside the Agency almost killed MKULTRA.

Now the CIA is nothing if not labyrinthine, and while MK-ULTRA was studying the nefarious potentials of LSD, another CIA project, ARTICHOKE, was scouring the globe for psychotropic plants. In 1952 a CIA-funded scientist had been sent to Mexico to gather samples of mind-altering plants, in particular the seeds from a shrub called the *piule*. He had returned with pounds of material and a rumor that deep in the Mexican mountains there existed a psychotropic mushroom cult that dated back to the Aztecs. The next summer, at roughly the same moment Gordon and Valentina Wasson were embarking on their quest, a CIA scientist was arriving in Mexico with a similar brief: locate the mushroom sect and acquire samples.

To be bested by a New York banker who wanted to prove a maverick historical thesis that had been nagging at him for the last twenty years must have been galling for the CIA, what with its unlimited funds and its Caligarian vision of chemical power; but to the intelligence agency's credit, it knew of Wasson's discovery almost immediately. A Mexican botanist cabled details a few days after Wasson returned from Huatla de Jimenez. Learning that Wasson planned to return the next summer leading a team that included the noted French mycologist Roger Heim, the Agency decided to insinuate its own man into the group in the person of James Moore, a contract chemist with ARTICHOKE. It used its conduit, the Geschickter Fund, to sweeten the deal.

Moore's nasty few weeks in Mexico were immaterial to his bosses at Langley: what was important was that he had returned with plenty of the prize mushrooms. And should he succeed in isolating the psychoactive element, then it was "quite possible," memoed Sid Gottlieb, that the new drug would "remain an agency secret." So to be bested by the same Swiss chemist and the same Swiss chemical company who had once controlled the world supply of LSD must have been galling. Once again the Agency had to apply to Sandoz—this time for its supply of psilocybin.

One of the problems the CIA grappled with in its search for a mind-control drug was the problem of how to field-test the various candidates. You could run experiments on imprisoned junkies and impoverished college students, but this was a far cry from knowing whether the drug could crack open a potential double agent or a State Department communist. To address this problem the CIA converted one of its San Francisco safe houses into a behavioral field laboratory. The house, located on Telegraph Avenue, was actually a brothel equipped with two-way mirrors and a squad of prostitutes under the supervision of former narcotics agent George

White, who was famous as the man who had broken August Del Gracio with liquid marijuana back during the OSS days. The idea was that the prostitutes would lure visiting businessmen back to the house, where they would then be unobtrusively dosed with LSD or psilocybin, or any of the other mind-control candidates. From a budgetary standpoint the brothel was an ingenious idea and the whole operation was dubbed, with characteristic preppie humor, Operation Midnight Climax.

We can only guess what it was like to visit the Other World under CIA auspices, but one of the first things the randy, hallucinating businessman probably focused on was the decor. The CIA decorators hadn't been able to decide whether the proper ambiance was *fin de siècle* decadent or Fifties chic. Swatches of African fabric and textile hangings competed with Toulouse Lautrec reproductions of Can Can girls kicking up a storm. The tables were covered with black velvet, the curtains in the bedroom were red, those in the hall plaid, with candy-striped ones in the kitchen.

The drugs were usually administered in a drink, but not always. In one series of experiments LSD was sprayed into the bathroom just before the hapless John wandered in to use it.

It was operations like Midnight Climax that the CIA's Inspector General had in mind when he raised, in a 1963 analysis of MK-ULTRA, the spectre of ethics. That an arm of the U.S. government had been testing behavior-change drugs on unsuspecting U.S. citizens didn't alarm the Inspector General so much as what might happen if the unsuspecting public ever found out. The secrecy of MK-ULTRA was vital, he warned, not only to protect the reputation of the Agency, but also its outside sources. Noting that "research in the manipulation of human behavior is considered by many authorities in medicine and related fields to be professionally unethical," he warned that loose lips could place the professional reputations of the CIA's many contract researchers in "jeopardy."

By the time the Inspector General raised these ethical issues the CIA had supposedly lost interest in LSD, although it was still testing other mind drugs, most of which would find their way into the psychedelic underground of the 1970s. Presumably the CIA's active interest in LSD ended sometime around 1958, although the Agency continued to keep tabs on the research scene, a process made infinitely easier by the fact that the Josiah Macy Foundation, an occasional Agency conduit, had begun holding regular LSD conferences in 1955—which is not to impute insincere motives to the Macy Foundation: its interest in LSD was genuine, and had been ever since its medical director, Frank Fremont-Smith, spent an afternoon in Harold Abramson's lab watching Siamese fighting fish drugged with LSD.

The Macy conferences synopsized the changing direction of LSD research. The first, in 1955, brought together most of the Lab Madness people. The second, four years later, was dominated by the therapists: the Dutchman Van Rijn, the Englishman Sandison, Hoffer from Canada, and a whole platoon from Los Angeles, including Sidney Cohen, Betty Eisner, and the psychiatric team of Chandler and Hartman. Harold Abramson of the aforementioned Siamese fighting fish was also there, and at one point, in an attempt to arrive at a limited consensus regarding LSD, he proposed six points of general agreement:

- a) It is pharmacologically safe; very large doses may be given without tissue damage.
- b) It is effective in small doses for therapeutic interviews in which the therapist is definitely involved.
- c) The patient is conscious, cooperative, and better able to integrate material with psychodynamic significance.
- d) The patient undergoes an essentially elated disturbance in ego function, which is also accompanied by integrative forces, so that it may be thought of as "hebesynthesis" rather than narcosynthesis.
- e) The drug may be given repeatedly. There is no evidence of addiction. The pharmacological effects usually wear off within 12 hours.
- f) Patients usually like the experience of taking LSD in the dose range stated.

This was by no means a universally accepted list. The Lab Madness researchers still had problems with the whole idea that a drug they had used to make people crazy was now being used to make them well. A number of the therapists blanched at *hebesynthesis* as an organizing title—what an awkward product of scientific language mangling that was. But they could understand the motive that had prompted Abramson to coin it. Betty Eisner mentioned how she and Cohen referred to that curious sunlit place in the mind where conflicts disappeared as the integrative experience. But she became tongue-tied as soon as she tried to expand on that: "Obviously the language is bad; I am floundering," she apologized. Then Abram Hoffer volunteered that up in Canada they were calling it the psychedelic experience. What was that, someone asked. "Psychedelic," repeated Hoffer. "I think Dr. Osmond coined it. It comes from the Greek, meaning 'mind-manifesting.'"

Besides introducing the word that would ultimately triumph in the public consciousness, Hoffer also briefed his colleagues on the startling way in which he and Osmond were now using LSD. Unlike most of the therapists at the Macy conference, they were not using small doses to "liquefy" defenses, thus speeding up the time needed for a successful treatment. Using Hubbard's curious techniques, they had begun giving their patients massive doses and then guiding them, if they could, into that part of the Other World where egos melted and something resembling a spiritual rebirth occurred. As Hoffer described it, there was scarcely any psychotherapy involved at all: "They come in one day. They know they are going to take a treatment, but they know nothing about what it is. We take a psychiatric history, to establish a diagnosis. That is on day one. On day two, they have the LSD. On day three they are discharged. We make it an absolute point not to give them psychotherapy outside of the LSD experience. We do no follow-up except to find out whether or not they are drinking. The results are that fifty percent of these people are changed."

Those were astonishing figures, particularly since Osmond and Hoffer were not working with

the usual mix of neurotics and volunteers, but with chronic alcoholics, recommended by Alcoholics Anonymous, or brought in off the street by the police. Only those alcoholics who have had the transcendental experience improved, Hoffer claimed "Those who have not had the transcendental experience are not changed. They continue to drink. The large proportion of those who have had it are changed. But this is not an invariable rule."

Of course the alcoholics didn't just stumble into the psychedelic state. They were led there using a variety of psychological and environmental tricks. We use "sound and music," Hoffer explained, "visual stimuli, such as paintings by Van Gogh; tactile stimuli, such as various smooth or rough objects for the patient to handle. We also take advantage of the heightened suggestibility of the subjects by using persuasion, suggestion, and reiterated demand, with the theme of hope and possibility of change." The results were so promising, he said, that they were thinking of introducing a businessman's special, which would take only a weekend.

Hoffer's presentation of what would become known as psychedelic therapy—as distinguished from the mainstream small dose/traditional psychotherapy that became known as psycholytic therapy—disturbed a number of therapists. They questioned the wisdom of using such large dosages in a one-shot situation. "I start the patient with small doses increasing the dosage gradually and working through problems to get to that point," said Betty Eisner. "That is the point, I think." "Seventy-five percent of patients will get to the point if they are given enough LSD," Hoffer retorted. And they were disturbed by the mystical overtones that kept creeping into the discussion. What did the Dutchman Van Rijn mean when he talked about wanting "to change something in the totality of the person"?

Anecdotes started to rise to the surface, slicing through the murky analytical jargon. A number of therapists talked about the serendipitous side effects that they sometimes saw in their patients. They would be in the middle of a postsession interview, perhaps two or three weeks after the original LSD session, and the patient would suddenly say, "Oh and the headache is gone too." What headache? they'd ask. Why the headache I've had for ten or fifteen years, would be the answer. Betty Eisner told how she had once stayed high for three days, which was tolerable since it was a good trip. Had it been bad, who knows what she might have done to herself. Others talked about how in some people the LSD state seemed to spontaneously reoccur—the first whisper of what would later become famous as the flashback. One therapist told of an ex-patient who had re-experienced the LSD state some five years after his original session. But others questioned the whole concept of a flashback. Just because someone had a dissociative experience under LSD one month didn't mean that later dissociative experiences could be attributed to LSD. This was a case of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* reasoning said one.

There were a few genuine gleams of insight, however, the most important being the deepening appreciation of just how crucial set and setting really were. Most of the therapists had long ago come to terms with the way LSD magnified the environment, but they were just beginning to admit that their own personalities, and even their own professional assumptions, were somehow influencing what happened in the LSD sessions. As Arthur Chandler observed, his partner, Mortimer Hartman, was always eliciting violent sexual fantasies, while he himself never got

violent sex fantasies, but rather a high proportion of paranoid delusions, something Betty Eisner said she rarely saw.

But mostly there were dozens of questions that required fresh attention. How did LSD "liquidate" a person's psychic defenses? What kind of therapeutic window did this liquidation open? And how could a therapist best exploit it? Why were some people unable to find the integrative or psychedelic state? How come roughly a quarter of those who took LSD had no reaction? On a more fundamental level, was it really wise to speed up the therapeutic process, to say nothing of reducing it to one climactic session? As the convention adjourned, Sidney Cohen stood up and announced that he was collecting data on side effects and adverse reactions, and would appreciate whatever information those assembled could give him.

The future of LSD research seemed bright, but already forces were in motion that would change what seemed a complex but ultimately solvable scientific problem into a complex and apparently insoluble social problem.

The Politics of Consciousness - Part III

"The whole goddamn climate changed. Suddenly you were conspirators out to destroy people. I felt like Galileo. I closed my practice and went to Europe. I felt violated."

That was the way Oscar Janiger remembered the change in mood that began in the summer of 1962. Suddenly LSD was no longer innocuous. It was a dagger pointed at the heart of psychiatry, the next thalidomide, a time bomb that was cheerfully being constructed by deluded members of the profession.

"If you want to know, it was Leary and the others who were ruining what we had worked so hard to build."

That was Janiger retrospectively laying blame. At the time no one knew where to point the finger. With the exception of some of the Lab Madness boys, who had been a tad bitter when their work was dismissed as passé, things had been proceeding with benign optimism, new recruits swelling the research ranks every week.

In a major city like Los Angeles, it was as easy to go on an LSD trip as it was to visit Disneyland. Interested parties could either contact the growing number of therapists who were using LSD in practice, or they could offer themselves as guinea pigs to any of the dozens of research projects that were under way at places like UCLA. Representative of the first approach was Thelma Moss, a former character actress turned "slick fiction" writer. Moss had heard Aldous Huxley talking about the Other World on a local television show, and before learning of Arthur Chandler and Mortimer Hartman, she had been prepared to search out some of Gordon Wasson's magic mushrooms in Mexico. Moss made an appointment with Chandler and Hartman, and after deciding on a psychological problem that would focus the sessions (she chose frigidity), she took the first of twenty-three LSD trips.

Moss was not a novice when it came to psychoanalysis. She had been in therapy for years. But she had never really, in her heart of hearts, believed that there was such a thing as the unconscious. LSD convinced her. During one session she suddenly became a legless beggar caught in a desert sandstorm, a scene right out of *King Solomon's Mines*, except that deep inside herself she heard a voice whispering, *I died here*. Another time she watched her insides explode into flames with such force that she was flung against the wall. It reminded her a little of how emotions sometimes multiplied until every pore was engulfed, only this was "a vastly more ruthless force" (students of *Kundalini* take note). "What is it," she kept crying to her therapist, who finally gave her a tranquilizer.

Moss never knew where she would land after she passed through the Door. "Truth and lies and absurdity and grandeur were all mixed together in the psychedelic experience," she wrote. "In an effort to separate them, I would return for the next session, and the next, hoping each time that with this next session the truth would be revealed." It never was. But what did happen was so incredible, so contrary to the slick fiction that was her bread and butter, that she began keeping

notes.

The other way to the Other World, the research project route, was exemplified by George Goodman, who is probably better known as the economist and writer Adam Smith. Goodman signed up for a UCLA project and was told by the director, "You are the astronauts of inner space. You are going deeper into the mind than anyone has gone so far, and you will come back to tell us what you found."

One of the things Goodman found was that he could see all "the basic molecules of the universe... all the component parts, little building blocks of DNA." He conscientiously drew a picture of what he thought was DNA, but it turned out to be a plastic monomer marketed by Dupont called Delrin. That didn't dampen Goodman's amazement, however, because up until taking the LSD he had had a banker's knowledge of molecules and chemical notation, which is to say he knew absolutely nothing about them.

There was something in the American psyche that craved spiritual adventure, something which writer Peter Mathiessen described as a "deep restlessness." Mathiessen had been a leader of the postwar Parisian expatriate scene, one of the founders of Paris Review. But he'd also become involved with the Gurdjieff work and that stirred a yearning that he described this way: "One turns in all directions and sees nothing. Yet one senses that there is a source for this deep restlessness; and the path that leads there is not a path to a strange place, but the path home." In Peru Mathiessen experimented with yagé. Then he hooked up with a "renegade psychiatrist" in New York and started using LSD. "Most were magic shows," he later wrote. "After each—even the bad ones—I seemed to go more lightly on my way, leaving behind old residues of rage and pain."

Mathiessen was fortunate. Whenever his girlfriend took LSD it precipitated a terrifying confrontation with her own death. Since this was a fairly common occurrence for anyone who spent much time in the Other World, it is worth quoting Mathiessen's description of a bad trip: She started to laugh, and her mouth opened wide and she could not close it; her armor had cracked, and all the night winds of the world went howling through. Turning to me, she saw my flesh dissolve, my head become a skull—the whole night went like that. Yet she later saw that she might free herself by living out the fear of death, the demoniac sage at one's own helplessness that the drug hallucinations seem to represent, and in that way let go of a life-killing accumulation of defenses. And she accepted the one danger of the mystical search: there was no way back without doing oneself harm. Many paths appear, but once the way is taken, it must be followed to the end.

If people like Mathiessen had a code, it was "there are no casual experiments."

One of the reasons LSD therapy was booming was because qualms about the drug's safety had been laid to rest in mid-1960, when Sidney Cohen published his findings on adverse reactions. Cohen surveyed a sample of five thousand individuals who had taken LSD twenty-five thousand times. He found an average of 1.8 psychotic episodes per thousand ingestions, 1.2 attempted suicides, and 0.4 completed suicides. "Considering the enormous scope of the psychic responses

it induces," he concluded, "LSD is an astonishingly safe drug." With the question of safety out of the way, interest then focused on the best way to use mind-expanding drugs. There were two schools of thought: those who saw LSD as a "facilitator" of traditional therapy, be it Freudian or otherwise, and those who followed the Hubbard-Osmond practice of giving huge dosages and trying, through the subtle use of cues, to produce a psychedelic or integrative experience. This became known as *psychedelic* therapy, as opposed to the more mainstream *psycholytic* therapy. It got so astute students of the literature could guess the theoretical orientation of an LSD monograph simply by its title: psycholytic papers had headings like "LSD as a Facilitating Agent in Psychotherapy" or "Resolution and Subsequent Remobilization of Resistance by LSD in Psychotherapy"; whereas psychedelic ones favored things like "LSD; Alcoholism and Transcendence" or "LSD and the New Beginning."

There were certain constants, of course, set and setting being the most notable. But from there the different techniques diverged rather dramatically. Psycholyticists like Chandler and Hartman took a lot of time, using small dosages, establishing a path to the unconscious—sort of a maintenance road—before any real exploration began. What they tried to do was create a state of conscious dreaming, and the way they did it was by masking the various senses. With the eyes blocked, the mind would begin projecting inner movies, sort of like "a 3-D film tape... being run off in the visual field," as one therapist described it. Some of these film loops were of actual incidents, forgotten since childhood, but most were composed of that symbolic patois that Freud felt was the true language of the unconscious, of psychic reality rather than objective reality.

The patients, asked to maintain a running commentary on what they were seeing, would report things like: *I'm in a black tunnel ... there is a grayish light at the end of it... I'm moving toward it...* There was a moment in one of Thelma Moss's sessions when she came to an abyss. Explore it, the doctor suggested:

As I plummeted down, I felt myself growing smaller and smaller ... I was becoming a child... a very small child... a baby... I was a baby. I was not remembering being a baby I was literally a baby. (The conscious part of me realized I was experiencing the phenomena of "age regression," familiar in hypnosis But in this case, although I had become a baby, I remained at the same time a grown woman lying on a couch. This was a double state of being.) The leg of the baby that I was (my own adult leg) suddenly jerked into the air and I whimpered in the voice of a little child: "They stuck me with a needle!" Before I could find out who had stuck me with a needle, I was playing with round violet-colored marbles... which changed into squares... then rectangles... which grew long and high and became the four sides of a playpen. I was inside the playpen. My brother was outside it, playing. I whined like a baby: "They let him play outside but I have to stay in here..."

Then the playpen vanished and Moss found herself gazing into a big purple jewel, which became an amethyst pendant hanging from her mother's neck, which became her mother's face, purple with rage, and she was shaking someone that turned into a rag doll that turned into Moss.

That was what was at the bottom of that abyss.

No doubt because they were Freudians, Chandler and Hartman elicited a lot of childhood sexual trauma, Oedipus complexes, penis envy, but they also observed elements of the Jungian unconscious, the wise old man archetype, the symbol of evil archetype. Sometimes mythological creatures appeared, dragons and Japanese devil gods. And just as Huxley had written, there was a hellish dimension to the Other World, a Dark Wood that everyone stumbled into eventually. A few passed through to something else and returned convinced that they had looked into the heart of creation. *Had they?* After some thought, Chandler and Hartman decided this mystical gnosis was one of LSD's potential drawbacks, since the patient was generally uninterested in further therapy.

But it was precisely this mystic *gnosis* that interested the psychedelic therapists. Using one large dose and a grab bag of nonverbal cues, after hours of interviewing, testing, analyzing, and prepping, the psychedelic therapist tried to lead the patient to that self-shattering point where he merged with the world—the point known to the Buddhists as *satori*, to the Hindus as *samadhi*, and to the psychological community as "a temporary loss of differentiation of the self and the outer world." It was a realm of pure potential, and if the psychedelic therapist was skilled, the effects could be dramatic. Osmond and Hoffer's success rate with chronic alcoholics was hovering between 50 and 70 percent, while Al Hubbard's clinic at Hollywood Hospital reported a figure in the low eighties.

An update on Mr. Hubbard. Despite the misgivings of Humphrey Osmond, who felt it would create more problems than it would solve, Hubbard had gotten his Ph.D. in psychology from a Tennessee diploma mill. He was now Dr. Hubbard, at least on his stationery. It may be that in some sense Al felt he needed proof of intellectual parity, poor barefoot boy that he was, surrounded by the likes of Huxley and Heard. Perhaps he coveted their Oxbridge erudition. If so, it was an ironic situation, he longing to discourse intelligently about Jung and the Other World, while they envied him his simple American ability to get things done, whether it was a business deal or a guided tour of the Other World. But whatever Hubbard did, there was always a lot of shrewd practicality to it, and getting his doctorate was no different. Hubbard had decided—I lapse momentarily here into Leary's transactional terminology—that the one game he wanted to play was the psychedelic research game, with his own clinic, patients, colleagues, and before he could do that he needed credentials.

To be blunt, Hubbard had burned his bridges to pursue LSD; he had let his business interests wither from inattention, which can be stressful for a man with a Rolls Royce-island-estate lifestyle. Despite his genuine human hunger to find out what was happening in the mind's depths, Hubbard had not been unaware of the possibility that an LSD clinic might prove profitable. What he had needed was a doctor to provide the necessary medical expertise, and he had found him in the person of Ross McLean, the administrator of Hollywood Hospital, in New Westminster, British Columbia. McLean had given Hubbard a suite of rooms and in 1958 the first private Canadian clinic to use LSD therapy opened for business.

Hubbard's clinic became the testing ground for psychedelic therapy. In 1959 it attracted the

attention of Ben Metcalfe, a local reporter. Hubbard invited Metcalfe to stop by for a two-day session, and Metcalfe did. He took the drug in Al's specially designed session room—Dali's Last Supper over the couch, Gauguin's Buddha on the far wall, another Dali, a crucifix, a small altar, a stereo system, burning candles, a statue of the Virgin. Metcalfe landed in a part of the Other World that was comparable to MGM's film library, particularly the section where historical epics were stored. There were Flashes of Carthage and ancient Rome segueing into landscapes out of Titian; great battles fleetingly glimpsed; figures that were unmistakably Shakespearian. It would have been immensely entertaining had it not ended in a fit of weeping. Not sniffly little whimpers, but great heaving sobs. "This is all repressed material coming out," Doctor Hubbard said. "This is what we bury to become men."

It went on like that, with Metcalfe emoting and crying and mumbling to himself, while Al sat meditatively alongside, rarely interrupting. One of the most difficult things that a psychedelic therapist had to learn was how to do nothing, how to become transparent, yet remain attentive enough to respond at the crucial moment, like when Metcalfe began shouting, "I must be insane! I must be." A good therapist had to know which cue would untie this particular knot. Which picture, which whispered observation. "We're all insane when it comes to confronting ourselves," Al murmured. And there was a big click in Metcalfe's mind and he went shooting up toward this bright central sun, and as he flew, it seemed to him that his earthly ties, his kids, his wife, his job, all floated away from him like "flashes of multi-colored snow vanishing in the darkness while I sped upwards."

It felt like death.

"Did I die?" Metcalfe asked.

"No one really dies," said Captain Al.

Hubbard's one published work, "The Use of LSD-25 in the Treatment of Alcoholism and Other Psychiatric Problems" (*Quart. J. Stud. Alcohol, 1961*), was frequently cited in the literature, but his biggest contribution was the Hubbard room, the stereo playing Bach, the vaguely spiritual pictures. Although few researchers knew its provenance, duplicates appeared wherever psychedelic therapy gained a foothold.

Though there were some classic psychedelic therapists—Hoffer and Osmond in Saskatchewan come to mind, the Kurland group in Catonsville, Maryland—who used LSD in an almost old-fashioned way, a lot of the psychedelic therapists were new to the profession, either recent graduates or converts like Hubbard and his former protégé, Myron Stolaroff, and this was going to cause problems. In their enthusiasm they returned from the Other World with a childlike energy that was often obnoxious to their middle-aged peers. They cut corners and bruised feelings and this more than anything contributed to the jealousy that lay behind the aura of "bad science" that began to surround LSD therapy.

Myron Stolaroff was a good example. Stolaroff had been in charge of long-range planning at Ampex, one of the first of the big electronics firms to settle south of the Bay Area, when he had been bitten by the psychedelic bug. Together with Hubbard he had tried to interest Ampex's management in a program that would use LSD to solve all kinds of corporate problems,

interpersonal problems, design problems, a long-range planning problems. But the plan had foundered on AI's penchant for Christian mysticism. Stolaroff didn't let go, though: he started holding weekly LSD sessions for some of Ampex's more adventurous engineers; Hubbard came down from Canada one weekend and took them all to a remote cabin in the Sierras where he guided them through the kind of ontological earthquake only AI could manufacture. The senior management of Ampex had been horrified. Having gotten to know Hubbard through rather extraordinary circumstances, it didn't seem at all irrational for them to be worrying, "What if this nutball drives our best men crazy?" So there had been sighs of relief when Stolaroff decided to leave Ampex and set up his own nonprofit psychedelic research center in Menlo Park, California—the International Foundation for Advanced Study.

The Foundation, which opened in March 1961, wasn't the only organization working with LSD in the San Francisco area. The Palo Alto Mental Research Institute had been studying the drug since 1958, and had been instrumental in introducing dozens of local psychiatrists and psychologists, as well as interested laymen like Allen Ginsberg, to the perplexities of the Other World. But the Institute's composure had been shaken by several terrifying incidents—colossal bad trips in which the subject returned from the Other World in questionable shape—and interest in LSD's therapeutic potential had diminished. LSD programs were also under way at the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital, the San Mateo County Hospital, and Napa State Hospital, but no one was offering psychedelic therapy, and what little research was being done was unexciting: Leo Hollister (who will soon reappear in association with a hopeful young writer named Ken Kesey), at the Veterans Hospital, was still doing model psychoses work.

The point was that most LSD researchers were fairly conservative. So when a couple of engineers set up shop (Stolaroff's vice president, Willis Harman, had been an engineering professor at Stanford) and began poaching bread and butter patients—unlike Osmond and Hoffer, Stolaroff wasn't just concentrating on chronic alcoholics, he was soliciting the man off the street, who in this case was the neurotic professional in the high tech-high education hub that surrounded Stanford—there were more than raised eyebrows. Charging five hundred dollars for one session with a highly questionable drug? The whole thing smacked of chicanery, despite the fact that Stolaroff had a licensed psychiatrist running the actual therapy sessions. But what was worse, it was chicanery with good word of mouth. The San Mateo *Call Bulletin*, scenting a medical scandal, had interviewed a number of Stolaroff's patients and found them laudatory to the point of hyperbole. At the Foundation's first and last open house, Stolaroff had been cornered by a disgruntled therapist who growled, "One of my ex-patients thinks you're a saint," making it clear that he thought Stolaroff was a charlatan. What was one to make, after all, of the *Call Bulletin's* statement that the Foundation's aims were "partly medical, partly scientific, partly philosophical, partly mystical"? The first two, okay, but philosophy was for philosophers, and mysticism? mysticism was for cranks!

It was a situation that was a little analogous to Leary's at Harvard, in the sense that the local therapeutic community was so totally absorbed with the pointing finger (questionable professionals using questionable drugs to produce questionable cures) that it was almost as if it

didn't want to look at the moon. The Foundation was not reticent about the data it was seeing. Seventy-eight percent of its patients claimed an increased ability to love; 69 percent felt they could handle hostility better, with an equal percentage believing that their ability to communicate with and understand others had improved; 71 percent claimed an increase in self-esteem, and 83 percent returned from the Other World with the conviction that they had brushed against "a higher power, or ultimate reality."

Robert Mogar, the Foundation's expert in such diagnostic tools as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, had never seen anything that could produce the kind of dramatic changes that LSD routinely produced. Part of the usefulness of the MMPI was the fact that some of its scales were remarkably stable, which provided a background against which other personality changes could be measured. But under LSD these stable scales, which generally pertained to beliefs and values, fluctuated wildly. To augment the MMPI, Stolaroff began using a variant of Oscar Janiger's elaborate card distribution system. This consisted of a hundred statements that the patient arranged in nine piles, ranging from those he agreed with least (pile one) to those he wholeheartedly endorsed (pile nine). Three times the cards were sorted into piles, once at the beginning of the program, two days after the LSD session, and then again in two months' time. The changes were consonant with what other researchers were beginning to report. Cards with statements like, "Although I try not to show it, I really worry quite a bit about whether I will prove adequate in meeting the challenge of life," tended to move down the scale. While those bearing statements like, "I believe that I exist not only in the familiar world of space and time, but also in a realm having a timeless, eternal quality," jumped to the top.

Of course there were some negative reactions. One patient felt he had been harmed mentally and roughly a quarter of the others complained that they now tended to lapse into daydreams with greater frequency. More troubling, but entirely understandable if the data about changes in worldview were correct, was an increase in marital problems—27 percent of the experimental subjects and 16 percent of the paying patients reported increased friction with their spouses.

The Foundation's theoretical manifesto—*The Psychedelic Experience: A New Concept in Psychotherapy*—was submitted for publication in late 1961. In it, the psychedelic experience was broken into three broad stages: (1) evasive maneuvers, (2) symbolic perception, and (3) immediate perception.

The evasive stage, according to the authors, was what earlier therapists had confused with schizophrenia, leading to LSD's misclassification as a psychotomimetic. What happened was this: the drug, by its very nature, released such a flood of new thoughts and perceptions that the patient's normal conceptual framework was overwhelmed, producing a panic condition with overtones of paranoia. But with skillful manipulation of set and setting, the therapist could guide the patient smoothly through the evasive stage to the point where the overly famous hallucinations began. These shifting geometrical patterns were a last gasp of an ego which, "having lost the battle to divert attention through unpleasantness, seeks to charm and distract the conscious mind by throwing up a smokescreen of hallucinations to hide the inner knowledge which it fears."

Actually, the hallucinatory level was a preparation for the realm of symbolic perception, which was where the psycholyticists spent most of their time, deciphering the curious symbolic patois: "The subject constantly works off repressed material and unreality structures, false concepts, ideas, and attitudes, which have been accumulated through his life experiences. Thus a form of psychological cleansing seems to accompany the subjective imagery. This results in considerable ventilation and release almost independent of intellectual clarification. Gradually the subject comes to see and accept himself, not as an individual with 'good' and 'bad' characteristics, but as one who simply is."

But there was also a higher level still. Past the symbolic stage was a land of no boundaries: The central perception, apparently of all who penetrate deeply in their explorations, is that behind the apparent multiplicity of things in the world of science and common sense there is a single reality, in speaking of which it seems appropriate to use such words as *infinite* and *eternal*. As Abram Hoffer had told the last Macy Conference, if you could lead a patient to this point, then nine times out of ten a cure would miraculously occur. Why this happened was not easily explained in psychological terms (as Leary had realized when he decided to opt for the rhetoric of applied mysticism). But it seemed to be something like this: overwhelmed by the realization that one was an "imperishable self rather than a destructible ego," the patient underwent a kind of psychic expansion, in which "the many conflicts which are rooted in lack of self acceptance are cut off at the source, and the associated neurotic behavior patterns begin to die away." As the self expanded, it burst the webbing of unhappy relationships that had tethered it to the ground.

Another analogy: Imagine the self as an oxbow lake, which is formed when a meander is cut off from the main body of a shallow, slow-moving river. Over time, unless fresh sources of water are found, the oxbow begins to stagnate, becoming first a marsh, then a swamp, as vegetation (thickets of received ideas, neuroses, etc.) starts to compete for oxygen. Psycholytic therapy, you might say, contented itself with removing the vegetation; psychedelic therapy, on the other hand, operated by dynamiting the obstruction and restoring the oxbow to what, in fact, it had always been: a lazy curve in a broad, flowing river. Both methods achieved the desired result, which was health, but in the second case something totally new (from the perspective of the oxbow world) was created. The psycholytic therapist used LSD to heighten the traditional psychotherapeutic values of recall, abreaction, and emotional release. But the psychedelic therapist was doing something entirely new, and whether he followed Tim Leary and called it applied mysticism, or the psychedelic experience, the integrative experience, or peak experience, it had an unmistakable and unwelcome odor. To discover, in the recesses of the mind, something that felt a lot like God, was not a situation that either organized science or organized religion wished to contemplate. Yet this was the implication of psychedelic research everywhere, not just at Harvard.

What sprang up was more a climate of criticism than any one specific charge. The profession began to worry. It worried about whether LSD, with its plunge into the deep unconscious, was an appropriate direction for a mental health movement whose *raison d'être* was the molding of healthy, adjusted egos. Could it promote the right sort of behavior change? It worried about the

cure rates—Hubbard's 80 percent with chronic alcoholics was unbelievable—which was the start of the bad science criticism, one variant of which went like this: "LSD is a hallucinogen, researchers are taking it as well as giving it, therefore they must be hallucinating their data." That was the charitable bad science interpretation. The uncharitable interpretation maintained that LSD therapists, besides hallucinating their data, were actually making their patients sicker. And they didn't even realize this because the drugs were giving them delusions of grandeur (comparing themselves with the Mercury astronauts or Galileo, what rot!). Psychedelics were revealing a nasty (or a rival) strain of evangelism within the Cinderella science: everywhere you looked therapists were turning into lower-case gurus, with adherents rather than clients.

Roy Grinker put it as bluntly as possible in the Archives of General Psychiatry: "Latent psychotics are disintegrating under the influence of even single doses; long-continued LSD experiences are subtly creating a psychopathology. Psychic addiction is being developed."

Grinker cited no data to back up these rather serious charges. He cited no data for the simple reason that there were none—Sidney Cohen's 1960 study on adverse reactions was still unchallenged in the literature. What Grinker was doing was projecting his own professional biases. Believing that your average citizen was a barely functioning tissue of neuroses and incipient psychoses, Grinker found it inconceivable that the opening of the Pandora's box of the unconscious could be anything but disastrous. Whether they knew it or not, people who used LSD had to be disintegrating; Grinker's whole model of consciousness depended upon it. To a traditional psychiatrist like Grinker, consciousness expansion meant unconsciousness expansion, and that was unconscionable.

Actually, a lot of the criticism over LSD can be reduced to a politics of perspective. A psychotomimeticist, for example, watching the ego dissolve under the press of LSD, would jot down "depersonalization," while a Myron Stolaroff or a Tim Leary, faced with the same phenomenon, might record an instance of "mystical union" or "integrative experience." Observing the flights of internal imagery caused by the drugs, the former would choose "hallucination" while the latter might select "visionary or symbolic interaction." As for the emotional highs that followed, the enthusiasm, one could either choose the psychopathological term, "euphoria," or go with the new psychedelic candidate, "ecstasy." When Abraham Maslow, a psychologist far removed from the LSD debate, published his first work on the curative effects of peak experiences (PE), psychedelic therapists like Hoffer quickly appropriated his vocabulary and the debate jumped to a new rhetorical level.

What was happening was basically a turf war over who would control traffic to the Other World. Were mere psychologists, to say nothing of artists, theologians, or an engineer like Myron Stolaroff, competent and responsible enough to investigate the extremes of consciousness, even if it was their own consciousness? Who owned the scientific prospecting rights to the Other World? The medical community claimed it did. According to one *Journal of the American Medical Association* editorial, anything which altered a person's "mental and emotional equilibrium" was a medical procedure and "should therefore be under medical control." In other words, LSD and its chemical brethren were part of psychiatry's weaponry, but not psychology's. Implicit in all this

was the understanding that whoever received the mineral rights to the Other World would also be allowed to define its borders.

Thus it was the theme of "irresponsibility" that rose to the fore in the summer of 1962. LSD "was a useful adjunct to psychotherapy" went the refrain, but unfortunately it attracted "unstable therapists" who derived an "intoxicating sense of power" from bestowing such a fabulous experience on others. And these unstable therapists were the main reason why LSD was escaping, so to speak, from the lab. In July 1962, Sidney Cohen and Keith Ditman, writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, drew attention to the phenomenon of the "LSD party"—a phenomenon that the California Narcotics Bureau, when queried by the *LA Times*, knew nothing about. Of course LSD parties had been part of the Los Angeles psychedelic scene since the mid-Fifties, but what was changing was the quality of the participant. A lot of kids were taking LSD, and not just college kids, but the beatnik kids, the maladjusted rebels. To Cohen's way of thinking, the Beats were exactly the sort of borderline personality types who should be kept away from LSD at all cost. If not, then Grinker's editorial would become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Besides alerting the medical community to the growing misuse of LSD, Cohen also solicited more examples of adverse reactions. He published his findings in the spring of 1963. Nine incidents were explored, ranging from a psychologist who took LSD three times and then spent the next few weeks contemplating bizarre plots, one of which entailed the seizure of Sandoz's entire LSD supply, to a secretary for a therapist with a large LSD practice who had taken the drug somewhat more than two hundred times and less than three hundred—she was unsure of the exact figure. What she was sure of was that whenever she looked in a mirror, she saw a skull.

Although adverse reactions were still rare, Cohen predicted that this would change as more therapists added LSD to their practice. The "inexpert" use of LSD could become a major health hazard, he wrote, and he recommended that use be "restricted to investigators in institutions and hospitals where the patients' protection is greater and appropriate countermeasures are available in case of adverse reaction." Projects like Leary's were precisely what Cohen wanted to see ended.

The debate over who was a responsible therapist and who an irresponsible charlatan became moot when Congress passed a law in the summer of 1962 that gave the FDA control over all new investigational drugs. Scheduled to take effect in June of 1963, the law was principally aimed at the misuse of amphetamines. But the result was that all researchers using experimental drugs would now have to clear their research projects with Washington. No longer would it be possible to mail a form to Sandoz and receive in return LSD or psilocybin.

It was unclear what effect the new regulations would have on LSD research, but a partial answer appeared at Oscar Janiger's door in the autumn of 1962, in the form of a regional FDA official.. Well dressed, polite, he asked to review Janiger's LSD work. Then he told Janiger to turn over his remaining supply of the drug. Janiger was stunned, then angry. He made some phone calls and learned that others had received similar visits.

Someone was turning off the research machine.

But it was too late to turn off the publicity machine. The psychedelic bookshelf—once limited to Huxley and possibly the Wassons' massive *Russia, Mushrooms and History*—was expanding in rapid fashion, as Adelle Davis's *Exploring Inner Space*, Thelma Moss's *Myself and I*, and Alan Watts's *The Joyous Cosmology* arrived in the bookshops. All three were anecdotal accounts of the Other World, but the similarity ended there. Adelle Davis, who'd taken LSD as part of Janiger's creativity study, had been transported to a phantasmagoric land suffused with the aurora borealis of God. "The most lasting value of the drug experience," she wrote, "appears to be a number of convictions, most of them religious in nature, which are so strong that it makes not one iota of difference whether anyone agrees with them or not." LSD had led her to "a new faith in God, a faith so satisfying and rewarding that my lasting gratitude goes to the Sandoz Pharmaceutical Laboratories." Thelma Moss, on the other hand, had spent her sessions harrowing the Freudian Id. The flap copy on her book said it all: "I traveled deep into the buried regions of the Mind. I discovered that in addition to being, consciously, a loving mother and respectable citizen, I was, unconsciously, a murderess, a pervert, a cannibal, a sadist and a masochist." And then there was Watts's smooth essay, which Leary and Alpert in the introduction lauded as "the best statement on the subject of space-age mysticism" available. "Watts follows Mr. Huxley's lead and pushes beyond."

Watts had a nice poetic feel for what it felt like to travel in the Other World, which is worth quoting:

Back through the tunnels, through the devious status-and-survival strategy of adult life, through the interminable passes which we remember in dreams... all the streets, the winding pathways between the legs of tables and chairs where one crawled as a child, the tight and bloody exit from the womb, the fountainous surge through the channel of the penis, the timeless wandering through ducts and spongy caverns. Down and back through ever narrowing tubes to the point where the passage itself is the traveler. .. relentlessly back and back through endless and whirling dances to the astronomically proportioned spaces which surround the original nuclei of the world, the centers of centers, as remotely distant on the inside as the nebulae beyond our galaxy on the outside.

The Joyous Cosmology was widely read by Watts's many fans, but it was not the most popular psychedelic guidebook to appear in the summer of 1962. That honor went to *Island*, Huxley's utopian blueprint for what a psychedelically enlightened society might be like. Already *Island* had attracted one enthusiastic social engineer, who was putting its precepts into practice in the appropriately exotic locale of Zihuatanejo, Mexico.

The Politics of Consciousness - Part IV

Had you suggested, at the 1962 White House Conference on Narcotics, that in just four short years America would resemble what Time magazine described as a "psychedelic smorgasbord," you would have been laughed from the podium. Marijuana and heroin were the chief concerns back then; LSD barely rated a footnote. The general consensus was that, "in spite of lurid statements by some popular writers," psychedelics were a fringe phenomenon, limited to "long hair and beatnik cults." That people other than kooks might seriously believe a drug could expand consciousness, or propel one up the evolutionary ladder, had seemed too ludicrous for words.

But no longer. Nineteen sixty-six was the year America awoke to the gravity of the psychedelic movement and reacted with all the cultural power it could muster. Before the year was half over, the governors of California and Nevada were publicly competing for the prestige of being the first to sign anti-LSD legislation, an eagerness that was more than matched by their peers in Washington, where three different Congressional subcommittees convened hearings to study the LSD problem—the Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee; the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations of the House Government Operations Committee; and the Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization of the Senate Subcommittee on Government Operations. This last had originally been scheduled to hear testimony on the problems of the handicapped, but at Robert Kennedy's urging the subject was switched to LSD.

By July open-ended research would be a thing of the past, as the FDA and the NIMH sharply curtailed existing projects; by August the first agents of the newly formed Bureau of Drug Abuse Control (BDAC) would be rooting out underground sources of supply; by October possession of LSD would be illegal in every state of the Union.

Although the backlash against LSD had been gathering strength since the early Sixties, it wasn't until 1965 that concrete evidence of its danger appeared. That was when William Frosch, a psychiatrist working at New York's Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, began noticing an increase in LSD-related admissions. From a handful a year the figures jumped to two or three a month, then to five or six. Most were young men—median age twenty-two—and all were middle class, which was a significant departure from the usual narcotic patient. Several were the children of physicians; one was a judge's son. Besides being well educated and well-to-do, they shared two other variables: all had taken LSD in the hope that it would improve personal insight, and all had a history of previous psychiatric disorder.

What the critics of Leary's enthusiasm had feared was coming to pass: unstable personalities, exposed to LSD in uncontrolled settings, were disintegrating.

Between March and December 1965, Frosch treated sixty-five patients whose etiology fell into three broad categories. By far the largest group were those admitted in an anxious or panicked state, what the Pranksters would have called "freaked." These were given thiorazine and released

after a few hours. They were lucky: approximately a third of Frosch's patients were admitted in a fully psychotic state, for which there was nothing to do but hope that eventually one or another of the treatments would work. Without question these were the most serious of Frosch's patients, but the gravity of their condition was matched by the scientific curiosity of the final category, which contained people who had taken LSD, often with no complications, except that months later, while sitting in a restaurant or strolling down the street, the drug state had suddenly reasserted itself. This reoccurrence became known as a flashback, and while its existence and implication was hotly debated—some researchers never encountered a flashback; others saw them all the time; still others dismissed them as no big deal: moments of depersonalization and hallucination happened frequently to people who had never touched an illicit drug—it quickly became a journalistic staple.

For six years the media had blown hot and cold on the subject of psychedelics, but in early 1966, as Frosch's data began to be replicated in other cities, particularly those with student populations, the breeze turned decidedly chill. *Time* magazine in March 1966 announced that America was in the midst of an LSD epidemic:

The disease is striking in beachside beatnik pads and in the dormitories of expensive prep schools; it has grown into an alarming problem at UCLA and on the UC campus at Berkeley. And everywhere the diagnosis is the same: psychotic illness resulting from the unauthorized, nonmedical use of the drug LSD-25.

According to *Time*, LSD psychotics were literally flocking to the nearest emergency rooms.

Time was exaggerating, of course. No hard data existed as to how many people were suffering from LSD-related problems. Within the research community the most frequently quoted figure was 2 percent—2 percent of those who took LSD in unsupervised settings were experiencing the sort of complications that Frosch was seeing at Bellevue. And of that 2 percent, about a third were becoming psychotic. That meant that for every thousand people who took LSD, seven would suffer a breakdown. That was seven too many, but it was hardly epidemic material. Which was perhaps why the qualifying figures had a way of disappearing, until instead of a third of 2 percent it became a third of 100 percent.

When William Frosch presented his Bellevue data before one of the three Senate subcommittees who had convened hearings on the "LSD problem," he was careful to stress that his findings were limited to the 2 percent of the psychedelic community who had problems with the drug. That's what went into the Congressional maw. What came out was the perception that One of the most common recurrent reactions to LSD use is a psychotic breakdown of an extended but unknown duration. What this means, of course, is that many LSD abusers become insane in a few short hours under the influence of the drug.

Even Frosch's statement that it tended to be those with a history of psychiatric disorder who experienced complications underwent a subtle transformation, until it was thought that what he had really said was that anyone who took the drug was "already psychologically deranged, or can be, or at least the predominance that are using it in that way."

But if the LSD psychotic was of questionable statistical reality, in an aesthetic sense it seized the public imagination and didn't let go for the rest of the decade. Scarcely a week went by that this curious creature wasn't in the news columns, either raping or murdering or committing suicide in stories that were usually anonymous, uncheckable, and bizarre. It is difficult to pinpoint the precise moment when the LSD psychotic first entered the public consciousness, but a good starting point would be April 1966, when the FDA invited reporters in to examine its LSD dossier. Among the stories contained therein was the one about the psychiatrist, a three-time user of LSD, whose breakdown had distinct megalomaniacal shadings; for a month he hatched grandiose scheme after grandiose scheme, the most grandiose being his plan to invade Sandoz and capture the world supply of LSD. Subsequent retellings of this story improved upon it until a few actually had him breaking into the lab. Another file told of a fifteen-year-old girl who became involved with a college professor who hosted weekend LSD orgies. The girl came home acting a bit strange after attending one of these parties and was promptly hospitalized by her family. She escaped, however, and tried to stab her mother.

Following the FDA's lead, police departments around the country opened their own files to reporters eager to get a local angle on a breaking national story. The result was an almost geometric intensification of LSD's negative image. "Cases of attempted rape, assault, murder, suicide and self-mutilation," began one Los Angeles police-file story, before going on to tell about the seventeen-year-old who had attempted to tear out his eyeballs and the twenty-year-old who, postingestion, cruised the suburbs looking for a girl to rape. Spotting a fifteen-year-old outlined against the windowshade of her living room, he tore off his clothes and stumbled inside, only to be thwarted by the girl's quickwitted younger brother, who telephoned the police. Then there was the heavy user who, believing LSD had transmuted him into an orange, refused all human contact for fear of being turned into orange juice.

Given the cavalier way the press treated research statistics, it is prudent to ask how credible most of these stories were. Aside from their uniform tone of vague anonymity, certain discrepancies exist that support a moderate amount of skepticism. It is interesting to contrast, for example, the Congressional testimony of Commander Alfred Tremblay, head of the LAPD Narcotic Division, with newspaper stories published within a few weeks of his appearance suggesting that his files were full of LSD-inspired rape, murder, and mutilation. As a committed opponent of drugs and drug-users, one would have expected Tremblay to choose his most heinous cases to present to Congress. But there was little of that in Tremblay's testimony, which verged on the weird rather than the horrible, offering anecdotes like the time the LAPD found two guys sitting on a suburban lawn eating the grass and nibbling on tree bark. Or the time they received a complaint that a young man was standing beside the Coast Highway making obscene gestures at the traffic. When the police arrived, the guy dashed into the ocean, fell to his knees and began to pray, all the while yelling "I love you! I love you!" Then there was the time someone reported screams in a downtown apartment building and the police found a boy and girl having sex in the hall and shouting "GOD" and "LIFE" at the top of their lungs. In fact the only example of violence that Tremblay had to offer occurred the day before he flew east to testify,

and involved a naked man who rampaged through a local housing development, smashing windows with a two-by-four.

Again, reading the Los Angeles newspapers, one would have thought that scarcely a day passed that LSD didn't contribute to some calamity, usually involving teenagers. Yet police files show that in the first four months of 1966, out of 543 juveniles arrested for narcotics, only four involved LSD.

So where did all the horror stories come from? Part of the problem may have been the media's ignorance of psychosis. No matter how often researchers like Sidney Cohen stressed that rage was a rare occurrence—unless it was self-rage, leading to suicide—rage was the emotion the journalistic community most often associated with LSD; kids eating grass and bark just didn't fit the stereotype of the crazed psychotic.

But there was another possibility besides ignorance, one that had to do partly with journalistic style and partly with the way the dominant powers of a culture influence the value system of that culture. Addressing the problem of truth versus fancy during one of the Congressional hearings, Senator Abraham Ribicoff remarked that, "Only when you sensationalize a subject matter do you get a reform. Without sensationalizing it, you don't. That is one of the great problems. You scientists may know something, a senator may know something, but only when the press and television come in and give it a real play because it hits home as something that affects all the country, do you get action."

Halting the spread of LSD had become part of the national agenda; thus it was necessary for the press to sensationalize the subject. And the press was an old hand at sensationalizing dangerous drugs. The prevailing style was the one perfected by Harry Anslinger back in the Thirties, during his "reefer madness" campaigns against marijuana. Anslinger had maintained a voluminous file of anonymous marijuana horror stories, which he periodically fed to a credulous press. One began:

The sprawled body of a young girl lay crushed on the sidewalk the other day after a plunge from a fifth story of a Chicago apartment house. Everyone called it suicide, but actually it was murder. The killer was a narcotic known to America as marijuana.

Or another:

It was an unprovoked crime some years ago which brought the first realization that the age-old drug had gained a foothold in America. An entire family was murdered by a youthful addict in Florida. .. the boy said he had been in the habit of smoking something which youthful friends called "muggles," a childish name for marijuana.

It was a curious thing, but if you changed a few nouns in any of the anti-marijuana stories of the Thirties, you ended up with a reasonable facsimile of the standard "LSD madness" story as it began appearing in the spring of 1966.

Not that there weren't legitimate examples of LSD-inspired violence. The most famous, occurring in late April, involved a New Yorker named Stephen Kessler who stabbed his mother-in-law dozens of times with a kitchen knife. When the police came to arrest him, Kessler

reportedly said, "Man, I've been flying for three days on LSD. Did I kill my wife? Did I rape anybody? What have I done?"

A Harvard graduate (class of '57) and a medical school dropout, Stephen Kessler had a history of psychiatric problems; a few weeks before the murder he had checked himself into Bellevue for treatment, and while he was there his wife had moved back with her parents in Brooklyn. Apparently it was this separation, exacerbated by the LSD, that precipitated the murder. Although the press characterized the Kessler case as an "LSD KILLING," most of the experts were less assured. Two things bothered them. One was the infrequency of rage as an LSD reaction; *Time* quoted Sidney Cohen to the effect that suicide was much more likely than murder. But more troublesome was Kessler's claim that he had been "flying" for three days and could remember nothing of what had happened. Unless one kept taking LSD, constantly upping the dosage to offset body tolerance, the effects wore off after twelve hours. And the whole uniqueness of the experience was the fact that one remained relatively clearheaded throughout; it was not an alcoholic fog or stupor. So the Kessler case was a toss-up. In terms of his psychiatric profile, Stephen Kessler was a perfect candidate for a psychotic episode had he taken LSD. But given his educational background, he was also astute enough to realize that LSD, in the spring of 1966, was the perfect alibi for what might have been nothing more than a common act of rage and revenge.

To be fair, after the years of positive sensationalizing that Leary had indulged in, a certain amount of negative sensationalizing was inevitable. Confronted with a pro-LSD password like "instant nirvana," the opponents countered with "chemical Russian roulette." Expanded consciousness? Distorted consciousness! Or, as James Goddard, the new commissioner of the FDA put it, "pure bunk."

Goddard, because of his position within the health bureaucracy, was the point man in the campaign against LSD. In April he sent more than two thousand letters to college administrators warning that

Both students and members of the faculty are being secretly approached to engage in hallucinogenic "experiences." There is direct evidence of widespread availability of a number of drugs which have profound effects on the mental processes. I wish to alert all educational administrators to the gravity of the situation and to enlist their assistance in combating an insidious and dangerous activity.

He was a fixture at the Congressional hearings, appearing in all three venues. Asked to judge the magnitude of America's LSD problem, he estimated a user population of around 3.6 million, a figure far in excess of Leary's personal guess of one hundred thousand. Goddard arrived at this number using a curious differential: for every reported incident of illegal drug use, the FDA assumed that ten thousand went unreported. And LSD had come to the Agency's attention 360 times.

Who were these 3.6 million? Not the evolutionary vanguard of Leary's rhetoric, but "middle-aged underachievers, stale artists, and postteenagers." "They are life's losers," said Sidney Cohen. "Dissatisfied, restless people, afflicted with problems they can't handle. A lot of them wallow in

self-pity and denigrate those who have made it in the 'square' world." Maladjusted failures. Nonconformists. At one point during his Congressional testimony, Captain Tremblay of the LAPD pulled out a photograph taken at one of Kesey's Acid Tests and passed it to the congressmen, saying, "I'm sure you'll agree that this young lad is certainly a nonconformist. He is presently under the influence of LSD when this photograph, this colored photograph was taken. He has painted his face and his jacket, the nonconformist signs on the back of his jacket together with his face would certainly indicate the young lad was a nonconformist with our society as we know it today."

In the end it wasn't the horror stories or the juggled figures on psychotic breakdowns that worried the congressmen. That, as Senator Ribicoff understood, was just the necessary PR froth: good for headlines, but largely beside the point. The real reason LSD needed to be eliminated wasn't because it was making a tiny percentage of its users crazy, but because of what it was doing to the vast majority. Contrary to what Captain Tremblay believed, LSD wasn't attracting nonconformists so much as it was creating them.

Back in 1963 Grinker had warned that LSD was "subtly creating a psychopathology"; by 1966 the contours of that pathology were clearly visible:

Those who use (LSD) frequently or chronically almost inevitably withdraw from society and enter into a solipsistic, negativistic existence, in which LSD is not merely an experience in the totality of living, but becomes synonymous with life itself. These individuals, colorfully described by their confreres as acidheads, engage perpetually in drug-induced orgies of introspection and are no longer constructive active members of society... they withdraw not only from society but also from meaningful family ties. Were the numbers of such individuals to increase markedly, such a group could constitute a real threat to the functioning of our society.

This was the real message the opponents of the psychedelic movement brought to the Congressional hearings. LSD was eroding the work ethic, it was seducing the young into religious fantasies, it was destroying their values. "We have seen something which in a way is most alarming, more alarming than death in a way," testified Sidney Cohen. "And that is the loss of all cultural values, the loss of feeling of right and wrong, of good and bad. These people lead a valueless life, without motivation, without any ambition... they are deculturated, lost to society, lost to themselves. "

If psychedelics continued to spread, then America ran the risk of becoming a society of spaced-out mystics; a communist society no doubt, since the drugs would have sapped the will to confront Soviet aggression.

It was an odd debate, with the opponents arguing that LSD had the potential to destroy America, while the proponents claimed the exact opposite. For them, LSD was therapeutic; it corrected the neurotic excesses brought on by a consumer culture; it jarred one free of mental ruts, allowing old problems to be seen from new angles; it accessed higher levels of information, some of which were spiritual in nature. If America was to remain a world power, it could not afford to turn its back on such a useful tool.

Curiously, the one thing both sides agreed on was that LSD was capable of altering personality in a fundamental way. But was this really true? Bill McGlothlin, a psychologist who had participated in several of Oscar Janiger's early studies, published a study in the summer of 1966 that offered some interesting answers to this question. To study the problem, McGlothlin recruited seventy-two graduate students through a blind newspaper ad. After screening out those with doubtful profiles, he divided the group into thirds and gave them a complete battery of personality tests, measuring things like creativity, anxiety, personal values, etc. The first group then received a full dose of LSD, the second a tiny one, while the third received amphetamine. Then the personality tests were repeated, once immediately after the drug trip, and again at an interval of six months. McGlothlin found that statistically the changes in personality were minimal, despite the subjective impression that enormous changes had taken place. Only in one area did significant change occur, the Ways-to-Live scale. After three doses of LSD, McGlothlin's subjects were suddenly having second thoughts about settling into a nice corporate job, they were now leaning toward something a bit more contemplative.

But even this change wasn't permanent; it faded with time and the absence of LSD. After six months the changes in the Ways-to-Live scale had diminished, only to be replaced by significant changes in the "Self-Perception" and "Self-Approval" categories.

McGlothlin's paper was part of a healthy crop of LSD-related research that found its way into the technical journals in 1966; a varied and frequently confusing bounty that may explain why the popular press generally avoided the scientific aspect of the LSD story. It was too complex, too partial in the way that most basic science is.

A researcher at UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute, for instance, announced that LSD seemed to help severely autistic children, but was counterproductive in those with milder autism. An NIMH study of forty-three alcoholics undergoing LSD therapy reported that twenty-three had not resumed drinking, seven were drinking occasionally but were able to hold jobs, and two had fallen back off the wagon. Another researcher, studying the good trip/bad trip problem, suggested that extroverts were constitutionally equipped to enjoy the Other World, whereas introverts often had hellish experiences. Intriguing stuff, all in all, but hardly in the same league as an LSD murderer or a mad scientist scheming to seize control of a powerful multinational drug company.

Even within the therapeutic community itself, which had enthusiastically embraced other classes of mind drugs, the tranquilizers, the antipsychotics, LSD research was given short shrift. The old problem of replication remained, and with it the charge (never proven) that much of the research was counterfeit. The alcohol studies drew the most heat in this regard. Some, like the one mentioned above, achieved marvelous results; others were unable to cure even a single alcoholic. The former tended to attribute their success to the sensitive way in which they wielded this powerful new tool, while the latter muttered about bad science and charlatans. But even among those researchers who were pro-LSD there were deep divisions as to the worth, and the ethics, of certain kinds of work, particularly the personality-change therapy that was going on at places like Myron Stolaroff's Foundation. "How should one evaluate the outcome if an individual were, for example, to divorce his wife and take a job which paid him less but which he stated he

enjoyed more than the one which he had previously held?" asked one critic. "If a person were to become more relaxed and happy-go-lucky, more sensitive to poetry or music, but less concerned with success or competition, is this good?" Change and be happy was a direct challenge to the adjust-or-else ethic that had reigned supreme during the Fifties, and in this sense the in-house skirmish over the direction LSD therapy was taking reflected a much larger battle that was being waged over therapy's appropriate social role.

But most members of the therapeutic community had little time or patience for the nuances of the LSD argument. *Unpredictable* was probably the word most of them associated with LSD—an unpredictability that manifested itself in the personages of Tim Leary and Dick Alpert, who were seen as cautionary tales on how not to conduct promising careers. But the fact was that there were casualties wherever LSD therapy had gained a foothold, either therapists who had gone crazy or developed cult followings or ones who, post-LSD, had abandoned the traditional methods as too conservative and had begun exploring the kind of esoterica practiced at places like Esalen, the spa turned New Age academy midway up the California coast at Big Sur. Group therapy. Nude therapy. Water therapy. It was no accident that the group leaders at Esalen's first public seminar were all veterans of the psychedelic movement.

This then, in broad outline, was the mindset of the therapeutic community on the eve of Time's announcement that LSD psychotics were flocking to the local emergency room. The result, not surprisingly, was panic. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, declaring that "There is no published evidence that further experimentation is likely to yield invaluable data," called for an end to all LSD research, which must have come as a surprise to the NIMH, who were funding thirty-eight different LSD projects at a cost of \$1.7 million. Apparently the editors of the *NEJM* were convinced they had another thalidomide scandal on their hands, a fear that might also account for Sandoz's decision, in early April 1966, to sever all corporate ties to its problem children, LSD and psilocybin. On April 7, Sandoz telephoned the FDA and announced that they were terminating all research contracts and would be willing to turn over their entire supply of the two drugs to the federal government. LSD had become a public relations disaster: Sandoz received dozens of phone calls from journalists and doctors every time it made the news, each requesting a copy of its LSD bibliography, which was now nearly ten inches thick.

Researchers were ordered to return all supplies of LSD and psilocybin to Sandoz, and then resubmit their research proposals to the NIMH for reapproval. Confusion reigned. *Letters to Science* lamented the "state of hysteria" that had driven Sandoz to the unprecedented move of disowning its own discovery. "For Sandoz to be so timorous suggests the Cowardly Lion of Oz." wrote one scientist. "Who is our Dorothy? The FDA? The NIMH? The National Research Council? Who will assume the responsibility for the necessary investigative work with LSD?"

But the scientific bureaucracies lacked the pluck of Frank Baum's Kansas heroine. Researchers attempting to resuscitate projects halted by Sandoz's decision encountered obfuscation and foot-dragging. A typical experience was that of John Pollard, a researcher at the University of Michigan, who had been in the early stages of an experiment measuring LSD's effect on behavior and performance when the "send-it-all-back-to-Sandoz letter" had arrived in his mailbox. Told he

must reclear his research proposal with NIMH, Pollard had immediately set out to do so. Since the NIMH had already given him one grant for LSD research, he anticipated little difficulty.. But things had changed. After a "summer of one-way correspondence and long-distance phone calls" he was told that while he had the approval of NIMH he must now secure the FDA's okay. "I had spoken to only four different individuals at NIMH," he wrote to *Science*. "But after speaking to five at the Food and Drug Administration, I despaired and hoped that my correspondence would eventually filter through to the appropriate person. The summer passed, the research assistant worked on his thesis, and I ran up a phone bill."

In this midst of this confusion, in mid-June a conference on LSD opened in San Francisco. Chaired by Frank Barron, it was the last time that all the factions in the psychedelic debate were together under one roof. Within weeks politics and public opinion would render scientific debate on the danger/usefulness of LSD moot. In fact, the opprobrium was already so strong that friends of Barron urged him to dissociate himself from the conference, warning that to go ahead would be professional suicide. And Berkeley, at the very last minute, refused to let the conference take place on its campus, so it was hastily moved to an off-campus building associated with the UC extension service.

Barron opened the proceedings by observing that there was still no scientific proof that LSD expanded consciousness. What was needed, he said, was more research. Not just to answer the basic questions, but also to address the reason why so many of the brightest students were turning to LSD "in the hope that it will tell them something about themselves." Barron was followed at the podium by Sidney Cohen, who warned that "just as hypnosis was lost to use for fifty years—while it was used on the vaudeville stage and in the parlor—the same is going to be true of LSD." "We are losing control," he said, and while he clearly felt that the majority of the blame belonged to irresponsible enthusiasts like Leary and Kesey, Cohen also urged that the medical model be modified to allow certain professionals—he suggested theologians philosophers, and anthropologists—access to the psychedelic experience.

A bit of excitement occurred when one of those irresponsible enthusiasts, Allen Ginsberg, arrived at the auditorium and was greeted with a standing ovation. This actually was an act of displeasure directed toward Barron's superiors, who had crossed Ginsberg's name off the list of speakers on the pretext that he was not a scientist. But aside from that, the Conference was a model of professional decorum. Abram Hoffer, Humphrey Osmond's former colleague, reported that his cure rate with alcoholics was running close to two-thirds. And Eric Kast, a researcher at the University of Chicago's Medical School, sent along a paper describing LSD's therapeutic potential with the terminally ill. Of eighty patients who had taken the drug with Kast, seventy-two wanted to repeat the experience.

Given the newsworthiness of LSD, one might have expected significant media coverage. But that wasn't the case. The newspapers seemed to be perplexed by the multiplicity of opinions—"everything you hear about LSD is nonsense, including what I'm telling you," quipped one pharmacologist at the beginning of his talk—and what little coverage there was tended to focus on the eminently quotable duo of Dick Alpert and Tim Leary, both of whom addressed the

conference. Alpert, whom Newsweek dubbed an LSD "High Priest," in contrast to Leary's "LSD Messiah," suggested that the government solve the problem of illicit use by establishing an Internal Flights Agency, which would license prospective LSD users, and provide them with up-to-date maps of the Other World. Leary, "radiating light in white chinos and tieless white shirt," with a "dazzling blonde traveling companion" on his arm, spent most of his time soliciting funds for his legal appeal. But he also delivered what Myron Stolaroff thought was "the most carefully prepared address I have ever seen him give."

Unfortunately, wrote Stolaroff to Humphrey Osmond, Tim quickly reverted to "his usual inconsistent, confusing self. After having recently appeared on TV requesting a one-year moratorium on all psychedelics, he ended this address by exhorting the audience to do their own private research and not let anyone stop them."

It had been a difficult few months for Leary, what with the Liddy raid following so closely on the heels of the Texas marijuana conviction. Although he had often joked about the usual fate of prophets, the reality left him subdued and dejected; his number-one priority changed from raising consciousness to raising money, as his lawyers scrambled to keep him out of jail.

It was at this low ebb that Leary agreed to testify before one of the Congressional subcommittees, joining Allen Ginsberg and Art Kleps, among others, on the advocate side of the aisle. Kleps, you will recall, was one of the Millbrook-trained guides. Since then he had gone on to form an LSD-based religion called the Neo-American Church, of which he was Chief Boo Hoo. ("Are you really called a boo hoo?" one of the senators asked him. "I'm afraid so," said Kleps.) Although Leary was not active in the Church, he was, Kleps informed the senators, a holy figure, the equivalent of Jesus Christ or Mohammed. "On the day the prison doors close behind Tim Leary," warned the bearded Chief Boo Hoo, "this country will face religious civil war. Any restraint we have shown heretofore in the dissemination of psychedelics will be ended."

After such a dramatic build-up, the senators must have been a bit nonplussed when Leary sat down before them in his old professorial tweeds. He began by stating his *bona fides*: 311 personal LSD trips; three thousand guided trips. LSD was a form of energy, he said, consequently some sort of control was necessary: "I believe that the criteria for marijuana, which is about the mildest of the psychedelic drugs, should be about those which we now use to license people to drive automobiles, whereas the criteria for the licensing of LSD, a much more powerful act, should be much more strict, perhaps the criteria now used for airplane pilots would be appropriate."

Training centers, modeled after Castalia, should be established around the country, with LSD lab courses a part of every college curriculum. This was too much for Senator Ted Kennedy. "And what is going to happen to the boy who doesn't get to college?" he asked sarcastically.

"There would be special training institutes for him," replied Leary, refusing to be drawn.

"Are we going to have high school courses as well?"

"I would let research, scientific research answer the question as to at what age the nervous system is ready to use these new instruments."

All in all, it was a temperate performance—too temperate for zealots like Art Kleps, who concluded that Tim's legal problems had destroyed his nerve. An assessment that received further

confirmation a few days later when Leary publicly proposed a year-long moratorium on LSD use. "I do not say we should stop studying consciousness expansion," he told a crowd of eight hundred gathered at New York's Town Hall. "But we must learn to have psychedelic experiences without the use of drugs."

But by June he had regained some of his old flair. After delivering his paper at Barron's conference, Leary called a press conference and announced that 2 million doses of bootleg LSD were about to descend upon California. Not surprisingly, all thoughts of alcohol cure rates vanished from every reporter's thoughts, as they raced to take down what Tim was saying, which was: "Our social duty now is to publish manuals, give training sessions, and prepare the young to use this powerful, consciousness-expanding drug."

Whether he realized it or not, by calling that press conference he had managed to sabotage the whole point of the Conference.

Myron Stolaroff had driven up to San Francisco principally to hear Abram Hoffer's paper. In truth, he was no longer part of the LSD research scene, his Foundation having lost its license to investigate new drugs—a forfeiture for which it was difficult not to blame Mr. Leary. Eighteen months earlier, while Tim was in India immersing himself in the ancient wisdom, Stolaroff had been on the verge of a major coup. During a trip to Washington, Bill Harman, the Foundation's associate director, had completed the groundwork for a project that would bring selected federal officials to Palo Alto for a thorough initiation into the potentials of psychedelic drugs. "I don't know what more we could want," Stolaroff wrote to Osmond: "I can't think of anything that would help the overall cause more at this time than to have selected persons well placed in the government receive first hand exposure to our work. Al [Hubbard] has assured us that he will be on hand to insure that their exposure is complete, and that they will not get away without having had a profound look at the situation."

But then, while the project was still in the planning stage, the political climate surrounding psychedelics had changed. Black market LSD, once a trickle, had become a sizable flow; and the impressionable young, stimulated by the claims of Kesey and Leary, had begun taking it wherever and whenever they could, with the upshot being the kind of fallout Frosch was seeing at Bellevue. Instead of being invited to give LSD to selected members of the government, Stolaroff now found himself pressed for funds, as grants that he had counted on were suddenly withdrawn.

When it became apparent in early 1965 that psychedelic therapy was no longer economically feasible, Stolaroff and Harman redirected the Foundation's energies toward the private sector: if the government no longer wanted to fund individual therapy, perhaps industry could be persuaded of LSD's problem-solving potential. In one sense this was a return to Stolaroff's first impulse, when he and Hubbard had dreamed of using LSD to transform Ampex into an enlightened supercorporation. But with a difference. In the interim Stolaroff had become a bit more sophisticated where presentation was concerned: you didn't just waltz into the president's office and invite him to sample a strange drug. You needed documentation, graphs, hard data. You needed a pilot study, which is what the Foundation set about doing, rounding up thirty different

professionals—physicists, furniture designers, architects, mathematicians, engineers—who were alike insofar as each had a problem that was eluding solution.

The architect, for example, was wrestling with the design of an arts and crafts shopping center. He came into Stolaroff's office, took the LSD, and later wrote this account of what happened: I looked at the paper I was to draw on. I was completely blank. I knew that I would work with a property 300' square. I drew the property lines and I looked at the outline. I was blank.

Suddenly I saw the finished project. I did some quick calculations ... it would fit on the property and not only that... it would meet the cost and income requirements.

I began to draw... my senses could not keep up with my images ... my hand was not fast enough... I was impatient to record the picture (it has not faded one particle). I worked at a pace I would not have thought I was capable of.

I completed four sheets of fairly comprehensive sketches. I was not tired but I was satisfied that I had caught the essence of the image. I stopped working. I ate fruit... I drank coffee ... I smoked... I sipped wine... I enjoyed.

It was a magnificent day.

But all this work came to nought when Sandoz decided to withdraw its patronage, leaving the FDA and the NIMH as principal arbiters of what constituted proper research. As far as the health bureaucracies were concerned, lack of creativity was not a disease. Consequently to use LSD in that manner verged on abuse. Al Hubbard flew to Washington to argue the point—he carried with him a letter pointing out that numerous industries, as well as NASA, had used psychedelics to solve specific problems—but he got nowhere.

The simple fact was that priorities had changed; the political breezes were blowing cold; research congruent with that view was funded, while the rest was left to die a benign bureaucratic death; when the IND's (official government permission to experiment with an Investigational New Drug) of this latter group came up for renewal, they were rejected. This was what happened to Hubbard and Stolaroff and dozens of others. Even Jean Houston and Robert Masters, who were about to publish *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*, which was unquestionably the best scientific account of what happened beyond the Door, even they lost the right to do LSD research.

But if anyone exemplified the dilemma of the LSD research community, it was Sidney Cohen. Since the publication of *The Beyond Within* in 1964, Cohen had been the most visible champion of sensible research—a clear-eyed "LSD expert" who was capable of articulately demolishing the propaganda of Leary while refraining from the sort of offbeat speculations that had apparently disqualified Humphrey Osmond from being invited to the Congressional hearings. The man who had coined the word *psychedelic*, who had given Aldous Huxley mescaline, was perhaps too eccentric to qualify as an expert; Cohen, who preferred the term *unsanity* when talking about the psychedelic state, was far more acceptable.

Cohen was popular on the lecture circuit, appearing often with Richard Alpert, who played the psychedelic radical (328 personal LSD experiences) to Cohen's scientific moderate (seven

carefully controlled ingestions). By appearing on the same stage with Alpert, Cohen risked the ire of his colleagues, who accused him of adding to Alpert's—and by extension Leary's—legitimacy. "True he broadcasts a point of view with which you and I disagree," Cohen replied. "What should we do about this? Should he be ignored, insulted or ostracized? None of these will be effective; in fact they would help him. He must be engaged, and his views effectively answered."

Alpert, on the other hand, tended to see Cohen as a hypocrite. It was okay for him to turn on Henry and Clare Booth Luce, but let anyone else try that and Cohen would start lecturing about strict medical use. But Alpert liked Cohen nevertheless; he was a nice guy "who is using the cards he's got in his hands to play what he can. Playing in the middle, all the way through."

What Alpert didn't appreciate, though, was just how difficult a balancing act staying in the middle had become. To refute the public statements of enthusiasts like Leary, moderates like Cohen were forced to paint increasingly bleak pictures of what would happen should the spread of psychedelics continue unchecked. Unfortunately, the very negativity of their rhetoric was creating a climate in which it was difficult to justify even basic research: if LSD was that volatile, how could anyone be safe... !

A variation of Gresham's law occurred, as sensationalized rhetoric replaced rational debate. By the autumn of 1966, opponents were hinting that LSD probably caused long-term brain damage. Their evidence? The fact that so many kids, post-LSD, showed little desire to adjust to the corporate-suburban lifestyle embraced by their parents. Without a blink, the ethic of adjustment had been elevated to an organic process of the brain.

Leary, not to be outclassed, countered with an equally outrageous gambit. Interviewed by *Playboy*, he announced that LSD was the most powerful aphrodisiac ever discovered. "Let me put it this way," he said, "compared with sex under LSD, the way you've been making love—no matter how ecstatic the pleasure you think you get from it—is like making love to a department-store-window dummy." And as a coup de grace, he added: "The three inevitable goals of the LSD session are to discover and make love with God, to discover and make love with yourself, and to discover and make love with a woman."

Was it any wonder that moderates like Sidney Cohen concluded things were out of control?

Pondering LSD's strange career, Cohen thought he could detect three distinct phases. The first phase was a scientific one. In LSD researchers had chanced upon a tool capable of unlocking the Dark Room of the Unconscious. But just as they were digesting and arguing over the rather astonishing things they had found in there, a parallel plot had appeared: the science story had turned into a religion story. Shepherded by Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard, LSD had become a way to accelerate evolution, creating the possibility that for the first time Man would truly merit the title *Homo sapiens*. But then the religion story had become a cultural revolt of the lowest possible character—"a mindless sensory whingding" was Cohen's description.

Instead of *Homo sapiens*, LSD had created *Homo Yippie!*