

*The Psychedelic Anthology* is a seven-part anthology and collection of real-life psychedelic experiences shared from all over the world. This anthology challenges the negative stigma surrounding sacred medicines such as LSD, Ayahuasca, and Mescaline by sharing the very profound and transformative experiences that may occur while under the influence of these substances, many of which have been used as sacraments in religious and spiritual ceremonies for millennia to heal and connect with the divine. Through these incredibly powerful stories, this book series hopes to humanize these medicines and reintroduce their importance to mankind.

The  
Psychedelic  
Anthology

Volume III

# PORTALS AND PRESENCES

## Salvia

### *La Dama Verde Parts the Veil*

I approached my first *Salvia divinorum* experience with the intent of founding an evolving relationship with this mystical medicine, so, during the early mornings of the days preceding my initial use – the first of these falling upon one of a full moon – I dedicated my practice to respectfully introducing myself to this medicine. To deepen this courtship, I devised a half-hour audio experience combining sacred space music, an ethnographic recording of a medicine woman’s ceremonial chant, Mazatec-related music and authentic field recordings of birds and wind from Salvia’s birthplace of Mexico. Whilst listening, I held a bowl of dried Salvia leaf – a Mexican-made blue glass tripod vessel utilized previously for divinatory scrying sessions – in which I dipped my fingers and nose. In the form of an introductory communion, I slipped a small fragment of dried leaf beneath my tongue.

Following these half-hour sessions and continuing forward, I slept with a small drawstring pouch beneath my pillow containing leaves and a holy medal of the Virgin Mary – she being closely associated with the medicine widely-known as *Hierba Maria* in the land of its origin. Gradually, a noticeable number of my dreams centered around organic greenery – one embellished by an episode during which I reconnected with a

friend not present in my life for thirty years. Perhaps these experiences were triggered by initial expectations and prior readings on the subject or maybe they signaled the opening of a portal yet to be explored. Crucial to my relationship-building with the plant was embracing the “imaginal” – to abandon the need for fact-based understanding or evidence in order to believe in a particular experience.

As it was fittingly Mother’s Day in the U.S. when I had my first Salvia experience, I called upon the protection and shepherding of the Virgin Mary and Saint Mary Magdalene – the latter with whom I had already developed a passionate link – as well as my partner who acted as sitter. In an easeful and organic way, I somehow conflated these two celestial feminine icons into *La Dama Verde* or The Green Lady.

Immediately after intake, I retreated into bed with a blackout eye cover. I began to undergo a mild fractal-like bodily dissolution combined with an elevated heart rate. Occasional waves of anxiety were reduced by focusing on the breath. Paradoxically, whilst these psycho-physical effects happened, they were experienced both viscerally from within the body and as an observer disconnected to them.

Over the course of the next twenty minutes, childhood memories arose visually, free from any mental commentary. These included: the recollection of a favorite rubberized toy figure of an American Indian, this perhaps being a fascinating associative link to the Salvia-using Mazatec peoples; the vision of an extremely colorful contemporary painting of rearing horses once on display in my family home; and looking out from

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an oft-frequented hiding place – how perfect then that just hours before, I unexpectedly had been sent a beloved photograph of myself at age thirteen I had lost track of years ago. The intense focus on these non-verbal/non-thought-heavy recollections perhaps pointed toward the importance of their nature over the perpetual intellectualizing common to adulthood. Additionally, there was the sensation and partial visual identification of a non-threatening presence to my right-hand side somehow connected with that American Indian toy figure.

After the experience diminished, I partook in consuming some food as recommended for grounding while I recorded trip report notes. This was followed by a pleasant sleep. Overall, this was an intriguing and positive adventure. My virgin adventure left me contemplating the nature and purpose of the inner-mechanism which maintains a typically impermeable wall between conscious awareness and our memories and dreams. I was thoroughly intrigued as to the role this medicine served in dissolving that very wall.

### *Yesterday Now*

Once again, the mild panic experienced at the start of the session resulting from a sense of body dissolution was alleviated through focused deep breathing. Once underway, the journey began with an awareness of being part of a group consciousness shared with other beings. This led to an intensely vivid series of long-forgotten childhood recollections perceived as an unfolding in the present. There was also a moment during which what would

typically be comprehended through words was instead understood through visual symbols alone. The subsequent day was marked by a euphoric sense of well-being, sensual awareness, and a deeper appreciation of life's preciousness.

### *The Inner Onion*

Building on my growing experience with this medicine, I addressed the initial panic at the start of the prior journey by focusing on the breath – simply by breathing deeply and evenly. A van Gogh-esque visual was followed by yet another return to a childhood setting; this one, largely unpopulated. Again, I was immersed in a three-dimensional memory landscape with the benefit of having the ability to explore it should I have chosen to do so. Overall, very little intellectual thought was processed during it – instead, a vibrant, sensual universe of intense color, shape, and textures were revealed. My sense was that continued *Salvia* experiences would be the equivalent of peeling back the layers of a most curious onion. What would be found at its center?

### *Wordless Meaning*

Although I chewed this quid more aggressively to create the *leche esmeralda* (emerald milk, as I call it), I was able to do so for a shorter duration than desired, perhaps resulting in a milder journey. Yet again, I explored an unpopulated childhood landscape wherein the focus was on long-forgotten and

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frequently architectural visual details without the interference of thought-chatter or verbal language; perhaps the latter might be explained by these being pre-verbal memories. In addition, there was an exploration of visually perceived alphabetical letters and their connection to shape. The style of this “lesson” strongly recalled that of late 1960’s – early 1970’s animated children’s educational television – some of the artists for which I would wager were more than likely familiar with psychedelics! I became appreciative of what a Herculean effort it was to report on such journeys afterwards in some coherent form, as the meaning of what was experienced was so often beyond the grasp of language. The additional gift of this experience arrived in the form of a deeper sense of gratitude felt the morning after – this certain thankfulness happily typical of my post-journey experiences. Curiously, I noted a rise in my libido hours after the session – perhaps such revisits to “earlier times” resulted in a freeing up of long-stagnated energies.

### *Perceiving Essence*

I chose to listen to music throughout this journey, being curious to learn how it might shape it. Unlike previous experiences, there was no sense of panic associated with this session. Mild body distortion was followed by moments of synesthesia during which sounds were given geometric shape, as well as a life independent of their source. Perhaps of the slightly heavier dose, the closed-eye visuals here were of a more psychedelic nature than those experienced before. During one moment, I



achieved invisibility; during another I was capable of perceiving and identifying the “essence” of a family member as a free-floating, amoeboid shape filled with small geometric shapes and colors. Also outstanding were the appearance of organic, tubular portals (birth canals?) – one leading upward into an unknown, brilliantly-lit source; and another, chocolate-brown, offering a passageway into inner-earth. The overall sense was that of receiving an abundance of information and methods of perception – goodly portions of which were beyond the limits of verbal expression – that have been lost and then temporarily regained through this journey – all of this lending the experience a bittersweet, yet hopeful quality.

*Beneath the Skin*

As these journeys built one upon another, I noticed a definite shift in pattern from earlier ones focusing almost solely on childhood associations to more recent experiences which might start out nostalgically before venturing into deeper and less recognizable terrain. This journey was surely of the latter variety. The sounds of birdcalls on the recording I was listening to at the time triggered the direct experience of accompanying an ivory-colored flock of birds rising and then soaring above my childhood home. This led to the re-sensing of both longing and irritation for and with particular schoolmates of respectively a friendly or unwanted association.

As this familiar, if not distant landscape of environment and emotion dropped away to one certainly futuristic in nature –

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perhaps influenced by the recent viewing of a science fiction film the previous evening – I was given several glimpses of genderless and featureless humanoid forms gently lit from within just prior to their physical manifestation in earthly human form like a battalion issuing forth from a high-tech conveyor-belt production line. The flesh-colored fabric-like facial covering of one form blew away to reveal its spherical head.

As in previous journeys, novel comprehensions and streams of related information were received so naturally as to seem almost humorously obvious – actually causing me to laugh aloud during this trip! This included the realization that the role of our biological parents is not what is accepted by the masses at large; that is, their being, the only original source of our individual genesis results in complex familial relationships. Instead, while not denying our essential connection to them, our parents serve as vehicles in the process of our chosen entry into the manifest world of Earth-life – the goal of which is perhaps to experience directly such emotions as love or the obliteration of fully comprehending the eternal loneliness of an ultimate creator or creative force. This resulted in my contemplating the perception of role-playing activities (from everyday life to gaming), as well as universal human interest and enjoyment in such character-driven pastimes as theatre, film, and literature as nothing more than dim echoes of the “truth” of our genuine origins from other dimensions – origins kept largely hidden from ourselves through an amnesia necessary for the goals of the embodiment process to be optimally experienced. I am only partially successful in attempting to not overly interpret such

understandings post-journey by excessive intellectualizations. Undoubtedly, I have encountered several aspects of these mystical “truths” during my Sufi training, as well as through the accounts of “awakened” beings, and spiritually-themed texts and films. I was committed to balancing such philosophical explorations with the awe-inspiring sheer enjoyment of these journeys.

*Invisible Playmates*

During the induction process, I experienced once more through closed eyes the dissolution to invisibility of the hand and arm utilized to hold a small bowl beneath my chin to catch any dripping of the juice produced by the quid chewing. Once prone, the same arm was discomfited due to its bent position during the nearly half-hour induction. Yet again, focusing on the breath served well to control anxiety. This was followed by the sense of detachment from the body and an upward floating. Several childhood locales became backdrops to the appearance of non-human, yet organic beings well over human height comprised of angular, geometric appendages. I received these elaborate, stick figure-like creatures with an unanticipated sense of familiarity. Seeing them against recognizable backdrops for the first time gave the impression that perhaps they had always been there, but became only revealed or perceived then for the first time – invisible playmates unveiled at last. The session’s intention set prior was to receive guidance in improving my efforts in the divinatory art of scrying. The answer came in the form of my

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being directed skyward toward the underside of leviathan, whale-like creatures soaring directly overhead. Inwardly, I understood the message to be not to focus on such hitherto used scrying objects as mirrors or bowls of water, but to look elsewhere – more specifically, upward into the void, perhaps ironically with closed eyes. There was no fear connected with this journey. Instead, it was embraced with trust and curiosity, undoubtedly aided by my prayers to *La Dama Verde* before and after its undertaking.

### *Dancing in the Air*

The day preceding a journey is one of anticipation before embarking for an unknown destination. Sometimes, such excitement was tinged with a slight degree of anxiety. This was true of this trip. Once onset was nearly achieved, mild fear accompanied by a generalized body sweat happened – the former manifesting in the irrational momentary conviction of inadvertently swallowing my tongue. This panic state was eased eventually through focusing on the breath.

With further childhood locales serving as backdrops, I experienced the perspective shift from my own to that of my mother present in the scene. She was accompanied by a strongly-sensed, yet invisible entity with whom I felt well-acquainted with and unthreatened by. Other beings associated with certain architectural elements were revealed – more specifically, tan-colored, two-legged, upside down “U”-shaped creatures connected with a concrete wall of the same hue. These familiar

vistas were replaced by a fantastical one comprised of several cavernous throat cavities, undoubtedly connected with the momentary clearing of my own. This was replaced with amoeboid creatures dancing in the air.

During another moment, I gained an instantaneous comprehension of a method of assessing another person's inner-being by effortlessly observing the contents of a visible rectangular space perceived upon them filled with mobile geometric-shaped objects of some organic substance.

The uplifting trance music listened to during this trip not only rendered it cinematic in quality, but extended its duration. During perhaps the journey's most awe-inspiring moment, I was cognizant of being a portion of sunlight illuminating an exterior fence-gate of my childhood home. As such, I experienced a palpable release from this planet with no concern of ever returning as the light withdrew upward, returning to its source.

Post-trip, I contemplated the reasoning behind the regular recurrence of visiting settings associated with my youth in which extraordinary perceptions opened. Conceivably, this may be a momentary return of access to such increased perceptual abilities in childhood – abilities sadly lost as a byproduct of the typical maturation process. Furthermore, I understood how the embracing of the loss of control into unknown territories during the journey experience may be of potentially tremendous value in many ways. These can range from accepting cataclysmic life changes to undergoing a peaceful death to even more mundanely, riding with more ease the ever-changing wheel of life.

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### *The Cornfield*

During onset, a certain degree of anxiety was felt – manifested once more as a concern for swallowing my tongue. This was kept manageable through focused breath-work. The majority of the journey centered on the landscape surrounding the Catholic church I attended as a child. Other than the face and figure of a genderless Native American, I encountered no other individual. It is unclear time-wise whether what unfolded had already taken place before the area had been developed with housing and a community, or was yet to happen after the same vicinity was left vacant with the subsequent passage of many years. In any event, the landscape of the parish cemetery churchyard was filled with a crop of swaying, green-husked corn. There was a sense of an ocean in one direction and a forest in another. Airborne over the field floated and darted a floral-ringed vagina – its darkened cavity opening and shutting – whilst nearby depended a squat, pollen-heavy, pod-like stamen. The scene changed – I found myself lying in a similar cornfield, but here beneath a cosmic, nighttime sky. Was I still on the planet Earth? I felt how the corn provided a grounding connection between the two divergent places, thus rendering the latter's alien quality of little importance.

Toward the end of the journey, I removed the earphones through which I had been listening to trance music since I felt it was playing too much of a role in shaping the session. At the session's finale, I found myself lying in a field of wavering, organic tendrils and sensed a genuine lack of concern whether I remained there eternally.

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The most significant post-trip contemplation I arrived at found me questioning how perhaps such familiar locales and at least partially-recognizable happenings serve as screens for deeper realizations, deeper truths.

Later research on the local geography of the churchyard in question uncovered how the town in which it is located was founded at the junction of two rivers – traditionally indicating especially sacred areas. Furthermore, Native American Indians did indeed populate this particular land.

#### *Soul Mass*

This journey was much milder in intensity. Awareness of the breath and repetitive trance drum music served as reliable anchors for this experiment. Just as in similar journeys, the landscape was a revisit to the town of my childhood, coupled with a sense of a needing to recall meanings gathered during these journeys which sometimes remained elusive. While there was a paucity of psychedelic visuals, there was one notable moment during which I perceived the souls of many individuals simultaneously – these given the appearance of upright, tan-colored ovoid shapes in the region of the solar plexus containing a series of horizontal lines. In addition, there was one hitherto unfamiliar visual effect when movement froze in place.

#### *Electric Blur*

Signaling the journey's launch was the gradual separation between

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thought and body – experiencing the freeing of the former from the latter’s cage, hitherto attempted through the practices of *Yoga Nidra* and *Nishkriya Dhyana* with varying success. Ironically then and for the first time, I experienced the corporal sensation of being within my body as a child – seeing smooth, hairless limbs and sensing a luxuriant crown of hair. As the onset deepened, I witnessed a great reaching out of a jungle of vibrant, green leafy foliage, consuming everything in its path. I found myself within a ship-like, wooden cabin that was filling with the unstoppable verdant flourishing as well.

Several familiar childhood townscapes passed before my eyes. Most prominent and recognizable among them was the perspective of looking outward from a window onto the avenue from within my paternal grandmother’s home. Making their appearance along this same thoroughfare was a procession of spectral fingers – these bearing the outer-shape of gingerbread cookie-cutter figures. Several of these were filled with a blur of electric static, occasionally broken by a flash revealing a momentary scene from the individual’s personal life. I understood how these figures served as containers for any residual energies following the cessation of bodily existence – simply vehicles through which were projected echoes of lives past. These are what survive death, at least briefly before their dissipation. There was a definite poignancy about these transient vessels, devoid of cognizance or distinct personality. The transient nature of these phenomena was evident before me. While there was comprehension as to how such impermanent beings might be psychically “read,” they seem little connected to a future – at



least on the manifest plane – beyond their brief survival before inescapable dissolution.

Even though this journey – as so many others – was tinged with death-centered realizations, the post-experience was one also characteristically marked by a sense of revitalization and excitement for having witnessed something extraordinary imbued with tremendous and ever-expanding meaning.

*Flight of Stingrays*

Experienced whilst listening to a specially prepared audio mix of Indian tanpura and synthesizer, the journey began via a childhood-level point-of-view looking outward from within a no longer extant retail business visited often with my mother and siblings. The accessing of deeper levels of experience was then signaled by a liquid-like dissolving of certain architectural elements of the scene. There was a loss of bodily awareness – from that same P.O.V. – noticing my own form was nowhere to be seen. I became part of the consciousness of or from within a nearby white wall. The visual scene before me was revealed to be nothing more than a fabric-like backdrop that began to fold at the edges, exposing a featureless void behind it. Somehow, this static backdrop resembled the final credit scene of a cartoon series seen long ago. This revelatory comprehension extended to individuals – each uniquely identifiable by certain orifice-like openings in their own fabric-like form.

Looking upwards, I observed a stately flight of elongated, triangular beings lit dimly from within, similar to the movement

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of stingrays. There before me was a silent, insectoid army of ant-headed soldiers quietly waiting in readiness – perhaps this image was inspired by the viewing of medieval artworks the previous evening.

There was the sense of grasping the meaning of an object through a non-verbal method, beyond the need for words powerless to convey it.

I noticed how allowing my hands to make contact with each other or touching other areas of the body resulted in a more rapid dissipation of the state. Once more, the aftermath was one of contemplative gratitude.

Fascinating to note how on more than one occasion, I experienced a form of flashback in daily life during which I was dropped into the Salvia experience characterized by a heightened state of visual acuity and awareness. Furthermore, in the following weeks, I experienced a dream in which I willingly received an unfamiliar medicine resulting in the ability to view the interior emotions of individuals who revealed themselves as glowing roseate coloring upon the surface of their skin.

### *Soda Pop Memories*

The journey began with an upside-down perspective of having one's back against the ceiling whilst looking downward, then a vision of sea anemones appeared – their wavering tendrils reaching forward in a watery embrace.

A brief series of childhood vistas followed. This included the green alley running between my home and that of a neighbor,

a place of wildy-growing ferns and weeds, and a small dairy store not far from the same location. More precisely connected with the latter was the direct experience of simple longing for some food item on display there in a cylindrical counter container. Are such uncluttered desires given independent life for a time, separate from their creator's proximity or existence? The final youthful image was that of an attenuated soda pop bottle – an undoubtedly psychedelically-inspired design popular at the time as a prize from seaside boardwalk games of chance.

While shifting my body position from sitting to being fully-prone, one of my knees accidentally collided against the leg of a nearby chair. This momentary pain was experienced as a visible brown splotch. Again, are even such mildly intense physical, emotive, or intellectual occurrences imbued with some form of autonomous presence, liberated from their origins? Might a useful analogy of a composer and their music be fitting here?

I came to be observed by a group of upright, rectangular-shaped, amoeboid-like beings cognizant of my presence. A cavalcade of classic psychedelic expanses arose and blew the mind before falling away.

The common thread connecting all of these episodes was the experience of being some form of disembodied consciousness in the absence of any standard visual or physical evidence to support such a sense.

While moving my arms and legs when returning from the journey, I did not feel connected to the floor beneath me. Given a recent episode of back pain, it was a delightfully pleasant experience to have sentience without the burden of a bodily

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vessel.

As I contemplated these series of journeys, I felt blessed by this experiential gift from *La Dama Verde*. The curious repetition of certain themes linking them are not insignificant – the nature of being before, during, and after mortal life; the shifting interplay of awareness between the supposed “animate” and “inanimate”, as well as hitherto unexplored modes of consciousness. It is truly remarkable how such richly intriguing mystical travels result from a scant few grams of a plant – *but what a miraculous plant, indeed!*

### *Sexual Pre-revolution*

A milder journey revealed a translucent screen upon which ever-changing figures – many of them fantastical – did manifest before morphing into others. An insight emerged from this phantasmagoria. Sexual gender is not founded in the genitalia that serve as its embodied expression upon the manifest plane. I was then given an experience of feminine gender in its more etheric and essential form – expressed as a warm, cinnamon-brown square set within a darker, rectangular surround.

### *Graphic Understanding*

In comparison to the prior’s week’s journey, this one was perhaps more immersive since the brew was taken in in a heated state, thus aiding in easier absorption into the system than when experimenting with a chilled variety. The launch of the experience

was signaled by a warm flushing of the upper-half of the body, which was less warmly dressed than the lower-half, accompanied by an increasing sensation of spaciousness. I could not physically feel such actions as the moving of body parts (for example, the raising and lowering of the drinking cup toward the end of the induction phase), but I was able to accomplish ingestion successfully. There was a short-lived perception of communing briefly with a “sisterly” energy or presence. This was followed by the appearance of two amorphous beings whose outer-shapes were comprised, in one case, of ever-multiplying plastic doll’s arms, and in the other, flaps of foodstuffs, all growing from within them. Momentary flashes of childhood landscapes arose and fell away. A dual-capability occurred characterized by achieving a sense of consciousness both adhered to and disconnected from the body concurrently. Thoughts in words and meaning were given a graphic existence in a wealth of shapes. Overall, this was an intriguing, if somewhat mild journey reached via a pleasant administration of this remarkable green elixir.

### *Spider Eyes*

The following trip was planned to happen during a periodic twenty-four hour silence I undertook during which the inner-senses flowered into an unusual keenness. A simultaneous blanketing snowstorm added a further sense of cocooning at the journey’s launch. I began it with a moment of prayerful communion with *La Dame Verte*.

Perhaps influenced by a Spanish-language documentary

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watched hours prior, the phrase “tenemos hecho...” (or “we have done...”) arose. While at the time I understood only the first of the two foreign-language words, post-experience research revealed the phrase’s full meaning. Its repetition accompanied a sense of being part of several distinct, yet united discarnate intelligences engaged in a fusing process of corporal manifestation to become a single, many-limbed being – more specifically, an enormous white spider with many-faceted eyes. In very little time, the joyful arachnid metamorphosed into large, similarly cartoonish snake with a prominent head.

A flash-moment occurred of a nighttime walk along a pathway to either my childhood home or that of a neighbor, while accompanied by another. I knew a dog was waiting inside; this very well may have been one of the two my family kept at that time.

This mild journey revealed the sense of being part of the surrounding animate scene and its architecture, flowing forth from or into a tunnel-like darkness. With a color-scape reminiscent of a Saturday morning cartoon, I encountered a one-dimensional, static, action doll figure accompanied by an unseen feminine presence. The bed upon which I lay was transformed into a very lofty platform. These were occasional, wispy sense-memories from childhood.

An informational transmission took place via a vision showing the materializations of “thought-forms” into airborne, dumpling-like pouches that “floated” unseen by and in-between the individuals that created them constantly.

A further instructive transmission was given by which pre-

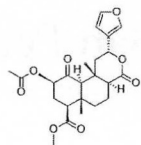
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cognition was explained to be a simple process of imagining a sequence of events prior to their taking place in actuality.

As has been typical of many of these experiences, I emerged both refreshed and with a renewed enthusiasm for the wonder of being, as well as the blessings of such adventures.

# Salvia

*Salvia divinorum*



*Salvia divinorum*, also known as Sage of the Diviners, is a perennial herb indigenous to the Sierra Mazateca region of Oaxaca, Mexico. It is used ceremonially and touted for its medicinal healing properties by the Mazatec people to alleviate ailments such as anemia, cluster headaches, and diarrhea. In larger doses, *Salvia* can induce altered states of consciousness.

The first recorded mention of *Salvia* in Western culture was made by Jean Basset Johnson during his studies of Mazatec shamanism in the late 1930's where he had heard that they were drinking a brew made from a visionary tea. In 1962, Albert Hofmann and R. Gordon Wasson obtained a specimen from the Mazatecs, in which they described it as a "less desirable substitute" for Psilocybin.

Modern medicine has discovered its therapeutic properties and believes its active compounds may be used to treat opioid addiction, schizophrenia, chronic pain, and Alzheimer's disease. *Salvia* has also been proven to curb cravings for heroin and cocaine. *Salvia*, whose psychoactive component is *Salvinorin A*, can be consumed by smoking or vaporizing its dried leaves, but its effects tend to be shorter when smoked. Conversely, chewing its leaves tends to have longer lasting effects. There are significant variations in its psychoactivity based on a variety of physiological and consumption factors.

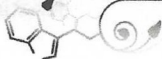
*Effects can last 5-120 minutes depending on potency, dosage, and delivery.*







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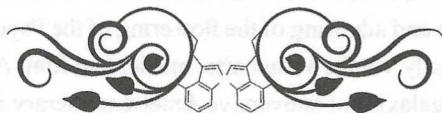
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# Outside the Lines

## A Journey with *La Dama Verde*

— Michael Orlando Yaccarino —



My parents were summoned to a meeting with the black-cloaked, Roman Catholic nun lording over my kindergarten class. The crisis to be addressed was of such far-reaching impact, my very future hung in the balance. There was no easy way to break the news. Fact: I was utterly incapable of preventing my Crayola Crayons from straying beyond the borders indicated in any colouring book. This apparent defect was supported by the presentation of damning corroborating evidence—firetrucks and rocket ships extravagantly embellished by swirly-swirls of Red-Violet and Midnight Blue drawn to the beat of a very different drummer.

In retrospect—the year was 1968, by the way—perhaps the heightened drama surrounding this academic catastrophe was simply misplaced anxiety. During that same landmark year, both Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated, while the Vietnam War raged on. Most certainly, constant news coverage of the latter implanted a discernible seed of fear deep within me. The world was revealed to be a very unsafe place; in fact, one unfolding dangerously very much outside any acceptable lines. How many years would it be, I pondered incessantly at five years of age, until I would

be drafted forcibly into military service—praying my “flat feet” might save me? It was a time of radical upheaval and change. While I do recall watching along with my classmates the television broadcast of Apollo 8’s first manned spacecraft moon orbit, we were a wee bit young to be grooving to the Beatles’ recently-released, highly-experimental *White Album*.

With their formal systems of rules and guidelines, the role-playing games appearing in a few years’ time held no appeal. For me, these, too, prohibited crossing boundaries into uncharted territories. Instead, I lost myself in pastimes conducive to the roaming of an unfettered mind and spirit. Creative writing and exploring the occult filled my afternoons and weekends—supplemented by the occasional witchy book covertly devoured from the shadows of my lidded school desk interior. Add to these Tarot reading and meditation as the years gathered speed. Perhaps, existing in the largely altered states resulting from such activities, throughout my adolescence and well into adulthood I had not sought out substances to achieve the same. To be sure, I had always been keenly aware and admiring of the flowering of the Psychedelic era of the late 1960s, especially via the visual arts, music, and film. A deep affinity for the drug-induced galaxies of subversive American literary sorcerer and artist William S. Burroughs whetted my appetite for direct encounters with the magically phantasmagoric, albeit those of a gentler mode. Yet only relatively recently did a decisive moment arrive. It was high time to earn a new set of wings to elevate my vicarious baby-psychonaut status upon those of a decidedly leafy variety.

The first step was a book-wise education on the array of amazing medicines found in nature’s garden. In very little time, I intuited an immediate kinship with the psychoactive plant *Salvia divinorum* due to the profound mysteries surrounding this mint variety. Most notably these comprised its precise botanical origins, still shrouded within the isolated cloud forests of the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, Mexico; its use by indigenous healer-shaman (or *curanderos*) as a ritual entheogen and divinatory gateway; and its power to produce visionary states as evidenced by a tantalizing body of hallucinatory reports by devotees. And happily, as of this writing, it is a non-controlled substance in my area—another consideration for this slightly twitchy newbie.

To further develop my relationship with this extraordinary medicine, I created a small living shrine to her nearby my main altar/working and soon-to-be occasional trip space. The fairly exacting growing requirements for the indoor cultivation and maintenance of a *S. divinorum* plant for this apartment dweller had me instead opt for a standard home variety “stand-in” with the delightful name of Golden Devil’s Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*), to serve as

a living representation, and—note well!—not to be ingested itself. During its potting process, a scattering of *S. divinorum* leaf was incorporated into the soil. And to honor *S. divinorum*'s common associations with the Blessed Virgin Mary (*hojas de Maria* or “leaves of Mary” being just one of its endearments), the finishing touch consisted of inserting a sky-blue rosary dedicated to Our Lady into the moist earth.

Setting is extremely important to me. Translation: over-gilding the lily. Thus, to house this hybrid planting with proper reverence and eclectic style, I acquired an early 20<sup>th</sup> century wicker plant stand from an antique dealer in Cognac, France; a vintage glazed pot from a private seller in Pennsylvania; and a handmade turquoise under-plate from a potter in Chicago—all of these under-seen by an antique French statue of the Virgin Mary standing protectively on the stand's lower-shelf, at the base-root, if you will. For my budding *S. divinorum* practice, I conflate the Virgin Mary and Saint Mary Magdalene, with whom I share a rich bond, into a single entity I call *La Dama Verde*. She has responded to my call before each journey, abundant with offerings of guidance and protection. I embark on these experiences with an adaptation of a sacred song attributed to Mexican shamans: “May *La Dama Verde* bless me, help me, and give me power and understanding.” And for added intimacy, I keep beneath my pillow a small, silken drawstring bag containing dried *S. divinorum* and a holy medal representing the Virgin Mary so I might bond with this ever-flourishing goddess in dreamland. Allow me to note that my daily practice draws from a variety of spiritual and magical traditions, typically toggling between the sacred and profane. Yet with its effective techniques of devotion and faith, it certainly appears my early Roman Catholic training has proven valuable in hitherto unimagined ways within this newly-found green landscape. Perhaps even Sister Mary Agnes would be proud!

Beginning in May 2017, I initiated a still-continuing exploration of *S. divinorum* utilizing a variety of methods—including the more traditional “quid” chewing method, a liquid essence version, and even a brewed tea preparation. In all cases, I don a light-blocking eye-cover to encourage closed-eye visuals. Whether deep or mild, each resultant expedition has provided remarkable gifts.

Over time, a pattern has emerged defining their general course; although certainly, there have been variants. Commonly recounted in many *S. divinorum* excursions, my own often begin within a childhood setting, with a visceral attention to long-forgotten details that is nothing short of breathtaking. Typically, there are no other humans or animals visible.

However on occasion, awareness arises of either a gathering of unseen presences, or myself being joined with them as a single, unified being. A subtle shift signaling an intensification of the journey frequently takes the form of visuals ranging from gentle waves to kaleidoscopic fractalizations. At the most profound levels of several of these experiences, I receive some form of instructional transmission with mystical and even cosmic implications. Such informational diffusions are more often than not gleaned from some form of visual display. I am repeatedly struck by the utter ease by which I receive these not always comprehensible teachings which possess during their communication a crystalline clarity and unquestionable practicality. A quickly regained cognizance of my physical surroundings indicates reentry and landing.

Allow me to share excerpts from just one of these trips which happened, appropriately enough, upon Thanksgiving Day, since I emerged from it with a deep sense of gratitude.

*The most significant early onset scene was of the very old graveyard located alongside the Catholic church I attended in childhood. Instead of flat earth embellished by gravestones, this large expanse of land is filled with tall, waving shafts of golden wheat-like vegetation. Emerging from this landscape—perhaps one many years prior to my own experience of it—is a large, multicolored spider. This benign creature and others similar to it in their picture book illustration qualities pulse into brilliant and friendly life.*

*More vivid still is a seamless shift to a glorious sunset of burning oranges and shimmering yellows setting in the east, reflected in the windows and front-entrance door glass of my maternal grandparents' apartment building. [In re-visiting this trip, I distinctly know the geographical area in question where the sun was setting to be most definitely east...but then again, this unfolded in some other form/aspect of "reality"... yet, this could have been a sunrise misread as a sunset on my part.] Seeing this is accompanied by a nearly painful nostalgia, recalling the moment when this dazzling event was first witnessed decades earlier and thought long-forgotten along with the knowledge felt then that it might never be seen again.*

*Further outdoor nature scenes arise in shades of dark brown—a shadowy field adorned by a single yellow sunflower glowing in the twilight. What is striking about this stunning vista is my deeper sense that it is all somehow a gorgeous fabrication, suggested by the curving, box-like corner edges of the distant horizon. At the journey's deepest levels, a cosmic vision unfolds. Shimmering curtains of starlight gently ripple—very similar to recorded images of the aurora borealis. Effortlessly, I comprehend how these billowing panels of vast solar systems when gathered together create a single human being—and how the bodies we inhabit are condensations of such tremendous star fields; that we recognize and are attracted to one another via some form of galactic pheromonic familiarity; and how our deaths are simply a dissipation of these same starry concentrations. These revelations result in quiet bursts of weeping as I resurface once again.*

I am never less than awed by these experiences—all induced by a relatively mild dose of this *leche esmeralda* (“emerald milk” which is my affectionate term) causing a total experience from launch to landing of less than a half hour. The remarkable nature and insights of many of them cause considerable reverberations within me for many days afterwards. Therefore for me personally, I would not turn to this particular sacrament for recreational purposes. Indeed, silence, darkness, and immobility are required to fully embrace this elusive goddess. It should be noted how, specifically for the sometimes challenging and unpredictable nature of its journeys, *S. divinatorum* has been branded unfairly as a “spooky” substance. Not entirely accurate at all. As is true for any traveler, familiarize yourself with the territory before setting off to determine if it is a place you might want to visit, and then open yourself to the possibilities of the unexpected extraordinary.

How ironic, then, that it was whilst in “Kindergarten” (from the German, “garden for the children”), I was chastened for an inability to adhere to easily discernible boundary lines. For now precisely a half-century later, I return repeatedly from an emerald realm with a renewed appreciation for a facility to embrace the mysteries hidden beyond commonly accepted frontiers. And with *La Dame Verte* watching over me, I am eager for countdown.

I wish could see myself seated in chairs of dark  
brown - a shadow held against by a single yellow  
uniform against the wall. It is a shadow  
about the same as it is. I don't know if it is  
an antique a great-grandfather suggested by the



"garden for the children" I was asked to be an ally in making a very  
disciplined boundary line. For two years a half-century later I claim  
spatially from an essential truth with a renewed appreciation for a lack of  
to embrace the mystery. I think beyond the words around them and  
with the same kind watching over me I am again the same.





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