

PSYCHEDELIC TRIPS

Travel and Drugs in Contemporary Literature

by

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Abstract

This dissertation studies interlocking representations of travel and drugs in contemporary American, British, and Canadian novels, exploring how those thematics alternately destabilize and assuage subjectivity, genre, and the perception of space. Following a prefatory chapter, Chapters Two and Three serve as a two-part introduction. The first part articulates a theoretical lens I designate by enclosing the word “tripping,” a colloquialism for a drug experience, in quotation marks. Through this lens, I examine travel and drugs in contemporary fiction indebted to sixties counterculture. In Chapter Three, I examine the work of William S. Burroughs and Aldous Huxley, contextualizing their mid-twentieth-century travel and drugs as foundational to later twentieth-century “tripping.”

Chapter Four treats Huxley’s novel, *Island*, as a revision of the foundations I outline in the previous chapter; his instantiation and critique of utopia via “tripping” help conceptualize the psychedelic experience as protective spatial movement – physical mobility instead of psychedelic fungibility – in the service of preserving a stable sense of self. Chapter Five discusses Alex Garland’s *The Beach*, in which drugs reveals the limitations of utopian thought by underscoring the paradoxical notion of immobility hidden within the supposed freedom of mobility. In these novels, Huxley and Garland depict travel as a key to the process of rendering psychedelic intoxication knowable in familiar terms.

Chapters Six and Seven, in exploring Hunter S. Thompson and Robert Sedlack, shift toward defamiliarizing conventional modes of travel using some of the radical possibilities of drug intoxication. Chapter Six examines *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, a text which, instead of attempting to understand inassimilable drug experiences by spatializing the drugged mind, explores mind-alteration as a way of understanding the postmodern space of Las Vegas that emerges following the demise of the counterculture. Chapter Seven constructs a reading of Sedlack's *The African Safari Papers*, examining ways its representation of self-conscious tourism, inflected by intoxication and Thompson-inspired excess, deploys the figures of the shaman and of animals to complicate conventional understandings of tourism. Thompson and Sedlack explore how the subjectivities of domestic and global tourists are reshaped by, rather than resist, the radical alterity introduced by the drug experience.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Psychedelic Trips examines the confluence of travel and drugs, two seemingly disparate thematics that, following the end of World War II and coinciding with a rise in affluence among middle-class Americans and an exploding counterculture, underwent dramatic and concurrent shifts. Travelers in this period, participants in the burgeoning industry of mass tourism, started in larger and larger numbers to visit places further and further afield, while increasingly large-scale use of psychedelic drugs – celebrated and decried in roughly equal but constantly shifting proportions – provided a set of cultural reference points and an aesthetic that helped cement the prominence of this period in the public imagination. We tend to think of travel and intoxication in quite different moral, material, and epistemological terms, but at the same time, we imagine them combining pleasures and dangers in similar ways and functioning as oddly interchangeable cultural signifiers of rebellion.

The similarities between these two thematics are actually quite striking. Drugs and travel are so discursively intimate, share so many of the same conceptual foundations, evoke such similar anxieties and pleasures, and illuminate such analogous problems that their combination is actually quite ubiquitous. Weston LaBarre locates one source for such entanglements in the etymology of the words we use to talk about drugs: “‘Hallucination’ derives from the Latin deponent or half-passive verb *alucinari*, ‘to wander in the mind’” (9). We see these entanglements in the notion of transport implicit in the ecstatic drug experience – the ec-stasis, the non-static, the movement – and by the

spatial metaphors governing our discourses about drugs: being high or tripping, for example, colloquialisms for what is usually a psychedelic drug experience. Like the pleasures of travel, which, according to Eric Leed, lie in the way the “passage through space shapes the experience of time and perception” (206 n. 14), the pleasures of drugs lie in their reformulations of chronology and perceptual experience. In offering similar threats to the boundaries between self and other and similar promises of alterity, travel and drugs are also subversive in similar ways. Leed stakes that claim for travel, but it is equally applicable to many forms of intoxication: “Travel is clearly subversive of the assumption implicit in all social structures that an individual has one real, consistent persona and character” (276).

Such potentiality is a key reason both travel and drugs are simultaneously celebrated and vilified. Because mobility often exerts pressure on unified cultural categories and discrete identities by introducing difference and gradation, travel can be feared for its alienating effects and shunned for its disruptiveness, just as drugs can. The tourist, to name one supposedly distinct kind of traveler, allegedly seeks prepackaged experiences and manufactured authenticity as escape from real life, just as the drug user is said to opt out of reality and seek chemical escape or substitution. The purported inauthenticity of both hallucinations and all-expenses-paid resorts becomes the villain here. Travel, often a metaphor for “inner exploration,” can sometimes result in arrogant, enclosed selves who make comparisons and judgments from comfortable positions of interiority, just as drugs can allegedly promote comparable selfishness and solipsism. Travel is a powerful means of consolidating national identity and extending its influence,

as in the case of imperialism, and drugs are never very far from empire.¹ Finally, drug trafficking (which as far as most discourses of legality are concerned is worse than using), condenses the doubly-dangerous nature of travel and drugs into one offence.²

To move beyond simply enumerating similarities and to analyze how the conjunction of these two concepts affects our comprehension of the broader thematics it raises, I designate the amalgamation of travel and drugs by enclosing that provocative colloquialism in quotation marks: “tripping.” I use the term “tripping” in two ways. First, it circumscribes the genre that forms my object of study: fiction that employs the conjoined topoi of travel and drugs, of “two kinds of trip in one” (Harris “Introduction” xxv). I study fiction (as opposed to the non-fictional *récit de voyage* that often comes to mind when one thinks of travel writing) because how these two kinds of trips are imagined is central to how they are understood. In inhabiting the terrain the travelogue purports to avoid, the novel insists upon reimagining the relationship between travel and

¹ Mike Jay provides a succinct account of the Opium Wars of the 1840s and 1850s, an encounter emblematic of the entanglement of drugs and empire:

The wars followed the British discovery that the opium they were producing in vast quantities in India could be lucratively sold on in China, where opium use had been well-established for centuries but imports were prohibited by the Emperor. When the Chinese authorities attempted to seize the British imports, the British enforced the traffic with gunboats, burned down the Summer Palace in Peking and forced the Emperor to sign treaties opening up ‘free trade’ enclaves (such as Hong Kong) where the British opium supply could be protected.... In these first Wars on Drugs, the roles were the reverse of today’s: Britain was in effect the Medellín cartel, ruthlessly enforcing their prohibited trade with violence, while China was cast in the role of the modern West, powerless to prevent illicit substances from being smuggled across their borders by gangsters. (70)

² Trafficking is also a good example of how one of these thematics can influence materially the development of the other. The fact that South American coca leaves, for example, are too bulky for transport led directly to their refinement into the much more potent cocaine. Similarly, banning the relatively unwieldy opium poppy led to its distillation into a much more compact (and dangerous) form: heroin. And to reverse the lines of influence, drug use in the sixties inspired a particular brand of travel, a countercultural politics of mobility abroad – what Sadie Plant calls “trips to Mexico and trails to India” (126) – still evident today in various incarnations. The sub-sub-genre of drug-smuggling literature suggests a “tripping” study of its own. A genre popular throughout the twentieth century, it includes early sensationalist works such as Sax Rohmer’s *Dope* (1919) and his Fu Manchu novels, Henry de Montfried’s *Hashish: A Smuggler’s Tale* (1935), Jerry Kamstra’s *Weed: Adventures of a Dope Smuggler* (1974), Richard Stratton’s *Smack Goddess* (1990), and Howard Marks’ *Mr. Nice* (1997). Twentieth-first-century incarnations include thrillers like Graham Joyce’s *Smoking Poppy* (2002), John Burdett’s *Bangkok 8* (2003), and Don Henry Ford’s lavishly titled *Contrabando: Confessions of a Drug-Smuggling Texas Cowboy* (2005).

intoxication.³ In this first use of the term, then, “tripping” is simply a generic label, and to examine “tripping” is to examine what Terence McKenna refers to as a “pharmopicaresque” (163) tradition and what Brian Musgrove (whom I discuss in Chapter Three) develops in more detail as the “narco-travelogue.”

My second use of the term “tripping” implies a more complex, mutually determining relationship between the two component themes. The literatures of “tripping” enact prosopopeia. They make visible what is intangible or otherwise difficult to represent. They encode intoxication in terms of travel, or they evoke travel in response to intoxication. Prosopopeia is especially relevant to “tripping” because, as Paul de Man reminds us, “prosopopeia is hallucinatory” (49). More than just a generic definition, “tripping” – to travel and to intoxicate, to trip and to trip – offers a map of the complex and unstable ways different texts represent one thematic in order to understand the other. In some texts, drugs present a disturbing risk to stable identity that needs to be assuaged using neo- or quasi-imperial conceptions of travel. In other texts, mobility poses the real problem – imperilling the traveler with personal or cultural disruption – and requires a particular understanding of drugs to temper that anxiety. My position on “tripping” is one which acknowledges the dynamic relationship between the threats and the anodynes “tripping” poses to the self. Mapping that relationship with an eye on how the

³ While it too would require a study of its own, there is nonetheless a growing body of recent non-fiction travelogues that offer fascinating explorations of “tripping.” Kevin Rushby’s *Eating the Flowers of Paradise* (1999) is an account of the author’s journey through Yemen and Ethiopia sampling qat, the leaves of a mildly stimulating shrub. Sylvia Fraser’s *The Green Labyrinth* (2003) is a chronicle – reminiscent of William S. Burroughs’ *The Yage Letters* (1963), which I discuss in Chapter Two – into the Amazon for ayahuasca, a concoction made from hallucinogenic vines. Christopher Cox’s *Chasing the Dragon: Into the Heart of the Gold Triangle* (1996) and Wade Davis’ *One River* (1996) are more reportorial examples of travelogues in which drugs (heroin and hallucinogenic plants, respectively) figure prominently. Henri Michaux’s travel book *Ecuador* (1929), which describes at one point the effects of ether, and Walter Benjamin’s short rambles through European cities on hashish (collected in *Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934* [1996]) are two of an earlier generation’s non-fictional “tripping” texts.

particularities of each text inflect the ambivalence of “tripping” will provide, over the course of this study, a nuanced guide to how travel and drugs influence one another.

“Tripping,” therefore, functions as a conceptual tool, as a combinatorial model that, like Jacques Derrida’s notion of the assemblage, is a “bringing-together [that] has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together” (“Différance” 132). The threads of this assemblage consist of different representations of travel and drugs that map a series of hermeneutical or perceptual concerns about alterity, subjectivity, imagination, utopia, excess, pleasure, form, and genre. This study is both about examples of drugs and travel coming together and about the conceptual consequences of such propinquity. My analysis will trace the continuities in the genealogy of “tripping,” but it will also seek discontinuities, ruptures, and reversals, and this discussion will provide new ways to think about the relationship between altering consciousness and changing perceptions of travel.

Because of a strangely common (and, in my opinion, scurrilous) assumption that a literary analysis of drugs must necessarily be irresponsibly celebratory, an assumption that crops up because, as Maurizio Viano writes, “Merely raising the topic with any attitude other than condemnation is itself bound to create problems” (153), I should clarify further my approach to this component of *Psychedelic Trips*. First, the present version of the attitude Viano identifies stems in large part from Nancy Reagan’s striking efforts in the 1980s to close down debate with her famous injunction “Just Say No.” Aside from the fact that inculcating a rote response – don’t think about it, *just* say no – represents a remarkable obstacle to intellectual and scientific investigation, cultivated

ignorance is also an egregiously irresponsible and unethical reaction to substances that can, in certain circumstances, be very dangerous. I therefore stand alongside an increasingly vocal group of scholars positioned in opposition to the powerful impetus to keep quiet about the subject. The blanket condemnation of drugs emblemized by “Just Say No” rests upon a bizarre and even outrageous epistemological assumption about this subject. Part of the comprehensive delegitimation of drugs comes from a presumption of knowledge, a presumption C.S. Ferns pokes fun at in the easy dismissal of Aldous Huxley’s mescaline experiments: Huxley is not worth listening to because he talks about mescaline, and “Mescaline is a drug – and we all know about drugs” (211). The self-righteous attitude Ferns mocks here rests upon a remarkable conjecture: drugs are one of the few things in the phenomenal world which we (*all* of us!) can grasp immediately and in their entirety. Why waste time, then, even thinking about them?⁴

The absurdity of this position seems self-evident. Sociology and anthropology have only recently revealed the ubiquitous, trans-historical presence in human culture of drug use and the desire to experience altered states of consciousness – what it is doing there is still a mystery – and the true scope of recreational use of illegal drugs in the contemporary general population is still unknown. Despite the dark regions of shame and silence to which they have been banished, drugs have complex histories and overdetermined meanings that need coaxing out. A sustained analysis of this oft-derogated subject can, I hope, contribute to clearing up the misconceptions and derision

⁴ In an unusually straightforward paragraph, Deleuze and Guattari criticize the cultivated ignorance of anti-drug sentiment: “There is a discourse on drugs current today [and, alas, still current over twenty years after the French publication of *Mille Plateaux*] that does no more than dredge up generalities on pleasure and misfortune, on difficulties in communication, on causes that always come from somewhere else. The more incapable people are of grasping a specific causality in extension, the more they pretend to understand the phenomenon in question” (283).

that fogs contemporary understandings of drugs and to overcoming the reigning moralistic and, as Stuart Walton puts it, “guilt-encrusted” (259) attitude toward these substances and behaviors. Such attitudes, after all, mean that drug use “remains, even in the face of its virtual universality, something that we have to pretend we don’t do, or at least not deliberately, or at least not very often, or at least only after we have done a decent day’s work” (75). Clearly, there is a lot left to learn about drugs despite (indeed *because of*) the prevailing assumption that we know everything. Drugs, after all, provide an alterity that often gets overlooked by a critical focus on racial or sexual otherness. The epistemological questions I have suggested inform travel can thus be illuminated by the vexed relationship drugs have with knowledge: they are at once a source of forgetfulness and silence and a source of revelation (*in vino veritas*, as the saying goes).

Secondly, and to state an obvious point that often gets lost in the moral hysteria surrounding this subject, altering consciousness, despite its obvious potential dangers, can also be harmless or even helpful. While I refuse to condemn drugs before the fact and contribute to a most pernicious form of prohibition – the shutting down of all discourse about drugs except the purely disparaging – I also refuse to romanticize drugs. Romanticization is, as Viano suggests, the “second worst thing after prohibition” (155). This project is neither a celebration of drugs nor a thoughtless dismissal of them because of their potential danger. As Avital Ronell notes in *Crack Wars*, her important work on the ontology of “being on drugs,” “it is as preposterous to be ‘for’ drugs as it is to take up a position ‘against’ drugs” (50). Similarly, literary representations of drugs are too complex for a polemical argument. Some of the texts I discuss offer unqualified celebrations of drugs, while others offer a long series of qualifications. Still others

condemn drugs, either overtly or in the guise of celebrating them. Representations of drugs are therefore not nearly as straightforward as they are assumed to be by well-meaning people who claim studying drugs is a waste of time because everyone knows what drugs mean.

I also pause here to register my skepticism of the discourses of legality and illegality that claim to reflect a substance's capacity for harm or a society's prevailing moral attitude toward that substance. The illegality of certain substances and behaviors is often taken for granted, but as many studies in this area have demonstrated, the seemingly unbreakable bond between drugs and criminality is in fact historically and culturally contingent.⁵ These studies have demonstrated that government and media representations over the last hundred years or so have fused drugs and drug-using behavior into what Stuart Walton calls a "cruelly undifferentiated model," a "collective, hypostasized Drugs" (154) wherein addiction and ruin are inevitable, and criminalization is the only sane solution. According to Richard Klein, this relatively recent form of repression "began by

⁵ Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards' *Opium and the People: Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), which delineates how opium use became deviant during that period thanks, in part, to racist policies enacted against the Chinese immigrants, is a ground-breaking generalist study that makes this argument. More recently, Mike Jay's *Emperors of Dreams: Drugs in the Nineteenth Century* (Sawtry, U.K.: Dedalus, 2000) provides another astute overview of how opium, cannabis, cocaine, mescaline, and other substances came to be so "easily dismissed as reckless self-indulgence, juvenile aberration or deviant pathology" (11). On alcohol, see Thomas B. Gilmore's *Equivocal Spirits: Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1987); Donald W. Goodwin's *Alcohol and the Writer* (New York: Penguin, 1988); Tom Dardis' *The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989); John Crowley's *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1994); and Marty Roth's *Drunk the Night Before: An Anatomy of Intoxication* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005). All discuss alcohol's changing formulations in social, historical, literary, and cultural contexts, including – in their focus on American literature and culture – the Eighteenth and Twenty-First Amendments concerning prohibition. On LSD, see Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain's account in *Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD, and the Sixties Rebellion* (New York: Grove, 1985) of how LSD, which showed great promise in treating schizophrenia and alcoholism following its synthesis in 1938, became a demon in the public imagination following covert and often illegal CIA experiments and the great countercultural experiment of the 1960s. On cigarettes, see Richard Klein's *Cigarettes are Sublime* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993), an inquiry into how smoking went from ubiquitous and celebrated to maligned, persecuted, and now virtually unspeakable in less than fifty years.

seizing and manipulating the attribution of the word *drug*, defining it narrowly and abusively extending its connotations to a vast variety of substances” (191). At the same time, such totalization fails to account for the legitimate health and social concerns raised by some drugs. For instance, despite the fact that “Only a small minority of drug use is what is currently termed ‘problematic,’ that is, leads to wrecked health, antisocial behavior and a drain on public finances” (Walton 12), the substance that, by an overwhelming majority, results in these social problems is a legal one: alcohol.⁶ Furthermore, the ubiquity of the phrase “drugs *and* alcohol,” for example, reflects the tenacious and confused supposition that because it is legal alcohol is not a drug at all.

Citing illegality to foreclose any possibility of interrogating these intoxicants within their respective histories makes it nearly impossible, as David Farber writes, “to understand why certain substances that affected mind and body, such as tobacco and alcoholic beverages, were legal and widespread and others, like marijuana and LSD, were illegal” (38 n. 13). Criminalization, rather unusual before 1900, has become the norm and, for some, even a patriotic duty following several U.S. government administrations’ so-called Wars on Drugs. Following the “profanation” (Tupper 505) of drugs in the late sixties, a curious relationship between the legality and morality of certain substances developed: drugs have to be illegal because they are bad, and we know they are bad because they are illegal. Despite the absurdity of this construction, these substances retain their moral taint and their purported worthlessness as objects of inquiry. Through the reefer madness of the 1930s, the ascendancy of the medical model of drug use during

⁶ In his chapter on alcohol, Jay mentions the damage done by introducing that substance to indigenous cultures in the Americas, the Pacific, and Australia who were unfamiliar with it, noting, “the lesson of history was unambiguous: that dozens, maybe hundreds of societies had been destroyed by alcohol, but it was hard to point to any plausible example of a society being destroyed by any other drug” (225).

the decade Robert Lowell called the “tranquillized *Fifties*” (“Memories of West Street and Lepke” line 12), the psychedelia of the sixties, the Wars on Drugs of the 1980s, and the war-and-drugs of U.S. military interventions in Colombia and Afghanistan, we have traversed multiple and ever-changing terrains of drug sensibilities. Our corresponding epistemological reconfigurations, however, only seem to conceal as much as they reveal.

To address these issues in light of travel, this study follows a roughly bi-partite approach suggested by the ambivalence of the *pharmakon* – the unification of “poison” and “cure” that I will discuss in Chapter Two and that underlies many conceptions of drugs. Each subsequent chapter looks at a series of key thematics through different but related facets of “tripping.” Because this study (and much recent thinking about drugs) was inspired in part by Aldous Huxley – a man from Surrey who took mescaline in California under the supervision of an English psychiatrist working at the time in Saskatchewan – the authors I study are multinational: British, American, and Canadian. The border-hopping that inheres in the concept of “tripping” makes limiting this study by categories of national literature difficult. I analyze diverse and non-canonical texts for the same reason Lawrence Driscoll does in his analysis of drugs, an analysis that tellingly contains a spatial metaphor in its subtitle (*Mapping Victorian and Modern Drug Discourse*): “I have had to choose an eclectic range of texts and discourses because the roots of our drug discourse are far from localized” (x). The roots of drug discourse, like the routes of contemporary travelers and the intellectual routes “tripping” takes, are mobile and global – far, in other words, from localized.

Part I of *Psychedelic Trips* consists of a double introduction. Chapter Two establishes key approaches to travel and drugs, sets up some of the most important

theoretical foundations of “tripping” as a hybrid concept, and introduces some of the key textual and thematic issues with which “tripping” will engage. It draws on some of Mark Simpson’s discussion of the dialectic between disciplined and subversive travel as well as some of John Urry’s and Dean MacCannell’s deconstructive insights into the tourist identity. It juxtaposes these threads with Avital Ronell’s and Jacques Derrida’s articulations of the semiotics of drugs. The “tripping” lens I construct allows for provisional glimpses of how one representation – of travel or of drugs – can be deployed to understand the other. Chapter Three offers a concrete complement to Chapter Two, setting up an analysis of post-sixties literature via a detour through pre-sixties literature. There, I discuss two sets of foundations, those of Aldous Huxley and those of William S. Burroughs, that inform “tripping” and that predate and fuel the American countercultural movement of the 1960s. Huxley’s famous accounts of his experiences with mescaline, *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), offer an influential basis for contemporary understandings of the psychedelized self as well as the utopian potential (and its paradoxes) by which we comprehend “tripping.” To Huxley I compare Burroughs’ travel narrative *The Yage Letters* (1963), something of a stark contrast but an important one for delineating counterculturalism. In recounting his search for a hallucinogenic vine in South America, Burroughs uses travel and drugs to articulate the individualism that would become a cornerstone of both the countercultural mode and a profoundly consumerist model of twentieth- and twenty-first-century tourism and drug tourism. I also begin my genealogy of “tripping” with these texts of ambiguous fictional status in order to foreground the self-reflexivity and generic instability of novels about

“tripping.” Discussing these two figures is the first of several two-pronged analyses of post-countercultural subjectivity and “tripping.”

In each of the two remaining parts of this study, I pair off novels on thematic grounds, treating each in separate chapters: Huxley’s *Island* (1962) and Alex Garland’s *The Beach* (1997) in Part II, and Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) and Robert Sedlack’s *The African Safari Papers* (2001) in Part III.⁷ Part II looks at constructions of drugs as agents in the consolidation of exclusive or elitist traveling identities and relates them to utopia as a spatial construct. In addition to various theorists of utopia, I draw on Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja to nuance these discussions of spatiality. Chapter Four, employing Huxley’s own psychedelic framework, explores the relations between psychedelia and the enclosed island utopia in his final novel *Island*. Chapter Five, indebted to theorizations of tourism by Urry, MacCannell, and Graham Huggan, discusses Garland’s bestselling novel and, by joining David Lenson’s theorization of cannabis to Richard Klein’s view of nicotine, explores the ways in which the novel satirizes the drug-inflected ethos of contemporary backpackers and their ironic (anti)utopian travel impulses. In both novels, drugs are integral to the construction and the failure of utopian spaces.

Part III situates “tripping” in a comparative transatlantic context by shifting focus from British authors to North American ones. Chapter Six engages with Marianne DeKoven’s and Manuel Luis Martinez’s recent discussions of Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. I inflect the theoretical models of space outlined earlier with Thompson’s simultaneous critique of sixties idealism and his opening up, via drugs, of

⁷ The achronological presentation of these texts reflects my interest in discussing different facets of a conceptual lens rather than providing a historical narrative. To employ a different metaphor, Part II and Part III are variations on a theme.

ways of reading Las Vegas as potentially radical space. Chapter Seven argues that Sedlack's *The African Safari Papers*, as a direct conceptual and thematic descendent of Thompson's work, embodies Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "becoming-animal" to reformulate drug ingestion and its accompanying perception of safari animals. While Sedlack's novel also suggests possibilities for radical reconceptions of space and identity in a post-tourist era, I conclude Chapter Seven with a discussion of the impediments to this creative reformation thrown up by his assumptions of masculinist privilege.

These texts are particularly interesting engagements with those thematics integral to the concept of "tripping," but they are of course not intended to exclude other texts from consideration under this paradigm. For example, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), Tom Wolfe's account of the Merry Pranksters' cross-country LSD-fuelled travels, could be appropriate, as would much Vietnam War-themed fiction such as Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers* (1973). Because recent fiction about young travelers frequently features drug use, a number of novels would suit a discussion of "tripping," including William Sutcliffe's *Are You Experienced?* (1997), Tess Fragoulis' *Ariadne's Dream* (2001), Emily Barr's *Backpack* (2001), Will Rhode's *Paperback Original* (2002), T. Coraghessan Boyle's *Drop City* (2003), or Max Ludington's *Tiger in a Trance* (2003). Fragoulis' and Barr's novels signal an especially notable omission from my study: texts by women authors. Obviously, this omission does not mean women are incapable of "real" travel or of writing about travel, nor does "the overrepresentation of male authors in the pharmaco-pantheon" (Lenson xv) necessarily reinforce a primness or propriety in women that means nice girls don't do drugs. Instead, my focus on male authors

highlights a key facet of “tripping”: the masculine privilege, both implied and claimed, in the construction of travel spaces and identities. Because women authors experience travel, drugs, and “tripping” differently from men for a host of biological and cultural reasons, it is perhaps the case that women writers deserve a study of their own, one that lies outside the scope of this one.

In engaging with the vexed relationships between the self and intoxication as depicted in travel fiction from the 1950s onward, this study offers a series of examples of how one thematic enters, filters, or otherwise alters the other. You travel while tripping, or you trip instead of traveling. You take a drug, or it takes you (somewhere else). What and how these formulations signify constitute the map for this journey.

PART I: SET AND SETTING

Chapter 2

Theorizing “Tripping”

My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters,
nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying
our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of.
But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus
was unwilling to take any message back, or to go
away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating
people, feeding on the lotus, and forget the way home. I myself
took these men back weeping, by force, to where the ships were,
and put them aboard under the rowing benches and tied them
fast, then gave the order to the rest of my eager
companions to embark on the ships in haste, for fear
someone else might taste of the lotus and forget the way home

--Homer's *Odyssey* (Book 9, lines 91-102; trans. Lattimore)

He was named Aloadin, and his religion was that of Mahomet. In a beautiful valley enclosed between two lofty mountains, he had formed a luxurious garden, stored with every delicious fruit and every fragrant shrub that could be procured. Palaces of various sizes and forms were erected in different parts of the grounds, ornamented with works in gold, with paintings, and with furniture of rich silks. By means of small conduits contrived in these buildings, streams of wine, milk, honey, and some of pure water, were seen to flow in every direction.

The inhabitants of these palaces were elegant and beautiful damsels, accomplished in the arts of singing, playing upon all sorts of musical instruments, dancing, and especially those of dalliance and amorous allurement....

In order that none without his license might find their way into this delicious valley, he caused a strong and inexpugnable castle to be erected at the opening of it, through which the entry was by a secret passage. At his court, likewise, this chief entertained a number of youths, from the age of twelve to twenty years, ... who showed a disposition for martial exercises, and appeared to possess the quality of daring courage.... And at certain times he caused opium to be administered to ten or a dozen of the youths; and when half dead with sleep he had them conveyed to the several apartments of the palaces in the garden....

Upon awakening from the state of stupor, their senses were struck with all the delightful objects that have been described, and each perceived himself surrounded by lovely damsels, singing, playing, and attracting his regards by the most fascinating caresses, serving him also with delicate foods and exquisite wines; until intoxicated with excess of enjoyment amidst actual rivulets of milk and wine, he believed himself assuredly in Paradise...

When four or five days had thus been passed, they were thrown once more into a drugged state, and carried out of the garden....

The consequence of this system was, that when any of the neighboring princes, or others, gave offence to this chief, they were put to death by these his disciplined assassins; none of whom felt terror at the risk of losing their own lives...

--*The Travels of Marco Polo* (Book I, chapters 23 and 24)

As prominent travel narratives considered integral to Western literature and culture, Homer's *Odyssey* and Marco Polo's *Travels* disclose quite clearly the weight of

travel in our cultural baggage. “Travel,” Eric Leed contends, “is the paradigmatic ‘experience,’ the model of a direct and genuine experience, which transforms the person having it” (5). The journey motif is so central to the inquiry into knowledge of self and other that we often take its transformative power and its authority for granted. Stashed, however, in Western culture’s travel baggage, including in the excerpts I cite above, are some stimulating and often overlooked contraband: the intriguing and mutable roles of intoxicating substances. What are drugs doing here? If travel is a commonplace metaphor for addressing many fundamental epistemological and ontological questions, why are drugs, which so often appear alongside travel, dismissed and so often represented as dismissible? Moreover, what do drugs have to do with travel?

As Marcus Boon points out in *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs*, 1937 saw Harry J. Anslinger, commissioner of the Federal Narcotics Bureau of the United States, cite the *Odyssey* and the *Travels* in making his case to the government for a prohibitive taxation regime that would effectively criminalize cannabis. “The drug is as old as civilization itself,” Anslinger claimed.

Homer wrote about it, as a drug which made men forget their homes, and that turned them into swine. In Persia, a thousand years before Christ, there was a religious and military order founded which was called the Assassins, and they derived their name from the drug called hashish which is now known in this country as marihuana. They were noted for their acts of cruelty and the word ‘assassin’ very aptly describes the drug. (US. Congress)

Boon points out that Anslinger, in addition to pushing the date of the Persian myth back two thousand years, takes some liberties in his effort to caution lawmakers against the oblivion and murderous aggression in store for those foolish enough to ingest mind-altering substances: “Neither of Homer’s plants has any known connection with cannabis” (123-4), Boon explains, and Anslinger’s appropriation of Marco Polo’s version

of the myth ignores its lengthy history of Orientalist interpretation and elaboration.⁸ Despite Anslinger's infelicities, Boon qualifies his argument about Anslinger's demonization of cannabis: "Although it was disingenuously convenient for Anslinger and company to exploit this literature regarding cannabis, and to create out of it a framework of criminality, it was no less disingenuous for writers to use cannabis as a way of framing up and selling the realm of the imagination in which they were so heavily invested" (169). In other words, the discourse of criminalization that claims drug use usurps mastery over one's own mind and freedom can easily be modulated to express its opposite: drugs function as a hortatory index of one's devotion to artistic creativity or spiritual and literal exploration, to say nothing of its value in expressing countercultural cachet.

Boon's analysis of Anslinger, astute as it is, does not explore why the dualities we find readily in drug discourse are so intricately intertwined with travel and how the two thematics influence one another. He thus overlooks a host of questions about space, subjectivity, alterity, and perception. Travel is fundamentally about the attempt to understand the other through a process of encounter and consumption, but what happens when that process is joined by mood- or mind-altering substances? What about otherness that can be assimilated through the fraught processes of ingestion, inhalation, or injection? What about otherness that can be, in the words of David Lenson, "as close as one's own bloodstream" (*On Drugs* 11)? How does that otherness affect our understanding of the spaces we travel through and the cultural otherness we encounter

⁸ As suggested by William Marsden's translation of the *Travels* (quoted above), the drug may have in fact been opium, but an 1809 revision of the myth of Hasan-i Sabbah (another name for the Old Man of the Mountain Polo calls Aloadin) by French Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy posits hashish as the drug of choice and offers the etymological footnote Anslinger rehearses.

there? This study is about the complex relationships between the pleasures and the horrors of traveling on drugs.⁹

In Homer's account, the intoxicating lotus flowers threaten to interrupt the journey by limiting the mobility of the traveler and imperilling his travel narrative with poisonous forgetfulness. As such, they help constitute a cautionary tale akin to contemporary narratives linking drugs to border-crossing privileges: if you try to take drugs over the border, arrest will follow. Paradigmatic, self-defining travel must be guarded, Anslinger would say, against the drug's ability to halt the trip. Meanwhile, Homer's representation of drugs, as with many texts where drugs and travel come together, highlights a curious twist on what Mark Simpson calls the "orthodox sense of mobility's liberating power" (128). For Odysseus' men, travel is *compelled* mobility to which they must submit despite the fact that staying with the lotus-eaters and partaking of their "honey-sweet" existence has tremendous appeal, especially when the alternative is being chained, weeping, to the rowing benches. In other words, Anslinger (who has proven surprisingly influential in developing contemporary attitudes toward drugs) is suspicious of the pleasure and relief offered by the flowers because they suspend a predetermined and compulsory journey. They threaten to disrupt an enforced return to that most sacrosanct and nostalgic determiner of identity: home. Anslinger's distrust of intoxication as Homer represents it thus reveals his investment in compulsory mobility as the means to knowledge and certainty. Travel cannot be interrupted for any reason, because such interruption could threaten the required return home.

⁹ I wish to avoid, as a matter of course, the suggestion that otherness is a transcendental, dehistoricized, hegemonic category. I tend to use it somewhat abstractly in this study, so I emphasize here its diversity, its multivalencies, its contradictions, its pluralities, and the paradoxical strains of familiarity it harbors.

Anslinger's use of the Hasan-i Sabbah myth is both consistent and inconsistent with his use of Homer: consistent, because drugs in that myth disrupt originary identity and turn the young men into assassins; inconsistent, because Polo's account reveals an even stronger reliance upon drugs for understanding travel. Drugs in the myth are an essential component of the kind of mobility the young men experience. Hasan-i Sabbah's mountain enclosure is highly structured and designed to restrict yet functions potentially to prompt political action. The boys' trip into paradise and then out again leaves them willing to do anything for the chance to die heroically and return to what they think is heaven. Intoxication allows for their initial transport into physical paradise and serves as inspiration for a future trip, *enabling* movement instead of aborting it as it does in *The Odyssey*. The process of relating travel to intoxication again undermines conventional notions of the freedom of mobility, but it mobilizes in other ways.

Drugs in the myth, instead of offering oblivion, consolidate the boys' identities as honourable killers by helping them to produce a particular kind of space.¹⁰ Drugs allow them to overlook the inescapable boundaries of their mountain prison and their enforced mobility, substituting instead a paradisiacal realm and the potential for political action. Unlike Odysseus' men, these boys do not weep as they are transported. What they think they know about their situation and the spaces in which they find themselves – their epistemological state – come about as a result of traveling while high. The space they inhabit is entirely dependent upon how the boys conceive of it, how the minds doing the conceiving are altered by chemical agents, and how those reconceptualizations affect their production of space. Henri Lefebvre, whose landmark study *The Production of*

¹⁰ Of course, the myth is heavily dependent upon Orientalist constructions – ever-present today – of the fanatical Muslim killer, but for the sake of this argument, my point is that traveling while high has the ability to produce (at least temporarily) stable, defined identities.

Space addresses the fact that “To speak of ‘producing space’ sounds bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it” (15), provides some helpful formulations here. He articulates at length the process by which “[t]he quasi-logical presupposition of an identity between mental space ... and real space creates an abyss between the mental sphere on one side and the physical or social sphere on the other” (6) and postulates theories to bridge that abyss. In “tripping” literature, the spaces of travel are simultaneously produced out of the physical (e.g. the drug economy and drug phenomenology) and the metaphysical (e.g. being-on-drugs).

The tales Anslinger uses in his anti-cannabis campaign exemplify some of the ambivalences that structure the itinerary of this study. Travel for Homer is enthralling and enriching yet must never endanger the return home, so intoxication becomes a dangerous distraction and another obstacle Odysseus must surmount at the same time that it is a source of pleasure and relief for his exhausted sailors. Mobility in the Hasan-i Sabbah myth is likewise forced and deceptive, yet the results are pleasurable and formative, so drugs become both an index of violent fanaticism and a glimpse of paradise. The relationship between representations of travel and representation of mind-alteration are dynamic, unpredictable, and frequently result in paradoxical manifestations of the ambivalences of “tripping.”

Anslinger’s pursuit of prohibition in 1937 was, by most accounts, rooted in fear and confusion, but it was also integral to defining twentieth-century drug regulation and, by extension, contemporary relations to drugs and intoxication. Coincidentally, 1937 is the same year Aldous Huxley moved permanently to the United States and began the process of becoming another, though very different, influential figure in the development

of American counterculture. The confluence of these two events indicates that the conditions would soon be right for a vociferous debate in the U.S. between a burgeoning drug culture and an equally fanatical opposition, a debate that has proven definitive in the relationship between drugs, travel, and late twentieth-century subjectivity. Along with growing mass tourism, post-World War II affluence produced a new consumer economy that raised standards of living to unprecedented levels and, at the same time, fomented a new anxiety over consumption that would mesh in intriguing ways with anxieties over the large-scale consumption of drugs. Anslinger's interest in Homer's and Marco Polo's representations of travel and drugs, coupled with Huxley's arrival and psychedelic revolution, highlights the importance of travel and drugs in engaging with idealistic yet perpetually ambivalent countercultural identity. This study thus originates in Huxley's seminal trip across the Atlantic and the subsequent cultural revolution he helped spawn as well as Anslinger's use of travel literature in the construction of a U.S. anti-drug policy that would eventually be partly responsible for the demise of sixties counterculture.

As Homer and the myth of Hasan-I Sabbah suggest, the confluence of travel and drugs is a transhistorical, transgeographical phenomenon, but I focus my analysis on the latter half of the twentieth century because of these converging historical phenomena. Following Huxley and Anslinger, electronic mediation, affordable high-speed mass transportation, transnational capital – all of which contribute to a phenomenon David Harvey terms time-space compression – produced exceptional juxtaposition and dislocation.¹¹ Such innovations in transportation and communication technologies have produced a postmodern, postindustrial self who, as part of the collapse of the opposing

¹¹ See especially Part III, "The experience of space and time," of Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry in the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990).

poles of reality and simulation as Jean Baudrillard has outlined them, exists in the realm of the hyperreal simulation. “[N]othing,” writes Baudrillard, “separates one pole from another anymore, the beginning from the end; there is a kind of contraction of one over the other, a fantastic telescoping, a collapse of the two traditional poles into each other: *implosion ... That is where simulation begins*” (31).¹² Travel writers’ efforts to reflect upon, interrogate, and respond to these global changes have, over the past several decades, resulted in an explosion in their popularity, illustrating how strongly time-space compression and other markers of postmodernity prompt cravings for sustained critical analyses of the traveling subject in global contexts. This period is thus foundational to a study of “tripping,” but at the same time, the sixties is well-known territory, and I believe more can be gained by looking obliquely at the sixties than by generating another historical assessment.¹³ In tracing the inauguration of the sixties and responses to its counterculture, the decade itself becomes a powerful afterimage, like the very substances considered central to the decade. When LSD and other hallucinogens began achieving critical mass in the public consciousness in the early sixties only to become illegal by the late sixties, they became history’s blinding flash, pulsing into (officially sanctioned) existence only momentarily but having momentous and lingering effects. I therefore focus first on the genealogy of countercultural conceptions of travel and drugs, then on responses to those conceptions, challenging in this way the centrality of the

¹² All quotations of Baudrillard are from *Simulacra and Simulation*, unless otherwise noted.

¹³ Examples of such narratives of literary history, drawn from the large industry of sixties scholarship, include Morris Dickstein’s *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (1977) and *Leopards in the Temple: The Transformation of American Fiction, 1945-1970* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), Philip D. Biedler’s *Scripture for a Generation: What We Were Reading in the ‘60s* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994), and Marianne DeKoven’s *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

counterculture itself to the articulation of “tripping” and, in the process, attempting to move beyond the “hippie trails” clichés.

Because psychedelics were the drugs of choice for the counterculture during the sixties, the period I place (off)center in this study, my focus falls on texts that depict the use of psychedelic or quasi-psychedelic drugs. When Humphrey Osmond coined the term “psychedelic” in a 1956 letter to Aldous Huxley, he was aiming to capture what he felt were the “mind-manifesting” effects of the drug (the word is from the Greek: *psyche*, mind or soul; and *delos*, show). For him, LSD and psilocybin did not introduce, as if they were contaminants, unnatural hallucinations. Instead, they manifested – that is, made perceptible and, from the point of view of the senses, seemingly material – what was already latent in the mind. They gave spatial dimensions to strange modes of cognition and lavish mental imagery, which prompts the interest in spatiality in this study.¹⁴ They also produce subjective experiences that frequently coincide with many characteristics of postmodernism (disjunctions, surrealism, altered perceptions of space and time, and so on), emphasizing their connection to the subjectivities of postmodernity. I will therefore use the term “drug” to designate *primarily* a psychedelic and the term “intoxication” to designate an experience with one of those drugs.¹⁵ Encounters with

¹⁴ Huxley liked Osmond’s term, but his own preference was for “phanerothyme,” which similarly means “spirit-manifesting.” The more recent term “entheogen” is taken to mean “manifesting the God within.” In any case, these designations turn drugs into catalysts for bringing out what is already locked away inside. The exchange between Huxley and Osmond hints at the terminological wrangling that has long been central to describing drugs.

¹⁵ The terminology with which we talk about drugs significantly helps determine the nature of our subjective experience with them and the moral registers into which those experiences are cast. For instance, Mike Jay notes that in 1914 in the United States cocaine “was attached to the bill which prohibited the retail sale of ‘narcotics’: even though it’s a stimulant, the opposite of a narcotic, it was hurriedly reclassified as one, a nomenclature which has persisted in American legalese to this day” (182-3). A “narcotic,” with its connotations of lassitude, indigence, and oblivion, seems more morally suspect (especially in light of the Protestant work ethic so central to American identity) than a “stimulant,” with its connotations of animation, liveliness, and fervidity, and is thus easier to prohibit. Similarly, Jay points to “modern mushroom guides, where psychedelic fungi are simply classified as ‘toxic’” (189). The

substances that produce fairly radical shifts in consciousness or cognition (mescaline, ayahuasca, psilocybin, cannabis, LSD, and so on) tend to prompt that process of “translation” into spatial dimensions in order to be understood.

For the most part, legal drugs such as pharmaceuticals, caffeine, alcohol, or nicotine (with the exception of a major point in Chapter Five) play small roles in this study, since their legality helps minimize the moralizing accretions and mystifying exoticism that adhere so readily to illegal substances. Because these drugs are legal, we take for granted their ubiquity, harmlessness, and banality, and we tend to foreclose forms of understanding outside discourses of legality. I maintain that such rigidity still needs interrogating, but doing so lies beyond the scope of a study preoccupied with examining the resonances between purportedly mysterious, exotic, illegal drugs and the mysteries, exoticisms, and transgressions of border-crossing. I also exclude, for the most part, those drugs that give rise to addiction: narcotics (barbiturates, heroin), for example, and stimulants (methamphetamine, cocaine). Since Avital Ronell’s study of the logics of addiction and narcosis, these latter categories of substances have already produced extensive and fascinating bodies of thought and literature to which I am indebted but which I do not wish to revisit in detail here. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, the late twentieth century, following the development in the 1950s of a novel set of “intuitions about commodity fetishism” (135), “turn[s] out to be the site of the epidemic of addiction and addiction attribution” (135). As a result, the contours and nuances of addiction this field has explored have been tremendously useful in understanding drugs

physiological effects of these mushrooms are the same to mushroom gatherers as they are to “drug-users,” but interpreting those effects (and the activities that produce them in the first place) changes with terminology. The context within which drugs are taken, what Timothy Leary famously called “set and setting,” depends heavily on terminology and determines the texture of the experience itself.

and intoxication, but because of the relative extensiveness of this aspect of the field and because of the persistent tendency in the popular imagination to accept addiction as the paradigmatic drug experience, I am reluctant to provide another meditation on addiction. Instead, I examine the less frequently discussed literary representations of psychedelics, constructing in the process an assemblage, which I have termed “tripping,” that focuses on the psychedelic drug experience.¹⁶

Prior to articulating the theoretical framework that both compels this study and that will be inflected, modified, or simply questioned by the texts I discuss, I wish to outline in detail some of the issues “tripping” puts at stake. One such issue concerns the problem of the traveler’s subjectivity. Setting out on the road, travelers experience profoundly conflicted subjectivity because travel – with its interrogative border controls and its cultural dislocations of the “nobody knows me here” vein – throws categories of knowledge into question. Mobility itself is disorienting, as Michel Foucault suggests in his discussion of how the discovery of Galilean infinitude affected medieval notions of place: “a thing’s place was no longer anything but a point in its movement just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down” (23). Our realization of the perpetual motion and uncertainty of the cosmos was one of the central destabilizing agents of modernity. This notion stands in contrast to the received idea that travel produces a stable self, that a trip “out there” is a metaphor for an inner journey of self-discovery – an orthodoxy that persists despite being questioned and undermined by roughly thirty years of deconstructive postcolonial criticism. Such criticism argues that while the privileged vantage point of the colonial self constructs the indigenous other,

¹⁶ Despite this generality, I will nonetheless occasionally loosen my use of the term and allow “tripping” to include drunkenness, narcotization, and addiction.

that self is unexpectedly altered and shaped by encounters with those peripheral subjects it purports to define.¹⁷ The uncertain interdependence of traveler and native often results in what Alison Russell, in her study of postmodern travel writing, calls “dislocation, disorientation, and distortion” (34).

As such, travel can be a countercultural activity. Travelers seek out the unknown and the potentially disturbing, trying – and failing and succeeding to varying degrees – to expand the realm of the known without rupturing it. But the risk of rupture is always there. The exchange of cultural ideas can threaten one’s notions of propriety or normalcy. Travel also tends disturbingly to force private behavior into the public sphere. Confounding categories of the known and the unknown, us and them, here and there, and center and margin allows travel to re-imagine or explode the boundaries of identity and the understanding of space, functions that can be profoundly disturbing to the *status quo*.

Yet travel can have a more conservative dimension, too, one which can counteract this potential for anarchic rather than stable or coherent identities. “One of the delusions of travel,” writes Paul Theroux, “is that you can be a new person in a new land” (432). Theroux, in Casey Blanton’s words, “remains a traditional travel writer wholly centered within his narrative and positionally capable of the imperialist and othering tropes that are part of the genre’s heritage” (109). Theroux voices a stodgy kind of travel that establishes identity through comparisons of the known to the unknown and the familiar to the unfamiliar in a predictable hierarchy that tempers the uncanniness of the (un)familiar encounter and that reinforces predetermined power relations. This process uses a sense

¹⁷ See such monuments of the field as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), Leed’s *The Mind of the Traveler* (New York: Basic, 1991), Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Ali Behdad’s *Belated Travelers* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1994), and James Clifford’s *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997).

of “abroad” that consolidates and reproduces a sense of “home,” a form of spatial production that shores up a neo-colonial sense of subjectivity. Imbricated, therefore, in the concept of mobility are two contradictory valences: travel as the radical reformulation of identity versus travel as nostalgic and conservative.

Bound up with this ambivalence are questions concerning the “authenticity” of the traveler’s identity, questions frequently emblemized in the effort to distinguish between the traveler and the tourist. In his study of travel between the wars, Paul Fussell voices a sentiment (common enough, it seems, to travel writing of all periods) that the real age of travel has ended and tourism today, facilitated by mass transportation and an industry bent on commodifying the once-authentic adventures of the traveler, provides only “the security of pure cliché” (39). While Fussell’s condemnation of tourists and his nostalgic sense of modernist exile have been thoroughly challenged for their class-based assumptions, contemporary literary formulations of travelers and tourists continue to engage with those sentiments. Many of the texts under consideration here thematize what John Urry, elaborating on Maxine Feifer’s concept of the “post-tourist” (271), understands as postmodern, self-reflexive tourists who are not only aware of their roles in writing the space of travel but actively construct both commodified “authenticity” and resistant spaces.¹⁸ These post- or anti-tourists seemingly recognize the *faux* authenticity “travelers” use and appear to satirize it by reveling in the inauthenticity of their own encounters, but the texts in which they appear sometimes recuperate the discourse of authenticity and the traveler-tourist hierarchy and sometimes – in a complex satire-of-satire structure – critique the logic of the post- or anti-tourist. Moreover, which stance the text takes is often ambiguous. As this study unfolds, “tripping” will, among other

¹⁸ See Urry’s *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

things, help discern the texts' stances on the "authenticity" of travel and encounters with alterity.

Making distinctions between travelers and tourists, tourists and post- and anti-tourists, or "us" and "them" involves both generating selves shot through with the estranging qualities of travel and preserving integral selves, but the production of these selves is also fundamentally a process of producing space. It is a way of addressing questions that surround how traveling selves relate to their destinations. Space, as Fredric Jameson notes in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, is crucial to the late twentieth-century: "our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism" (16). The discourses of travel, including the traveler-tourist dyad in which the traveler visits one kind of space while the tourist visits another, reflect the pertinence of space with particular insistency. Just as the traveling subject under construction in a piece of travel writing has no predetermined or easily predictable contours, so too are the spaces of travel variable. Discerning the traveler's identity, the authenticity of the traveler's voyages, and the kind of spatial production the traveler engages in becomes more fruitful upon recognizing that travel is bound to another concept that too is woven inextricably but often invisibly into the social tapestry: drugs and intoxication. What do altered states of consciousness tell us about travel? What facets of traveling and the traveler's identity bear upon representations of drug using and the drug user's identity? How does the intoxicated or psychedelized consciousness influence the construction of both utopias and heterotopias, and how do drugs affect the traffic between one and the other?

These questions are part of a growing body of criticism that seeks to break the popular addiction – discussed in Chapter One – to totalizing representations of drugs as disreputable and taboo. To discuss productively their latent complexity and their relationship to travel I wish to complicate the clichés surrounding the drug trip – the “transporting” power of drugs or the “otherworldly regions” of consciousness supposedly opened up by intoxication. Having this discussion involves assuming that drugs, like travel, can function ambivalently. Sometimes, the subjective experience of psychedelic intoxication will be so unfamiliar and unsettling that it will prompt profound alterations in the subject itself. To square away those alterations – which sometimes involves defusing them or incorporating them into a more familiar framework – some of the more conservative dimensions of travel can be called into service. Other times, though, such as when the psychedelic experience becomes entangled with what the drug taker perceives as a vulgar economy of commodities and material transaction, or when the idealism attached to psychedelia runs up against the impracticalities of utopia, the more unsettling dimensions of travel can supplement a difficult or disappointing drug trip.

This process raises several thematic concerns. Taking drugs and taking in the sights are, for instance, bound up with consumption. In bringing together these ostensibly different kinds of consumption, “tripping” involves representing them, in varying combinations, as processes of dreadful, weakening contamination or as coveted, strengthening supplementation. Sometimes such processes are subversive, and sometimes they reaffirm those orthodoxies that govern consciousness and mobility. In its subversive incarnations, “tripping” can illustrate how self-destruction, often a term by which drug use gets denigrated, molds the excess and monstrosity of the drug fiend

exporting his infection abroad into a critique of late capitalism's own ravenous appetite for alterity. In its more conservative, self-affirming manifestations, "tripping" can involve a traveler who uses drugs and a drugged mind to apprehend landscapes, in both tourist and anti-tourist modes, in an imperializing fashion.

"Tripping" also facilitates certain textual analyses. Because delineating generic boundaries remains a key issue in the criticism of travel writing, one such analysis must concern genre. Non-fictional travel writing, which is supposed to provide objective access to real space and real alterity, in fact encompasses and straddles ethnography, history, geography, and in the famous example of Bruce Chatwin, fiction.¹⁹ It thus remains generically indeterminate and always potentially "contaminated" by fiction. Similarly, drugs are supposed to lack viability as a mode of experience; we cast aspersions on the drug user's hallucinations – long synonymous with delusion and delirium – because they are said to lack objective reality, to thwart access to the truth, and in so doing, are "non-productive" (i.e. anti-capitalist, anti-"work ethic") wastes of time. But drugs can be lauded for many of the same reasons we tend to venerate fiction. We celebrate its imaginative free rein and its consequent ability to uncover "greater truths" about human culture. We find something of immense value in its unreality. This set of tensions, then, between what the *récit de voyage* is supposed to be and what its "embroidery" actually looks like, and between our denigration of imaginary hallucinations and our celebration of imaginary fictional worlds, lies at the heart of the

¹⁹ The degree of fictionalization in Bruce Chatwin's travel writing has long been a topic of debate. In an interview conducted by George Plimpton at the Poetry Center in New York in 1989, Paul Theroux quotes his friend Chatwin as having said, in relation to his own composition process, "You have to embroider" (qtd. in Blanton 103). Chatwin's best known works, *In Patagonia* (1977) and *The Songlines* (1987), have achieved their fame (or infamy) in part on the basis of their tendency to blend fiction in with the conventionally understood documentary function of travel writing.

generic questions “tripping” addresses. Insistent on blending the fictive and the material, the literatures of “tripping” often deliberately blur the distinctions between fiction and non-fiction as part of their interests in the mutability of consciousness and as part of the other forms of boundary violation they effect. Generic transformation amounts to a rhetorical strategy, an intoxicated text, through which the values of “tripping” are disseminated – be they neocolonial penetrations into other lands or subversive understandings of the fluidities of spaces and identities. Consistent with the doubling, the oscillations, the *pharmakon*-like nature of many of these concepts, the questions of genre introduced by “tripping” mirror “tripping” itself.

To traverse this dynamic terrain, I use “tripping” as a theoretical vehicle that will, in turn, be modified, supported, and challenged in subsequent chapters. Any framework I construct must be provisional, for as Marcus Boon asks (in a question about drugs that can be applied to the epistemological problems raised by travel), “How do we find a framework for discussing something that can be defined only as causing frameworks to shift?” (125). I first situate this provisional framework within the larger project Félix Guattari identifies when he talks of wishing to “subvert the simplistic attitudes taken toward the phenomenon of drugs – whether in terms of a medicalized view or in terms of psychological, sociological, or criminological ones” (199). Borrowing from those disciplines while not relying on any one of them, I examine literary representations of drugs in fiction about travel in large part because existing scholarship does not address the interdependence of these two concepts. Some of the broader cultural meanings of consuming mind-altering substances are, after all, situated in the context of encounters with alterity engendered by travel. Inspired by the flexibility of the concept of drugs

itself and by all those mercurial fictional travelers who cross borders, this study urges a more agile, mobile way of thinking about drugs and intoxication.

I begin with the fundamental ambivalence of travel. Moving through the world can be highly disturbing, or it can be affirming of the liberal subject and its neo-imperial gaze. Sometimes, as Frances Bartowski asserts, it can be both simultaneously: “in seeing ourselves in the face of the other we mistake both our self and our presumed reflection. But this is not merely an unfortunate mishap in terms of our late-twentieth-century troping of subjectivity; it is a historical base for forms of presumptive hierarchy, [and] political structures of domination” (xvii). This gaze tends to emerge from the essentialized identities, set in binary opposition, of traveler and tourist, the former of which is usually defined by everything the latter is not. In exploring how these identities work, the framework of “tripping” takes as one of its starting points James Buzard’s observations about the distinction between traveler and tourist: “Snobbish ‘anti-tourism’, an element of modern tourism from the start, has offered an important, even exemplary way of regarding one’s own cultural experiences as authentic and unique, setting them against a backdrop of always assumed tourist vulgarity, repetition, and ignorance” (5). Such “authenticity,” and its insistent commodification, help confirm the monadic, all-knowing subject in the face of troubling travel, the subject who travels to, in the words of Caren Kaplan, “absorb difference and create ahistorical amalgams” (2). Other kinds of mobility, those which Mark Simpson locates in, for instance, the activity of fugitive slaves, affirm individual histories at the same time that they disavow the romanticization or fetishization of travel, underscoring in the process the “potentially destabilizing effects in the *work* of motion” (11) we call illicit and insurgent. This subjective volatility is

sometimes sought out and other times circumscribed by what Simpson calls “mobility’s discipline” (92).

Travel oscillates between these modes depending (as so many things do) on its representation. Travel writing can have a homogenizing effect when it introduces the unfamiliar but casts it in familiar conceptual and generic terms. On the other hand, because travel writing often borrows the tools, techniques, and aims of fiction, it can more easily imagine the familiar as unfamiliar. Travel *fiction*, of course, foregrounds imagination while often emulating the supposed objectivity of the travelogue, and the results can be equally destabilizing. Travel writing’s ability to stretch categories of form and identity gives it a resonance especially appropriate to the contemporary period in which national and ethnic identities are harder than ever to pin down. One of the main threads of this study, then, is that travel narratives can sometimes be about one culture asserting power over another, and sometimes they can produce a traveling subject riven with pluralities and creative indeterminacies. Similar to Steven Shaviro’s assertion that “exodus, exile, and nomadism are not merely negative concepts” (182), my suggestion is that the uncertainties and ambivalences in “tripping” can produce a positive space conducive to newly created subjectivities.

The spatial production inherent in “tripping” rejects what Neil Smith, echoing Henri Lefebvre, calls “the positivist understanding of the givenness of space, autonomous and static, for a nuanced conception of the interimplication of space with the social” (xx). Regardless of the kind of space being produced, and regardless of the traveler identity upon which it depends, the process of production (as Derek Gregory illustrates throughout his influential book *Geographical Imaginations*) ensures space will be riven

with heterogeneity and indeterminacy. Looking at these spaces through the lens of “tripping” provides a sense of their contours in relation to the intoxication practices that both contribute to and help undermine their creative indeterminacy.

The framework for “tripping” foregrounds a similar ambivalence within the thematic of drugs as exists within the thematic of travel. Foregrounding this ambivalence draws on a rapidly expanding body of work on drugs Stuart Walton calls “intoxicology” (15), a body that is first indebted to a series of philosophical lines of inquiry into the discursive nature of drugs. The semiotics of drugs, as this line of thought is sometimes called, is starting to encroach upon the reigning medical paradigm that “has been allowed to stand, metonymically, for the whole field of experience that intoxication refers to” (258) and that has claimed its own authority as the means of distinguishing bad drug use from good. As the constructedness of drugs and their subjective effects have started to become more prominent, drugs are less often solely biopharmacological agents with specific, predictable effects on their users’ bodies and psychologies. They are less things than ideas.

The contemporary semiotics of drugs lies rooted in a groundbreaking interview with Jacques Derrida entitled “The Rhetoric of Drugs” and, before that, to the section in *Dissemination* entitled “Plato’s Pharmacy” in which he reads *Phaedrus* and articulates the concept of the *pharmakon*. Etymologically, *pharmakon* means both poison and cure, which embodies the contradictions bound up in drugs: their danger and their joy; their pleasure and their pain; their ability, as supplement, to augment health or to contaminate it with artificiality; their status as “desocializing, and yet contagious to the *socius*” (“Rhetoric” 37); their use as “heroic existential exploration or neurotic nihilistic escape”

(Driscoll 100); their promise of “productive receptivity” (“Rhetoric” 29) to the world or the risk of being seduced by their deceptive traffic in “nothing true or real” (“Rhetoric” 26); and so on. In their capacity to shade over from essential to toxic, from healthful to poisonous, they displace and violate conceptual boundaries and purities. The reversibility of drugs is unpredictable and rapid – sometimes even instantaneous – because a drug, whether it is conceived as poison or cure, can exist as its opposite simultaneously. To get a “fix” is to get “wrecked,” but it implies repair, a restoration to a prior, supposedly normative condition. The *pharmakon* thus also provides the necessary template for the conceptual oscillations we find in travel’s thematization of space and subjectivity.

In addition to the *pharmakon*, Derrida’s *Dissemination* also treats the *pharmakos*, the Greek scapegoat, who is “Beneficial insofar as he cures – and for that, venerated and cared for – harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil – and for that, feared and treated with caution” (133). The scapegoat bears the weight of what is unwanted or poisonous to the community – the abject, the transgressive, the diseased – and is in that sense considered purgative when it is sent away. *Pharmakoi* can thus be said paradoxically to *supplement* the health of the community. Supplementation, though, can become excess, adulteration, and contamination, and it can foul up the purported purity of categories. In an article about Derrida’s “pharmaceutical thinking” (90), Dave Boothroyd writes:

The use of the *pharmakoi* as a cultural prosthesis appears to have a direct connection with representation of drugs in general today as personal ‘chemical prostheses’. In modern times, when the role of the sovereign subject is foremost in our cultural self-understanding, the use of the personal chemical prosthesis is presented as having as its sacrificial victim ... the (ab)user himself. (95)

Supplementation becomes self-contamination and self-sacrifice, and use becomes indistinguishable from abuse.²⁰ And once again, as this study will demonstrate, we find in these related notions of supplementation and excess a reflection of how travelers, tourists, and anti-tourists conceive of their encounters with other places and peoples.

Foregrounding the ambivalence of drugs in this project also depends upon lines of thought that, echoing Avital Ronell's claim that "the horizon of drugs is the same as that of literature" (78), focus specifically on fictional representations of drugs.²¹ These literary and cultural studies argue that drugs deal in imaginative realms – in abstract, illusory, slippery and "unreal" differences from the everyday – and such dealing can be celebrated, romanticized, demonized or pathologized, or it can be rendered socially invisible, as with the examples in the West of alcohol, coffee or pharmaceuticals. These latter substances are simply not thought of as "Drugs" or else, as in the case of pharmaceuticals, can in fact be seen as reproducing *normative* states.²² These studies emphasize that drugs are as conceptually mobile as they are biochemically diverse and, as such, mesh well with the ambivalence of travel.

²⁰ The phrase "abusing drugs" is another revealing formulation found throughout drug discourse. It is not, after all, the drug itself that is being abused, as the phrase suggests; rather, it is supposedly the body and mind of the user. In this instance, the identity of the user becomes indistinguishable from that which he or she is supposed to be (ab)using. The phrase demonstrates that, once again, the site of anxiety over "deviant" pleasure is not drugs themselves but the fact that the self can experience those kinds of pleasures.

²¹ See, for example, Sadie Plant's *Writing on Drugs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999); John Barrell's *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991); Alina Clej's *A Genealogy of the Modern Self: Thomas de Quincey and the Intoxication of Writing* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995); Lawrence Driscoll's *Reconsidering Drugs: Mapping Victorian and Modern Drug Discourse* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Marcus Boon's volume; Janet Farrell Brodie and Marc Redfield's *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002); Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts' *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* (Albany: SUNY P, 2003); and Tanya Pollard's *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005).

²² Even setting up categories of "hard" or "soft" drugs, one of the supposed foundations of our legal attitudes toward these substances, is notoriously difficult. Cocaine, in the example Mike Jay offers, has been classified as a narcotic, an analgesic, an anaesthetic, a stimulant, and a euphoriant, and in its incarnations under medical, recreational, and legal discourses, "was both a soft drug and a hard drug right through to the end of the [nineteenth] century" (167).

Thus, when travel threatens to unseat the subject in some of the literary texts I engage with, drugs frequently appear in those texts as a way of engaging with, understanding, or attenuating the sometimes menacing dimensions of travel. For example, because the drug experience is so often a form of surrogate travel, and because intoxication, as Alina Clej argues, “exposes the self to an imaginary loss of self without actually endangering its existence” (x), taking drugs can be a form of immunization. It can be a “curative” antithesis to the “poisons” one encounters in the world. One takes drugs, Clej argues, in a fashion as deliberate and methodical as Thomas De Quincey did to inoculate oneself against the uncontrollable, undifferentiated, anxiety-producing otherness encountered while traveling.²³ The ordered repetition of De Quincey’s addiction “is an attempt to preempt any danger of dissemination and dissipation of the self through the contagious influence of the ... Other” (xi). The alteration of consciousness can therefore be, in certain circumstances, akin to the process of doubling, the production of another self or of “the peculiar structure of transcendental subjectivity” (Boon 6) that helps negotiate the concrete materiality of the world. Similarly, Avital Ronell contends that drugs “are animated by an outside already inside” (29), which suggests the role familiarity plays in what is supposed to be a deeply defamiliarizing challenge to categories of identity. We already know, so this thinking goes, some of the outside drugs purport to put us in contact with because it in fact resides within. Some instances of taking drugs can defeat the desire to encounter otherness altogether. De Quincey has said that “If a man ‘whose talk is of oxen’ should become an Opium-eater, the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all) – he will dream about oxen”

²³ John Barrell’s *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991) outlines this argument in painstaking and revealing detail.

(5), meaning alterity is not necessarily introduced from without by the act of taking drugs. Instead, taking drugs introduces one to the alterity within – even at the risk that such alterity is horrifying or banal. Discussing Emmanuel Levinas’ similar construction of the drug experience as an unethical *rejection* of the other, Jeffrey T. Nealon identifies the “greater intensification of the subject’s interiority” (176) as what replaces an authentic encounter with difference. “[I]ntoxication or junk addiction,” Nealon writes, “brings to the subject only the disappearance of the world” (176) and the resolidification of selfhood and its interiority.

The variability of drugs means, of course, that they can also pose a threat to a fictional drug taker. As Lawrence Driscoll notes, “we seem to have constructed drug users as having *no* agency, as well as being configured as wishing to willfully infect/destroy/addict the rest of the population” (58). Such contradictions have led to deeply problematized drug-using subjects and what Timothy Melley calls “agency panic” (40). David Lenson identifies this fear when he notes that “the most dangerous Other is always the one least distinguishable from oneself, the one that might really *be* oneself” (8). When drugs are depicted as threatening, therefore, travel frequently emerges as an anodyne. This representation works, often enough, because travel engages with troublesome epistemological questions in spatial terms. Such spatiality evokes the standard metaphors we use to describe drug experiences (getting high, hitting rock bottom, spacing out, being far out), but space in this study is more than a metaphor. Like the recruits in the Hasan-i Sabbah myth who know yet do not know where they are, the travelers I discuss are trying to figure out where the boundaries between self and other and subject and object lie at the same time that they are trying to sort out how drugs

affect the construction and perception of those boundaries. For some of these travelers (e.g. the ones I examine in Part II), the visionary or transcendent state offered by drugs is so profoundly destabilizing that the traveler must formulate a conservative notion of space – a regulated, idealized space that disciplines intoxication and then in turn produces a newly singular, impregnable, static self who can move unhindered through that space. Altering the perception of space through drugs is often akin to creating a space into which the mind can be projected.²⁴ Casting the psychedelized consciousness into a concrete representation of space allows the drugged self partially to square away the tensions between individuality and community, contamination and purity, the familiar and the unfamiliar, and – in that fundamental question of epistemology – between the known and the unknown. The drugged self has not changed in any fundamental way; he or she has simply *gone somewhere else*.

In some cases, that somewhere else is a utopian space – apparently idyllic and perfect but carefully prescribed and regulated. These utopias, as Foucault writes in “Of Other Spaces,” “have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society” (24) and, as analogous, “are fundamentally unreal spaces” (24). In other cases, they are what Foucault identifies as heterotopias: “counter-sites” (24) in the sense that they are real, but unreal in the sense that they are “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). Like a theater, in which multiple places can appear on one stage, heterotopias generally perform one of two functions: “Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory ...

²⁴ We are, after all, as Edward Soja suggests, “active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities” (*Thirdspace* 1).

[o]r else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (27). Either function, whether heterotopological or recursively utopian, tells us something about the kind of intoxication the text depicts.

In other texts, however, such as the ones examined in Part III, “tripping” clearly reveals what Lenson calls “the fluid (that is, creatively inconsistent) relationship between mind and matter” (27-28), and thus how space, composed of both the material and the conceptual, invokes imaginative fantasies that restructure consciousness, redefine alterity, and recombine permutations of race and class politics. Such restructurings tend to inject fluidity and multiplicity under the skin of what are often orthodox, quasi- (or overtly) imperial conceptions of travel. The relationships between modes of travel (neocolonial or revelatory) and modes of intoxication (those that threaten or those that shore up selfhood) are not always predictable. Reversals and oscillations – even within individual texts – are common.

The texts I have chosen to use to elaborate on these issues and to inflect this theoretical framework constitute a series of sights along “tripping’s” circuitous path. They reflect mid-twentieth-century changes in how drugs and travel figure in the popular imagination. In their depiction of the drug-using traveler, they sometimes eschew the notion of a stable self authorized by travel in favour of a subject always in formation, and at other times, they register unease in the face of such incipience by seeking stability. “Tripping” foregrounds both the construction of selfhood’s borders and the foreignness that is constantly circling the borders looking for a way in.

Chapter 3

Foundations:

Aldous Huxley and William S. Burroughs

In the early 1950s, Aldous Huxley and William S. Burroughs, figures central to what would eventually become American counterculture, were writing pioneering works about travel and drugs. They were setting up the literary and cultural elements that the counterculture would soon employ, but they were also laying the groundwork for subsequent *responses* to the counterculture, responses that appear in the texts I examine in Parts II and III of this study. While I generally avoid tracing lines of direct influence, I do wish to suggest that Huxley and Burroughs provide a great deal of the sentiment and vocabulary for Hunter S. Thompson's drug-fueled and violent harangues against society, for Alex Garland's ironic critiques of global backpacker idealism, and for Robert Sedlack's combination of the latter two types of broadside. Huxley and Burroughs inaugurate, if not the counterculture itself, then a certain type of post-war dissent and certain types of elaborations and responses to that dissent built upon the dramatization of sixties excess.

Huxley and Burroughs, in their explorations of the relationship between the real and the unreal, provide one of the recurring motifs in this study, and as Oliver Harris says of Burroughs in a comment also applicable to Huxley, they "belonged to the first generation of writers to become celebrities of the modern mass media and to have suffered the wholesale displacement of the real by the image" ("Virus-X" 210). That generation, decentered by World War II and large-scale mass media commodification,

sought out drugs and travel as ways of engaging with that mutability. The altered state mirrored and sometimes compounded the uncertainty of the times while simultaneously opening up creative potential through a new sense of globality. New means of exploring other geographical states similarly threatened the traveler with more uncertainty and relativity while simultaneously broadening cultural and intellectual horizons.

Huxley and Burroughs produced texts at mid-century that consequently articulate another key motif in my analysis of “tripping”: vexed versions of individuality. Notions of incorporation, be it the ingestion of mind-altering substances or the consumption of new places, complicate the stable boundaries and pure autonomy upon which standard models of individuality rest, but such notions can also work toward the unconscious consolidation of identity. The sixties injunction to “do your own thing,” for instance, which owes a considerable debt to Huxley and Burroughs, celebrates a free and spontaneous self while nonetheless presupposing a unitary subject with knowledge and possession of its own “authentic” desires and proclivities. To consume a new place or culture as a traveler is to deploy that sense of freedom while risking an imperial sensibility, and it also means inserting oneself (with varying degrees of “fit”) into the burgeoning economy of tourism. As I will discuss in more detail, the individualities deployed by these two writers and understood by their inheritors and interpreters (a process by no means straightforward or uncomplicated) are permeable yet enclosed selves, multiple yet reifiable.

My analysis of Huxley and Burroughs in this chapter aims first to underscore the importance of genre. Despite my interest in analyzing fictional “tripping,” I lay the foundations for the concept in this chapter using texts of ambiguous generic identity.

Huxley's famous drug texts *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, as experiential accounts of and elaborations of his use of mescaline, are part memoir, part travelogue, and part philosophical dispensation. Burroughs' *The Yage Letters*, which Beat literature scholar Rod Phillips calls "America's first psychedelic travel narrative" (126), was written in 1953 in collaboration with Allen Ginsberg, reworked a number of times, and then published, in four different editions over the past fifty years, as a fictional epistolary travelogue. This generic uncertainty is intimately linked to the texts' oscillation between subversion and recuperation, a link which will allow me to discuss in subsequent chapters how those features influence the generic identities of more overtly fictional texts.

Opening the Doors: Aldous Huxley

[S]ome human beings are naturally superior to others.

--Aldous Huxley, "The Vulgarities of Modern Life"

Aldous Huxley is best known for two works: *Brave New World* (1932) and *The Doors of Perception* (1954). The first is a bleak dystopian novel in which the world's citizens are narcotized by a drug called *soma*. The second is a pioneering account of Huxley's experimentation with the psychedelic drug mescaline, an account that grew into the fictionalized utopia of Huxley's final novel *Island*, which alongside novels such as Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1964), and Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963), is a catalytic text in the countercultural revolution of the 1960s. How Huxley went from writing a cautionary tale against encroaching industrialization by

depicting drugs as the deceptive, escapist tools of a totalitarian regime to writing a utopian parable in which drugs are mystical agents of mind-expansion – a text he called a “reverse *Brave New World*” (*Writers at Work* 165) – is an important narrative, the contours of which will become more apparent in Chapter Four.²⁵

Despite these changes in Huxley’s thinking about drugs, however, there can be no doubt that his writings, both early and late, have their elitist and racist components. Though this chapter does not engage directly with Huxley’s travel writing, standard anti-tourist discourse has precedent in his work. A 1925 essay entitled “Why Not Stay At Home?,” for instance, collected in his book *Along the Road*, claims that “tourists are, in the main, a gloomy-looking tribe” (3). In *Jesting Pilate* (1926), one of his travelogues, he writes: “The democratic hypothesis in its extreme and most popular form is that all men are equal and that I am just as good as you are. It is so manifestly untrue that a most elaborate system of humbug has had to be invented in order to render it credible to any normally sane human being” (276). Similarly, in another travelogue, *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934), he says of so-called Mass Man: “Perhaps the wisest thing to do is to abandon them to their incredible vulgarity and ineptitude, and to concentrate all available resources on the training of a minority, that shall be capable of appreciating the higher activities of the spirit. *Il faut cultiver notre oasis*” (279). Even more candidly, Huxley writes, again in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*: “Frankly, try how I may, I cannot very much like primitive people” (124). Most notable for my purposes is the way this elitist rhetoric surfaces in *Heaven and Hell*, the 1956 sequel to *The Doors of Perception*: “Like the earth

²⁵ As late as his novel *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), Huxley depicts intoxicants (along with sexuality and the madness of crowds) as mere simulations of the mystical experience and thus potential sources of horror and depravity. He writes: “For the drug-taker, the moment of spiritual awareness (if it comes at all) gives place very soon to a subhuman stupor, frenzy or hallucination, followed by dismal hang-overs” (371-372). His assessment would change dramatically two years later with the publication of *The Doors of Perception*.

of a hundred years ago, our mind still has its darkest Africas, its unmapped Borneos and Amazonian basins” (9).

As an obvious example of how “travel and exploration writing,” in the words of Mary Louise Pratt, “...constitute the European subject as a self-sufficient, monadic source of knowledge” (136), this formulation constitutes an essential foundation to postwar “tripping” and its constructions of subjectivity and alterity. Spatializing the mind in this way, casting it in terms of geographic areas to be traversed and mapped, provides one of the vital metaphors through which the altered state of consciousness is understood. At the same time, I do not wish to suggest that intoxication is consistently or inevitably cast in neo-imperialist light, because as postcolonial criticism tells us, such formations often conceal hints of possible political resistance. Huxley’s “manifestly untrue” democracy, for instance, could be interpreted as a comment on the insufficient *realization* of the democratic project – “democracy” is humbug because it is not democratic – while his dislike of “primitive people” could similarly be a way of highlighting how the imperializing gaze has *constructed* so-called primitive people. Huxley thus inhabits the language of what he sees as “Mass Man” in order to reject orthodox constructions of primitive people and begin striving for real manifestations of equality.

The following discussion of Aldous Huxley explores these opposing philosophies through a distillation of *The Doors of Perception* and its sequel, *Heaven and Hell*, both of which offer a drug-taking self at the American mid-century as one invested, however problematically, in dissent and subversion.²⁶ Huxley’s first round of psychedelic

²⁶ The reception of *The Doors of Perception*, consistent with the unexamined hysteria that often characterizes twentieth-century responses to drugs, served to locate its author firmly on the fringes of the

theorizing puts forward several fundamental dualities, including the tension – which Burroughs elaborates further – between the authority of the enclosed, imperializing individual and the radical potential of the permeable self. These dualities are integral to constructions of the “tripper” as they emerge in selected works of literature written during the fifty years following Huxley, and they compel the two-pronged approach I take in this study. The dualities that emerge in Huxley’s psychedelia, consistent with the *pharmakon* as outlined in the previous chapter, instantiate the undecidability and ambivalence of “tripping.”

As the well-known story goes, Huxley’s long-standing interest in the spiritual and intellectual potentials of mind-altering drugs came to a head when he first ingested mescaline in Los Angeles in 1953.²⁷ For him, the event transgressed multiple boundaries. As an altered state of consciousness, his mescaline intoxication was profoundly disruptive of his assumptions about perception and cognition. Because such disruptions appear in a cross-cultural context – a Briton taking drugs in the United States with an English psychiatrist working in Canada – consciousness expansion is shot through with notions of mobility and border-hopping from the outset.²⁸ With his mind in flux, and with multiple

mainstream. As David King Dunaway notes: “The bitterness triggered by Huxley’s account of mescaline exceeded any previous criticisms he had received, even those of his pacifism.... *The Doors of Perception* brought Huxley reactions ranging from wild reproof to hostility” (301-2).

²⁷ Foundational as his account has become, he is of course not the first to know this substance and to write about it. Mescaline is the active ingredient in the peyote cactus indigenous North Americans have been using in religious ceremonies for centuries, and among the first white men to write about it were Lewis Lewin (“*Anhalonium Lewinii*,” in the *Therapeutic Gazette* 4, 1888), D.W. Prentiss and Dr. Francis P. Morgan (“*Anhalonium Lewinii* (Mescal Buttons): A Study of the Drug with Especial Reference to its Physiological Action Upon Man, with Report of Experiments,” in the *Therapeutic Gazette* 9, 1895), and James Mooney (*The Mescal Plant and Ceremony*, 1896).

²⁸ For more detailed accounts of the transnational dimensions of Huxley’s drug experimentation, see Joel DeShaye’s “Attention from Saskatchewan: Huxley, Osmond, and the Psychedelic History of *The Doors of Perception* and *Island*” (*Aldous Huxley Annual* 2 [2002]: 181-202) and Erika Dyck’s “‘Hitting Highs at Rock Bottom’: LSD Treatment for Alcoholism, 1950-1970” (*Social History of Medicine* 19.2 [2006]: 313-329) and “Flashback: Psychiatric Experimentation with LSD in Historical Perspective” (*Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 50.7 [2005]: 381-388).

national identities and border transgressions coming into sight, Huxley's earliest drug experimentation, conceived in terms of opening doors and exploring the lands on the other side – what Charles M. Holmes calls “a lyrically geographic metaphor” (172) – would provide the basis for “tripping” and the matrix for the subjectivity of the “tripper” in the twentieth century. The mind of the “tripper” can best be unfolded and understood by conceiving of it *as* (inner) space itself, as an open-ended construct resembling external space. The traveling metaphors are keys to understanding new formulations of consciousness at a time when mass travel was becoming more and more widely available. Those metaphors, as Chapters Four and Five will reveal, help rearticulate subjectivity in the face of genuinely destabilizing intoxication practices.

It is important to remember, though, that the sense of self Huxley articulates is often understood in contradictory ways. The editorial apparatus in the Flamingo edition of *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, for instance, prominently rehearses these contradictions. J.G. Ballard's foreword rightly notes that Huxley “realized that his insights were not into himself and his modest personal history, but into the universe around him” (n.p.), but then nonetheless discusses how the texts articulate “the inward passage to our truer and richer selves” (n.p.). Ballard grasps the fact that Huxley advocates a union of self and the infinite but cannot relinquish the individuality at the heart of the discourse of self-improvement and self-realization so characteristic of popular psychedelic drug use. Ballard follows Huxley as he moves away from personal solipsism, only to turn back – either because of his own orthodox understandings of selfhood or because such orthodoxies linger in Huxley's articulation – and reaffirm a conventional self. Similarly, David Bradshaw's introduction calls *The Doors of*

Perception “a bewitching account of the inner shangri-la of the mescaline taker” (n.p.).

As Huxley stresses repeatedly, it is an abstracted “Not-I” or a “Not-Self” exploring the infinitude of the universe, not a circumscribed identity (“the mescaline taker”) discovering his rich inner world, as in Bradshaw’s promotional cant. Huxley *starts* with a cordoned off, self-referential ego, but proposes that psychedelic exploration may in fact *free* the ego and allow the external world to achieve primacy. Perhaps influenced by the fact that a great deal of mid-century American literature depicted isolated, alienated selves and their rich inner worlds (I think here of Richard Wright, J.D. Salinger, John Steinbeck, or Carson McCullers), or perhaps because they sense a persistent individuality in Huxley’s work, Ballard and Bradshaw reaffirm the personal ego. Their detours away from Huxley’s renunciation of individuality nonetheless prefigure one of the relationships between travel and intoxication that “tripping” will uncover: the way metaphors of travel deployed to articulate psychedelic liberation frequently reinscribe the insular self.

Huxley believed that the desire to escape tedious, individual selfhood was “in almost everyone almost all the time” (*Doors* 43). He writes, “We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all circumstances we are by ourselves” (3), a condition which prompts a powerful desire for a perception of the infinite. William Blake’s aphorism, which Huxley uses as an epigraph to and in the title of his psychedelic treatise, reflects this interest in the transcendent: “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite” (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* pl. 14 ln. 5). Huxley believed glimpses of the infinite, of what Buddhists call the Universal Mind, what Christians call Divine Love, or what Blake calls Eternal Man, were possible, in part, through psychedelic drugs. To that end, he conceived of the human

nervous system as primarily eliminative, that our minds in their normal states functioned mainly as filters to screen out vast quantities of perceptual information not relevant to our biological survival. He believed the mind was primarily a “reducing valve” (13) that “excludes the total content of Mind at Large” (13), and that when subjected to psychedelic drugs, could perceive the infinite. Opening the “little pipe-line to the Mind at Large [and] by-passing the brain-valve and the ego-filter” (23) floods the mind with infinitude and allows it to alter radically its conception of both itself and the world.²⁹ Contemplating objects, landscapes, or people in a psychedelized state allows one to perceive what Huxley called “[t]he totality ... present even in the broken pieces” (33). Encountering the infinite by allowing the (capital-M) Mind to flow briefly through the (small-m) mind enables subjects to get beyond the idea that they are confined, segregated selves. Consistent with his lifelong project of refuting Cartesian thought and proposing the abstracted “Not-I,” a venture he articulates in a number of works, Huxley claims: “My existence does not depend on the fact that I am thinking; it depends on the fact that, whether I know it or not, I am being thought – being thought by a mind much greater than the consciousness which I ordinarily identify with myself” (*Adonis and the Alphabet* 24). The desire to experience that greater consciousness, moreover, is explicitly figured as ingestion, as when Huxley reminds us: “The urge to transcend self-conscious selfhood is, as I have said, a principal appetite of the soul” (*Doors* 46).

²⁹ Mechanizing the mind with metaphors of valves and filters seems to be a falling back upon precisely what Huxley cautioned against in *Brave New World*: regularizing the body in the interests of a larger system. At the same time, though, consciousness is figured at its most fundamental level as movement, with sensations, thoughts, and perceptions arising out of the movement of information from one place to another through constant flux, impediment, or redirection. The unpredictability of this flow of sensory, perceptual, and metaphysical information, despite the mechanical metaphors, restores consciousness to that primal state of excessive movement and seems to challenge notions of regularization.

With his interest in moving through doors, crossing boundaries, and diverting rivers of information, Huxley is obviously keen to discuss this volatile, vulnerable, appetitive self in terms of spatiality and mobility. Mobility in *The Doors of Perception*, though, is not relegated to the “merely” philosophical or conceptual. Instead of languishing in a hypnotized state of paralysis – the archetypal drug experience and the stuff of cliché – Huxley is, as Stuart Walton puts it, “anything but ‘immobilized’ during his inaugural mescaline experience” (11).³⁰ Moving through Los Angeles in *The Doors of Perception* introduces the travel narrative into a drug essay, turning it into a kind of psychedelic field report, and destabilizes generic boundaries. Such instability seems to be a reflection of a necessary condition for the kinds of reciprocal relationships between travel and drugs. As one concept influences and helps construct the other, the generic boundaries that usually keep these thematics separate become permeable. Permeable boundaries help establish, in *The Doors of Perception* and in many of the other texts I explore here, the complex relationship between integral/multiple selves and the self-consciously multiple texts in which it is explored.

Because of his use of the travelogue in *The Doors of Perception*, examining the role of actual, physical travel in Huxley’s life and writing becomes important here. While he influenced the shape of the American counterculture, the influence of the United States on Aldous Huxley is also important. He was, for instance, less than impressed with the country upon his first visit in 1926. Nicholas Murray, in his

³⁰ Walton’s comment is part of a broad argument he makes about the insufficiency of our dominant understandings of drugs. He cites the frequent interpersonal warmth and geniality produced by some drugs in certain social settings as evidence that they do not reliably produce stupefaction and lassitude. He notes further that the hyper-productivity of a “working mother of the 1960’s, zipping through the ironing on prescription speed” and a “superstar chef on cocaine” (11) both counteract the notion that taking drugs is just about selfishly “zoning out” from the world.

biography *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual*, notes that Huxley's "view of American civilisation in general, and Hollywood in particular, are what might be expected, in one sense, of an upper middle class literary Englishman in 1926. He was sniffy about the roaring materialism of the Jazz Age and about the products of Hollywood" (181). Huxley's subsequent travels within the United States were disappointing, and such disappointment, echoing John Steinbeck's fiction about seeking El Dorado on the West coast, eventually led Huxley back to California. Peter Conrad describes this pattern in Huxley's travels as evidence that he was perpetually in search of something he could not find, turning and returning to the space of the country – particularly California, the home base of American drug culture – for enlightenment: "All travel, for Huxley, revolves inside this dismaying tragic cycle, with the feverish hope of the journey collapsing into the frustration of arrival. All travel is a version of travel to California, because every outing testifies to the frantic human quest for an unrealizable happiness" (250). Increasingly alienated in Britain, though, over his pacifist views, he eventually made a permanent move – foundational to his version of "tripping" – to California in 1937.

Huxley's arrival in America constituted a creative rupture that opened up the possibilities of imaginative reconstruction, possibilities that were necessarily intertwined with the annihilation of self. When Huxley writes of his perception, under the influence of mescaline, of the spectacular excess of his new country, he admits: "The fear, as I analyse it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under the pressure of reality greater than a mind" (*Doors* 37). Similarly, when Huxley's home and extensive library in the Hollywood Hills burned down in a devastating fire in 1961, "the television

cameras,” as Peter Conrad recounts, “arrived at the burning house half an hour before the fire engines. Huxley angrily savored the justice of this, because it showed how technology had overtaken history in America: the cameras which translate the fire into media event precede the engines which extinguish it” (244). The symbolic burning of Huxley’s ego, together with the understanding that the U.S., as Conrad and Harris both point out, engenders mediated and quasi-imaginary events that seem more real than real ones, can be read as a concentrated (and, for Huxley, infuriating) distillate of one dimension of “tripping” in postmodern America: the breakdown of conventional, monadic identity and the attendant awareness that reality is constructed, not given.³¹

Such ego dissolution nonetheless offered mystical potential. After a five-week road trip across the country that ended at D.H. Lawrence’s ranch near Taos, New Mexico, Huxley became enamored with the “savage, empty vastness” (*Letters* 422) of the American desert. He eventually found the Mojave Desert outside Los Angeles a sufficiently visionary location that he and his wife Maria purchased a forty-acre ranch there.³² As a blank, minimalist space, the desert reflected the emptiness within and precipitated the dissolution of the self. It functioned for him both as the pathetic fallacy writ large and as a canvas upon which to construct the restorative visionary experience.³³

Like the demolished ego, the desert is dehumanized and stripped, but where logocentric

³¹ We find in Jean Baudrillard a most insistent articulation of hyper-simulation. In, for example, his description of American war-making, specifically the conflict in Vietnam, he writes: “the war become[s] film even before being filmed” (*Simulacra* 59). Explicitly linking mind-alteration to the international military intervention, Baudrillard writes: “the war in Vietnam ‘in itself’ perhaps in fact never happened, it is a dream, a baroque dream of napalm and the tropics, a psychotropic dream that had the goal neither of a victory nor of a policy at stake” (59).

³² The ranch was in Llano del Rio, in Los Angeles County. In an instance of the literalization of the metaphor of visionary places and their concomitant mobility, Huxley claims the bright desert light improved his vision (which had been very poor since an adolescent eye infection) to the point where he could drive a car!

³³ Dunaway suggests a provocative early link between visionary experiences and drugs when, of Huxley’s nascent blindness, he writes: “In college, Huxley had dilated his pupils with atropine to peer around the opacities in his eyes – only with a drug could he read” (152).

tradition tends to read a stripped ego or a vast desert as empty, the visionary experience as Huxley articulates it finds such “blank” psychic or geographic terrains conducive to rendering perceptions more distinct. Dissolution, often decried as “derealization” in anti-drug discourse, is occasionally unpleasant but, as Huxley’s experiences prove, necessary for re-securing the self and preventing its total dissolution. Ingesting the American desert offers symbolic sustenance to the expatriate and an imaginative canvas upon which to work. Ingestion – be it “absorbing” the desert or consuming mescaline – constructs the alterity of that which is being ingested as symbolic visionary capital for the affirmation of a new kind of selfhood. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of Huxley’s latent colonialism, which here manifests itself in his simultaneous elision of the indigenous populations who inhabit this “empty” space and his reinscription of those populations using the racially-loaded term “savage” to characterize that space. His consumption of desert, then, is more accurately understood as the *creation* of a particular sort of desert which he then ingests for his personal visionary experiences.

In 1953, though, the setting for his most famous visionary experiences, the ones described in *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, becomes Los Angeles. The majority of his best-known proclamations about mescaline-influenced consciousness, his theories of the “reducing valve” and the “Mind at Large,” for example, come from the initial portion of the experience as he gazed around the room in which it was happening, listened to music, and walked in the garden. Notably, Huxley’s initial attitude toward space is one of apparent dismissal. Asked about “spatial relationships” (*Doors* 9), he writes: “my mind was perceiving the world in terms other than spatial categories” (9). “Place and distance cease to be of much interest” (9) to him under the influence of

mescaline. “The mind,” he writes, “was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning” (10). Huxley finds, however, that understanding being and meaning often requires a recuperation of the concepts of space and spatial relations: the world around the drug-taker “may be experienced ... ‘out there,’ or ‘in here,’ or in both worlds, the inner and the outer, simultaneously or successively” (14). Being and meaning take on their significance when inside and outside intermix, and Huxley’s initial formulation of that event comes across as a dismissal of space – why should “here” or “there,” “near” or “far,” be important when they are one and the same? But the power of the experience depends on shifting categories of space and is thus best understood not as the nullification of space but as its elevation to primacy. This moment in *The Doors of Perception* grants us insight into that overwhelming feeling – seemingly common in psychedelic drug experiences – of a world suffused with importance: spatial categories seem to merge into one another, which creates a sense of unity and transcendence. The mind, however, has to reaffirm discrete spatial categories in order, as a subject, to be able to comprehend those mergings.

Four or five hours into the experience, when Huxley gets “taken for a little tour of the city” (16), the further implications of these ideas about space emerge as intoxication and travel come together explicitly. First, it is worth noting that Huxley’s narration of his “little tour” begins by jumping to the end, to “a visit, towards sundown, to what is modestly claimed to be The World’s Biggest Drug Store” (16). After looking through some art books (“surprisingly enough” [16], for a drug store) and commenting on the intricacy of the aesthetics of Van Gogh, El Greco, Watteau, Cézanne, and others, he looks around the Drug Store and finds his field of vision suddenly “filled with brightly

coloured, constantly changing structures that seemed to be made of plastic or enameled tin” (28). Pronouncing them “Cheap” and “Trivial” (28), he finds his universe abruptly closing in on him: “‘It’s as though one were below decks in a ship,’ I said. ‘A five-and-ten-cent ship’” (28). Huxley elaborates on how “World’s Biggest” shrinks to a tiny world: “This suffocating interior of a dime-store ship was my own personal self; these gimcrack mobiles of tin and plastic were my personal contributions to the universe” (28-29). The borders of Huxley’s subjectivity are thoroughly permeable here, and from the divine richness of art and his own thinking about art to his own utilitarian contributions to the tacky shoddiness of mass commodity culture is but the smallest of steps when under the influence of mescaline in Los Angeles, city of angels and city of garish Hollywood simulation. With his mind wide open, both cities coexist in his consciousness, but his awareness in this instant, as he and his surroundings intermingle, of his own limitations strike Huxley as hellish and evoke the other, more poisonous, version of the *pharmakon*.

As part of this process, the World’s Biggest Drug Store, with its suggestions of plenty and profusion, veers into the realm of enclosure and constriction. The passive voice with which Huxley recounts “being taken” on a tour of the city and the constriction of the “dime-store ship” produce a sense of enforced mobility. Replacing travel’s orthodox connotations of itinerancy and freedom with obligatory and compelled movement has the effect of resolidifying a self in flux. Enforced mobility is unpleasant, of course and contributes further to suffusing Huxley’s world with hellishness, but such a moment of paralysis-in-motion is also crucial to reconciling the intoxicated self, assuaging the fear “of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating” (37), and understanding the spaces through which that newly reconstituted self moves.

Returning to a point in the narration prior to the drug store visit, Huxley writes, “we got into the car and went for a drive” (41). Sensations of divine revelation color the streets of L.A. as they go, but when they stop at an intersection, Huxley sees cars “rolling by in a steady stream – thousands of them, all bright and shiny like an advertiser’s dream and each more ludicrous than the last” (41). In this moment, he understands the city, with its fixation on the automobile as status symbol, as garish and superficial and pronounces it “ludicrous.” Again, the proximity of divine revelation to the excesses and futility of commodity culture serves, for Huxley, to yoke the immaterial to the material, the divine to the banal. Such a union again provokes a metaphor suggestive of compelled travel and the paradoxical immobility-within-mobility that characterizes certain forms of “tripping”: “The Red Sea of traffic parted at last,” Huxley writes, “and we crossed into another oasis of trees and lawns and roses” (41). The allusion to Moses parting the Red Sea, a Biblical refugee tale, invokes compelled travel that again helps Huxley comprehend the defamiliarization his own consciousness is undergoing: he is no longer an abstracted not-I but instead an I traveling from one place to another. The lurching shifts in perception – the oscillations between seeing the world in its own “is-ness” and seeing it as a projection of his own interiority – are deeply unsettling. Huxley’s “tripping” suggests, however, that such shifts can be comprehended if the psychedelized mind is recast as a physical traveler who, while disjointedly compelled into motion by forces beyond his control, nonetheless retains a sense of who he is and where he is going. Secure in this kind of enforced mobility, Huxley returns to the metaphorical desert of Los Angeles that, with its visionary oases of flowers, again becomes a canvas of heightened sensitivity. Mobility becomes once again a source of wonderment and pleasure.

As he travels back down into the streets, Huxley sees that the “magic began to work again” (41). He glimpses the “unforgettably beautiful” (42) sight of “a stucco wall with a shadow slanting across it” (42), one of what he calls “fragments of New Jerusalem” (41). This chiaroscuro enters into juxtaposition with other parts of the suburban architecture, now visible in what Huxley calls its “peculiar hideousness” (41). The union of heaven and hell, provoked by the simultaneity of his travel and his drug-inspired transfiguration, is another example of the “renewals of transcendent otherness” (41) we first saw in the World’s Biggest Drug Store.

Once again, Huxley uses the rubric of travel to make sense of his experience, and transfiguring narrative itself – as he does when he transplants the end of his day to the beginning of its telling – is part of the process of transfiguring the place through which he moves. The (trans)figuration of landscape is what allows the “tripper” to modulate his or her understanding of altered consciousness. Huxley concludes as follows: “An hour later, with ten more miles and the visit to the World’s Biggest Drug Store safely behind us, we were back at home, and I had returned to that reassuring but profoundly unsatisfactory state known as ‘being in one’s right mind’” (42). Telescoping the rest of the narrative, including his visit to the Drug Store, Huxley seeks to locate it “safely” in solid temporal and spatial realms. The miles have unrolled “behind us” and are thus fixed in representational permanence. The trip is over, and the destination has been captured in narrative and made real. The alterity is gone, the shocks of juxtaposition have ended, and Huxley has been restored to the orthodox consciousness of “one’s right mind.” He acknowledges that “one’s right mind” and all the possessive individualism it implies is “profoundly unsatisfactory” (42) but necessary to return the psychedelized self and the

accompanying defamiliarization to the familiar territory of comfortable spatiality. The trip is “behind us,” and the landscape has been securely rendered and returned to its state of immutability. But we know now that it contains difference. Thanks to the alteration of consciousness, the space of travel is again familiar in its totality but will also never be the same again. Space is once again apprehensible by “one’s right mind,” but the boundaries of the self are now a little blurrier and more porous than they were before. *The Doors of Perception* thus enacts the complex dialogue between a psychedelic drug’s ability to alter subjectivity and its ability to perceive space, with all of its potential disruptions, in recognizable and assimilable form.

Huxley’s *Heaven and Hell*, the far less personal sequel to *The Doors of Perception*, elaborates on the nuances of psychedelic intoxication. It provides, for one thing, several analogues to visionary experience in mythology and religious iconography, offering the multiple cultural meanings of flowers and jewels and the prominence of “praeternatural light” (73) and color in religious visions and folkloric worlds as examples of objects with analogous “transporting”(122) power. No doubt inspired by his stint writing for Hollywood, Huxley also discusses in *Heaven and Hell* the transporting power of film. Huxley characterizes film as a modern incarnation of “vision-inducing phantasy” (122), as an art form that is “alive, glowing, intensely significant” (123). Film represents the process of shaping imagination and the “raw materials” of reality into something else, a conjoining of art and the world reminiscent of Foucault’s characterization of the theater as heterotopia and, thus, of the process of producing space to account for psychedelized consciousness. Especially pertinent to Huxley’s later work is another group of transporting objects in *Heaven and Hell*: “[m]agically lovely islands” (73), proto-

visionary manifestations that occur in countless cultures. As we shall see in Chapter Four, islands as visionary motifs in *Heaven and Hell* are the ancestors of the paradisiacal island in his last novel. In all of its expressions, the category of the visionary purports to convey the subject from one realm of being to another, a mobility valorized for its transgressive and creative potential.

Heaven and Hell continues the well-known characterization of the drug experience in terms of travel metaphors, referring to psychedelia as, for example, a trip to “the mind’s visionary antipodes” (82), and features some of Huxley’s strongest colonial formulations. Rather than embark on a physical journey as he does in *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley spins an elaborate metaphor. On the first page of the sequel, Huxley strikes a distinction between the collector and the zoologist, noting that the collector is “not yet a physiologist, ecologist or student of animal behavior” (61) – not yet a zoologist. Rather, the collector more closely resembles a taxidermist; his job is “to catch, kill, stuff and describe as many kinds of beasts as he could lay his hands on” (61) to prepare for the “scientific tasks of classification, analysis, experiment and theory making” (61). The exploitative relationship the psychedelic collector has with what Huxley calls “fauna” (93) appears in the colonial metaphors he uses to describe his psychedelic experimentation, and the project of “classification, analysis, experiment and theory making” resembles what Mary Louise Pratt calls colonial “knowledge-making apparatuses” (29).

A project first glimpsed in the way in which spatialization domesticates or disciplines intoxication in *The Doors of Perception*, catching and killing and stuffing and describing is thus equally complicit in the power differential between the drug user and

the alterity offered up by drugs. Here, otherness is figured as something to be captured, appropriated, and enshrined by authoritative discourse. Such otherness engenders imperial mobility, deployed to master the surfeit of information and counteract the sense of dispossession arising in the face of excess, a type of travel we will encounter in more detail in my discussion of William Burroughs. Thus *Heaven and Hell* establishes one kind of relationship the drug-user can have with the paradoxically foreign-yet-domesticated alterity he encounters/produces.

That slash mark between “encounters” and “produces” gestures toward a crucial component of “tripping,” namely the idea that alterity is located within the mind, but accessing it requires that the mind be made permeable to alterity from outside. Echoing this formulation is the idea that what one encounters in the “mind’s antipodes” (63) is “exceedingly odd. But oddity is not the same as randomness” (65). Intoxication, like travel, produces experiences that “are strange with a certain regularity, strange according to a pattern” (65). The blurred line between familiarity and strangeness once again arises from this process of simultaneously locating alterity within and without, of being both familiar with and estranged from strangeness.

As suggested by its title – also borrowed from Blake – *Heaven and Hell* is about the reconciliation of such opposing states, but it does offer a fuller articulation than *The Doors of Perception* of the hellish potential that lies within the drug experience. The subjective vulnerability of that state can easily send the visionary experience into the territory of the horrific, and contrary to those moral guardians who would charge Huxley with irresponsibly “promoting” drugs, he devotes a considerable portion of *Heaven and Hell* to the hellishness latent in the psychedelic experience. Huxley suggests that the

phenomenon we now call the “bad trip” can stem from what he has previously characterized in *The Doors of Perception* as necessary for a glimpse of the infinite: the dissolution of the individual ego. Such dissolution, he argues, offers a “transporting” experience but can just as easily provoke fear, just as easily put individual egotism at odds with the infinite, and just as readily frame encounters with otherness in terms of the Essential Horror as opposed to the Clear Light. “When we look very near or very far,” Huxley writes, “man either vanishes altogether or loses his primacy” (95). Again, framing the drug experience in spatial terms and implying that movement between spatial realms can instantiate the process of “melting down” (95) one’s personality generates links between drugs and mobility, but vanishing subjectivity can be alarmingly different from transcendent, reconciliatory union with the infinite.

The “horror of infinity” (99) glimpsed during the visionary experience, Huxley explains, can prompt the sensation that everything “is charged with a hateful significance; every object manifests the presence of an Indwelling Horror, infinite, all-powerful, eternal” (99). That horror often takes the form of restricted mobility: “It is worth remarking that many of the punishments described in the various accounts of hell are punishments of pressure and constriction. Dante’s sinners are buried in mud, shut up in the trunks of trees, frozen solid in blocks of ice, crushed beneath stones” (100). Through such depictions of hell – from Dante’s *Inferno* to “those who have taken mescaline or lysergic acid under unfavourable conditions” (100) – the horror of the drug experience is one often characterized by immobilization. The “transporting” experience of altering consciousness, as it becomes horrific, brings the subject to an abrupt halt and imparts the paradoxical sensation of stagnation-in-motion, of going nowhere. Consistent with

countercultural glorification of free mobility, and contrary to the cultural assumptions that the pleasures of the drug experience lie solely in zoned-out immobilization, the negative potential of a Huxleyan drug experience is hellish precisely because it is restricting. Such restriction, as I have mentioned in relation to *The Doors of Perception* and as is consistent with the duality of the *pharmakon*, can also, however, be deployed in the service of reconstituting the self in the face of a troubling drug experience.

It is thus important to remember that the two titular kinds of encounters in *Heaven and Hell* are not mutually exclusive but rather come parceled one with the other. Huxley frames this duality in both philosophical and experiential terms, of course, but its connections to a semiological analysis of drugs as *pharmakon*, as simultaneously poison and medicine (to return to Derrida), are clear. While the positive valence of the *pharmakon* puts the subject in touch with a broader reality and codes that activity in terms of responsible remembering and self-healing, the *pharmakon* becomes poisonous when the subject views an encounter with infinite totality as unreal – as an irresponsible dwelling in hallucination and as forgetting reality. The horrors of Huxley’s World’s Biggest Drug Store experience reflect this potentiality by manifesting the Essential Horror of which Huxley speaks. Reconciling this heaven and hell, a process that would turn out to be more and more necessary as the counterculture bloomed following Huxley’s death in 1963, becomes more complicated when we introduce William S. Burroughs into the “tripping” mix.

Grabbing What's Outside: William S. Burroughs

Glad to have you aboard reader, but remember there is only one captain of this subway.

--William S. Burroughs, *The Soft Machine* (118)

The illusion of a separate inviolable identity limits your perceptions and confines you in time.

--William S. Burroughs, *The Adding Machine* (133)

Brian Musgrove's 2001 article "Narco-Travelogues and Capital's Appetites," which first drew my attention to the need for a sustained analysis of the literatures of travel and drugs, takes as its central premise that "the travelling literary encounter with drugs has ... legitimated and celebrated the western possession of precious sense-altering substances" (130). Musgrove claims that the West's sense of entitlement, its belief that the Anglo-European and not the savage mind should have dominion over intoxicants, results in the commodification of these substances and their importation into Europe "with the certainty that here was their proper local habitation; and that they were culturally purified, redesignated, by the rational character of western appetite and learning" (137). Musgrove's argument is historically valid. It echoes Mike Jay's assessment of the cultural and conceptual changes tea, coffee, tobacco, and cocoa underwent over the course of the sixteenth century:

In each case ... the new 'soft drugs' eventually found mainstream acceptance by developing a new set of associations which reinvented them as 'modern' European habits distinct from the barbarous practices which had characterized their indigenous use. Tea and tobacco were surrounded with modern medical claims for their health-giving properties; coffee was served in a new type of establishment, the coffee-house, which was frequented by well-heeled businessmen as an alternative to the ubiquitous tavern. Tea, coffee, and cocoa were all repackaged by the addition of milk and sugar, which had never been part of their traditional preparations. (147)

Musgrove's argument about neo-imperialism is also, as we saw in the first section of this chapter, applicable to certain parts of Aldous Huxley's writing. As my analysis of Huxley demonstrates, though, it would be inaccurate to reduce his work simply to that of a neo-imperial apologist. The generic instability of a psychedelic travelogue, the complex, paradoxical portrait of travel he offers, and the subjective discombobulation he encounters through mescaline complicate – at least sometimes – the notion of a monadic, imperial self. The central figure in Burroughs' text searches for his hallucinogenic vine in South America with an imperialist's eye, but the text works to undermine his position of mastery. Furthermore, the domestication of drugs remains an incomplete – indeed, frequently unsuccessful – endeavor, leaving drugs, as Gargi Bhattacharyya (drawing on Walter Benjamin) says, always “commodities with an extra aura” (107).

There are, therefore, problems associated with Musgrove's use of William Burroughs to illustrate what Musgrove calls the “structural durability” (141) of these formulations. Musgrove argues that *The Yage Letters* depicts Burroughs' drug-taking as “ethnologically and teleologically framed [so that] the consuming western body and mind were sensorially saturated; and the narco-traveller's imperious, panoramic gaze delighted in a global fantasy of consumption without limits” (144). This is all very familiar postcolonial argumentation. The problems with Musgrove's argument, which I discuss in detail because they elide significant portions of my conceptualization of “tripping,” have to do with the assumptions of biographical alignment that inevitably creep in whenever the topic of conversation is drugs. The two quotations with which I begin this section illustrate Burroughs' profoundly contradictory thinking about subjectivity – thinking that makes Musgrove's rather one-dimensional portrait of the

imperial drug-taker insufficient. The quotations also hint at one of the reasons Musgrove makes the error he does: the confusion between fiction and fact. *The Soft Machine* is a novel (albeit a quasi-autobiographical one, as almost all of Burroughs' work is), and the address to the reader that seemingly invests Burroughs with the singular authority of the lone captain is in fact that of a fictional persona. The second quotation, which comes from an essay called "Immortality," further authorizes the kind of subjectivity that problematizes Musgrove's point about the autonomous, imperial drug-taker. In this section, I would like to pay a debt of gratitude to Musgrove for raising one of the issues central to what I am calling "tripping," but I would also like to point out the shortcomings of his analysis of Burroughs and, in so doing, complicate the connections he draws between travel and drugs.

One of the twentieth century's most important avant-garde writers, Burroughs has had an unquestionable influence on the confluence of travel and drugs. His mainly autobiographical and quasi-autobiographical works, from his first novel *Junkie* (1953) to spoken word recordings included on *Stoned Immaculate: The Music of the Doors* (2000), recount a lifelong relationship with opiates and other drugs. Burroughs was also an inveterate traveler, living in or passing through St. Louis, New York, California, Texas, Kansas, Mexico City, Paris, North Africa, and South America. Burroughs critic Oliver Harris attributes his spectral and "irredeemably alien" ("Virus-X" 206) presence in part to his travel, to his "geographic removal from America" (207). Travel figures prominently in his work as well, as indicated by the titles of, for instance, his later fiction trilogy: *Cities of the Red Night* (1981), *The Place of Dead Roads* (1983), and *The Western Lands* (1987). Inevitably, travel and drugs come together in some of his works, including *The*

Yage Letters (1963), a fictionalized epistolary collaboration with Allen Ginsberg about the search for *yagé* (pronounced “ya-hey”), a hallucinogenic South American vine also known as ayahuasca. Because Musgrove provides a cornerstone of “tripping” at the same time that he offers an incomplete reading of Burroughs’ text, and because of that text’s own generic ambiguity (Harris calls it “a hybrid of the comic picaresque tradition, travel writing, the ethnobotanical field report, political satire, psychedelic literature, and epistolary narrative” [“Introduction” xi]), *The Yage Letters* is an important lookout point in the landscape of “tripping.”

Besides similar generic instabilities and thematic parallels, Burroughs has certain biographical connections to Huxley that make *The Yage Letters* an enlightening complement to *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*. Though *The Yage Letters* was not published until 1963, the bulk of it was written in 1953, the same year Huxley took mescaline for the first time. In 1954, the year *The Doors of Perception* came out, Burroughs wrote to Allen Ginsberg: “Since Huxley’s book on peyote seems to have attracted attention, perhaps we could do something with the Yage material” (*Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953-1957* 63). And in the last week of November, 1963, when Huxley died at his home in California, *The Yage Letters* was being released by City Lights Books in San Francisco. Such connections again mark the critical mass that had been reached in the United States at this time; drugs and travel were in the air, and the process of thinking about them was changing.

Despite the cultural transformations wrought, in part, by *The Yage Letters*, the text itself has largely been ignored. One possible reason for this neglect is that Burroughs’ interest in the hallucinogen ayahuasca represents a marked departure from his

life-long and well-known identity as an opiate junkie. So strong is the presumed connection between drugs and addiction that a text about a distinctly non-addictive substance seems impossible. As Oliver Harris explains in his monograph *William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination*, in the minds of the reading public “yagé becomes just a substitute for junk as the goal of identical quests for identical questions,” making the text “a mere anomaly, a biographical bridge to cross or an irrelevance to circumvent” (158). While opiates and addiction became well-entrenched in the cultural imagination over the course of the nineteenth century, ayahuasca was still virtually unknown in the middle of the twentieth. Burroughs had little to go on when he set out on two trips to find the drug in 1951 and 1952: “a technical bibliography of half a dozen works” (165), as Harris puts it, that were “only of emerging interest to a few professional ethnobotanists” (165). Burroughs’ interest in the substance prompted dramatic strides in addressing that lacuna, and as Harris has shown, Burroughs’ role in helping disseminate this knowledge was a truly pioneering one.

The Yage Letters grew out of an article Burroughs was writing, following a seven-month expedition into the Amazon, entitled “In Search of Yage,” which intended to capitalize on the momentum Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* was generating. As Harris’ painstaking archival research has demonstrated, *The Yage Letters* is not in fact a collection of letters Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg from the field: “[T]he twenty-two page first draft ‘[In Search of] Yage’ manuscript he mailed Ginsberg in June 1953 was not epistolary, in either form or origin” (“Introduction” xxxii). His actual letters to Ginsberg (collected in *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1945-1959* and *Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953-1957*) are about the composition of the manuscript that would eventually

become *The Yage Letters*, and only minute fragments of the prose of those letters ever wind up in the finished version. As Harris claims, “‘Yage’ was something other than a reworking of actual letters no longer extant, and the closer those letters that do survive are scrutinized against the text of ‘Yage,’ the clearer the case becomes: reversing the logical order of priority, most of this material was not derived from, but only later put into, epistolary form” (*Secret* 176-177). Burroughs “fabricated its epistolary form by adding material such as the letter’s formal tops and tails, by changing the tense to create an improvised effect of reporting live, and by cutting out tell-tale lines” (“Introduction” xxxiii). All the letters supposedly from “William S. Burroughs” in fact sign off with one of five variants: Bill, William, Willy Lee, W. Lee, or William Lee, with the Lee moniker well-known as one of Burroughs’ fictional alter-egos.³⁴ Harris’ textual scholarship also goes into significant detail about how the authorship of *The Yage Letters* was further dispersed by its initial publication, in bits and pieces, in various avant-garde literary magazines.³⁵ Despite these issues of authorship, despite this process of fictionalization, and despite Jennie Skerl’s accurate claim that “the narrative [of *The Yage Letters*] *pretends* to be strictly factual” (32 – emphasis added), critics continue to make problematic biographical assumptions about the text. Musgrove, for instance, in assuming that *The Yage Letters* are actual letters sent by William Burroughs which

³⁴ The final section of *The Yage Letters*, entitled “I am Dying, Meester,” is signed “William Burroughs.” Rather than a mark of authorial agency, though, the name appears “only because John Sankey, Ferlinghetti’s London printer, suggested it should be there” (Harris “Not Burroughs’ Final Fix” para 55).

³⁵ Parts were published, in substantially different forms, in Charles Olson’s *Black Mountain Review*, Paul Carroll’s *Big Table*, Lita Hornick’s *Kulchur*, and LeRoi Jones and Diane di Prima’s *Floating Bear* and as a pamphlet put out by Ed Sanders’ Fuck You Press. Assembling those pieces with Ginsberg’s replies (thus further distributing the authorial weight of the text), *The Yage Letters* was published by Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s City Lights Books in 1963. Three subsequent editions (in 1975, 1988, and now, with Harris’ edition, 2006) continued reassembling and reworking the text and thus further increasing its distance from the supposedly monadic letter-writing Burroughs of the early fifties. As Harris writes at the end of his introduction to *Redux*, “it’s clear that *The Yage Letters* was, right to the end, determined as much by chance factors and the agency of others as by Burroughs himself” (xliii). Also, see Harris’ “Not Burroughs’ Final Fix.”

transparently express his real opinions, overlooks the literary persona behind the fictional letters. In giving precedence to the biographical components of Burroughs' writing, Musgrove elides an important satirical dimension of Burroughs' work that complicates the neo-imperialist sentiments the text appears to convey.

Musgrove's article must be commended, however, for raising the "economic subtext" (131) within which drugs exist. He rightly argues that drugs tend to inhabit "the imbalanced east-west axis of commodity traffic" (131), and in highlighting the example of Thomas De Quincey, points out how texts such as "The *Confessions* galvanised ... a type of writing on drugs that brought together narratives of psychological, territorial and economic expansion" (133). Moreover, he underscores those moments where De Quincey constructs, in opposition to the savage Asiatic who uses opium for mindless intoxication, a superior Englishman who uses it for enlightenment. Musgrove's emphasis there suggests that travel and drugs necessarily come together for the sake of securing cultural elitism. All of these points are useful for understanding how travel can be a way of re-consolidating a monadic self by domesticating the defamiliarizing excess the "tripper" finds in the world and within. Musgrove productively points to the economic benefits accrued through this process, arguing that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers of narco-travelogues were "highly aware of the enormous benefits to be had by capitalising drugs" (141).

Valid as Musgrove's points about the imperial impulses of Thomas De Quincey and the economically exploitative drug discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are, I wish to argue that representations of travel and drugs are more complex than Musgrove imagines them. He grants that the meaning of drugs changes depending

on where, when, and by whom they are consumed (138), but his argument nonetheless seems to lead inevitably to the conclusion that all western drug use involves the voracious domestication and commodification of indigenous ethnobotanical knowledge. Part of that generalization involves simply the over-extension of a particular historical and literary phenomenon, but it also involves a homogenized portrait of drugs. To make his point about “capitalising drugs,” Musgrove has to capitalize them in a different way: as “Drugs” – a totalized formulation – in order to elide those cultural and pharmacological differences between substances. As my analysis of more recent literature suggests, the effects of drug use on the subjectivity of the drug user and on the representational schemas of the already unstable genre of travel writing are so profoundly unsettling that the kind of integral, authoritative consumer Musgrove constructs is often not possible. While it may be true in the case of De Quincey (and De Quincey scholars can probably find exceptions), any travel for or on drugs by a westerner is not necessarily colonial or exploitative. In the latter parts of my formulation of “tripping,” drugs extend and complicate the notion that travel is primarily in the service of empire or that, as Musgrove argues, it is primarily about domesticating drugs and bringing them under the purview of rapacious, commodifying capitalism. Like Burroughs, the authors in this study – and especially Hunter S. Thompson and Robert Sedlack – depict ironic, anti- or global post-tourists who, well aware of the long tradition of using travel to construct snobbish and racist portraits and often self-reflexive about their *own* use of travel in this way, can offer more complicated, critical, or even radical formulations than the ones Musgrove traces in his article. The characters in such fiction do sometimes travel and take drugs with neo-imperial intentions, but they just as frequently do so in other ways.

Which brings me to Musgrove's use of Burroughs. Citing moments in *The Yage Letters* such as when the narrator calls Bogotá "horrible as ever" (21)³⁶ and the people of Colombia an "[u]gly crummy-looking populace" (13), Musgrove argues that the text puts forth "the image of Burroughs the inveterate traveller-snob" (142). Ignoring the fact that the letters are signed by the persona Lee and not by Burroughs, Musgrove points to some of "Burroughs'" exploits (such as when he ruthlessly barter down a Puerto Assis boy from \$30 to \$10 for sex) and concludes that the trip to the Amazon is a combination of an "economic survey of the abundantly consumable South America and the compulsive quest for yage" (144). This conflation of Lee with Burroughs, like the compound first word of Musgrove's title – "Narco-Travelogues" – evinces a case of mistaken textual identity: *The Yage Letters* is a work of fiction, not a travelogue.

The broad satire of *The Yage Letters* indicates that Burroughs is well aware of his neo-colonial persona. After the heading of the opening letter sets the scene at the Hotel Colon in Panama, the first two sentences of *The Yage Letters* immediately skewer the objectivity and respectful propriety of the conventional ethnographic account: "I stopped off here to have my piles out. Wouldn't do to go back among the Indians with piles I figured" (3). The scatological humor of *The Yage Letters* is only the most obvious puncturing of the authority of the imperial traveler. Harris's analysis of the text indicates that it is shot through with anti-colonial resistance: "if for Lee as an American in Panama the Hotel Colon is the residence of colonial occupation, in a contradictory move he prepares himself for offering up his body for sexual colon-ization by the colonized" (*William Burroughs* 162). As a white American, he can identify with the colonizer, but as queer and as geographically and ideologically alienated from mainstream America, he

³⁶ All quotations from *The Yage Letters* are from the 1975 edition Musgrove uses.

sympathizes with the colonized; his narrative is fundamentally ambivalent. Lee criticizes constantly the Spanish, the original colonizers and (in his estimation) the current oppressors of the continent. “[Y]ou feel,” he says in Bogotá, “the dead weight of Spain somber and oppressive. Everything official bears the label Made in Spain” (9). Such commentary serves both to highlight and to offset Lee’s own role as neo-colonial American and to emphasize the ambivalence of the text: “Burroughs played the Ugly American ambiguously, at times blind to its operation, at times holding the identity up for coruscating critique” (Harris “Introduction” xxx).

Other moments of blunt vulgarity appear throughout the text and further cultivate shock at the sight of the imperial persona. Buying some inferior cocaine in Panama, at one point, Lee rants: “I nearly suffocated myself trying to sniff enough of this crap to get a lift. That’s Panama. Wouldn’t surprise me if they cut the whores with sponge rubber” (4). Lee makes ridiculously sweeping generalizations, not confined to South Americans, which generate ironic self-awareness of the racist undercurrents of the imperialist travelogue: “I never knew a Dane that wasn’t bone dull” (41), and “He looked like junk to me but you can never be sure with the Chinese. They are all basically junkies in outlook” (42). Burroughs further lampoons the genre when he has Lee callously disregard traditional ayahuasca ceremonies and score some *yagé* vine with “No trek through virgin jungle and some old white haired character saying, ‘I have been expecting you my son’” (23). After stomping around in the jungle as the Ugly American, Lee then says of the national police, with a mock wide-eyed innocence that betrays a textual awareness of his own obnoxious behavior, “They expect trouble to come from outside in

the form of a foreigner – god knows why” (17). The caricatures are so broad and the offensiveness so pervasive that Musgrove’s comments about *Burroughs* hold little water.

In addition to an examination of Burroughs’ satire, an analysis of Lee’s travel and *yagé* experiences helps complicate Musgrove’s assessment. Claiming that Burroughs draws on imperialist fantasies of endless expansion, Musgrove identifies a “triumphalist ideology and teleology of consumption” (145) in *The Yage Letters* that make it a quintessential expression of Burroughs as “super-consumer.” First, it is worth noting that Burroughs’ own relationship with travel, regardless of his persona Lee’s, is more ambiguous than Musgrove’s vision of unadulterated imperial freedom. In May, 1952, Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg: “*I must go. I must find the Yage*” (*The Letters of William S. Burroughs* 126). The simple, declarative sentences, with Burroughs’ emphasis, connote a compulsion to travel, an impelled mobility beyond Burroughs’ control and distinct from the ostensible freedom inherent in orthodox understandings of travel. This curious kind of enforced travel finds an analogue in Lee’s fictional letters: he moves from place to place out of a “Nightmare fear of stasis. Horror of being finally *stuck* in this place. This fear has followed me all over South America” (32). Lee’s fears make it hard to argue that his travel is imperial. Like the relentless logic of addiction, Lee’s compelled travel is a form of stasis-in-motion – he *is* stuck.

Paradoxical images of mobile stagnation abound in *The Yage Letters*. In Macoa, Colombia,³⁷ for instance, he senses the oppressive company of one of the ever-present national police patrolling the small town: “Macoa is The End Of The Road. A final stalemate with the cop riding around and around on his motor bicycle for all eternity” (16). Escaping Macoa lands Lee in Bogotá “for the third time” (21) in less than thirty

³⁷ This city is more commonly known as Mocoa. I have retained Burroughs’ spellings throughout.

pages, another example of this endless circling around a single point. Even the textual repetitions that arise out of Burroughs' (often literally cut-and-paste) composition techniques and out of the contingencies of the text's publication serve as recursive loops that give the reader simultaneous senses of narrative progression and stagnation.

We get a better look at what this fear of stagnation means, and what its relationship to Musgrove's argument about Burroughs' neo-colonialism is, when Lee recounts his experiences with *yagé*. Lee's intoxication reveals that the narco-traveler's identity is increasingly uncertain. He drinks the foul-tasting, oily liquid and narrates:

In two minutes a wave of dizziness swept over me and the hut began spinning.... Blue flashes passed in front of my eyes. The hut took on an archaic far Pacific look with Easter Island heads carved in the support posts I was hit by violent, sudden nausea and rushed for the door hitting my shoulder against the door post. I felt the shock but no pain. I could hardly walk. No coordination. My feet were like blocks of wood. I vomited violently leaning against a tree and fell down on the ground in helpless misery. I felt numb as if I was covered with layers of cotton. I kept trying to break out of this numb dizziness. I was saying over and over, 'All I want is out of here.' An uncontrollable mechanical silliness took possession of me. (24)

The first stages of intoxication are marked by surrogate travel to the "far Pacific," a lurching shift that temporarily suspends the familiar terms by which Lee can denigrate South Americans. The sudden appearance of "Easter Island heads" is disconcertingly at odds with Lee's present environment, and its profoundly bizarre and unsettling nature is useless to him in constructing his identity as a U.S. tourist in South America. The subsequent nausea effects a disembodiment in which he cannot feel pain, in which coordination is impossible, control is negligible, and the body itself – his feet as blocks of wood – is no longer familiar. The violent vomiting, a familiar initial effect of ayahuasca, stands in sharp opposition to Musgrove's portrait of the *yagé*-taker as super-consumer. The power of ayahuasca, writes Rich Doyle, is "in its capacity to purge. That is what

ayahuasca ‘gives’ you – a capacity to open” (11). To vomit is to reverse what Musgrove calls “the imbalanced east-west axis of commodity traffic” (131), to reverse the pattern of consumption, and to open the subject to plurality (to what Huxley would call the Mind at Large) instead of closing him off in his stolid imperial identity. Finally, Lee’s declaration that he wants to leave is a clear sign that any lingering colonial desires are disintegrating. Lee could not care less, at this point, about incorporating South American exoticism; all he wants to do is leave.

In his second encounter with *yagé*, Lee achieves the much-sought hallucinatory stage after once again going through disembodiment and violent vomiting. Musgrove draws upon the best known section of *The Yage Letters* to make the neo-colonial argument once again.

Yage is space time travel. The room seems to shake and vibrate with motion. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polyg[l]ot Near East, Indian – new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized passes through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants sprout out of the Rock and vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of your body), across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market. (44)

Musgrove calls this scene a “brilliantly cynical hallucination of the whole world arrayed in a market waiting to be taken” (144). To my mind, Musgrove is himself cynically focusing on the last word of a passage that, all told, offers a more complex vision than the one he articulates. For one, the predominant images in this passage are ones of plurality and multivocality, not homogenization under the dictates of imperialism. Lee is seeing races that have not even come into existence yet, let alone fallen victim to rapacious American capitalism. Again, the boundaries of the body are thrown open to the “blood

and substance of many races” and reveal, in a bizarre and evocative image, “vast crustaceans” hidden inside. In ayahuasca lore, that dissolution of the self is often metaphorically figured as death. Ayahuasca itself means “vine of the dead,” and in an introduction to his meditation on the drug, Rich Doyle echoes Ginsberg: “*accounts of ego death were not at all greatly exaggerated*” (7).³⁸ The subjectivity alluded to here is once again more unsettling and alien than Musgrove’s economic argument allows, and the chaos and open-endedness of the experience mitigates the construction of a neo-colonial identity. Into these images of plurality Burroughs interjects – in a possible allusion to the Hasan-i Sabbah myth with which he was undoubtedly familiar – an image of “stasis and death in closed mountain valleys.” This additional instance of paradoxical “migration” through “stasis” again employs compelled travel to *satirize* what Musgrove takes literally: the American tourist with a bloated sense of entitlement stomping at will through native lands.

The persona of the Ugly American Burroughs enacts through William Lee is at once a way to mock that identity and a way to illustrate how familiar imperial tools can shore up chaotic subjectivity. The metaphors of transportation and mobility that appear in Lee’s description of his experience are central to “tripping” because they produce the kind of identity Musgrove delineates: a singular, authoritative subjectivity moving through a world made knowable by the usual colonial and neo-colonial tropes of travel. That identity gets undercut, however, by Lee’s *yagé* experience. He has grasped the constructedness of reality and the composite, cultural plurality of the world and can thus deploy the conjunction of travel and drugs in ambivalent ways. So when Musgrove

³⁸ Allen Ginsberg’s replies, in which he recounts his own experiences with the vine and which make up a portion of *The Yage Letters*, are similarly “explicit about its shattering effects on his ego” (Harris “Introduction” xix).

claims that drugs “always come parcelled with the spectre of Otherness” (135) which Western imperialism seeks to defuse through decontextualization, dehistoricization, and commodification, he in fact overlooks the dimension of *internal* Otherness drugs can access. That Otherness within, which Huxley found when he claimed that “[t]he nearer, the more divinely other” (*Doors* 41), defamiliarizes the self and its relation to the world and thus in fact *inhibits* the neo-colonial paradigm Musgrove finds in *The Yage Letters*.

Obviously, I do not wish to suggest that Musgrove’s analysis of Burroughs is without value. Burroughs himself did indeed, as Harris intimates, take “the empirical approach of a skeptical Westerner, and this inclined him to resist indigenous knowledge” (“Introduction” xxiii), but he also employed the Lee persona to criticize “the exile’s power to still exercise the master race’s privileges” (“Introduction” xxvi). It is *Lee* who, operating in the tradition of De Quincey and others before him, enacts “psychological, territorial and economic expansion” (133). Obscuring the distinction between Burroughs and Lee as Musgrove does makes unintelligible the generic instability and the representations of ego dissolution in *The Yage Letters* and other “tripping” texts that allow for counterhegemonic travel and oppositional identities. Assuming that the surrogate travel of drugs consistently recapitulates imperialism likewise overlooks dimensions of “tripping” in which it does not. Reading *The Yage Letters* as Musgrove does simplifies the ambivalence of drugs and divests travel of some its multiple valences. I engage with Musgrove here primarily to stress the importance of complicating and extending his argument, to provide a more nuanced version of “tripping,” and to explore more of the complexities of the relationship between “tripping” and imperialism.

For both Huxley and Burroughs, travel serves to rein in drug use at the same time that it complicates the process of knowing-through-drugs. In *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley's elitist and anti-tourist aesthetic allows travel to modulate his articulation of the psychedelic self. At the same time, his experiences open up important vistas for understanding the space that surrounds him. Similarly, the radical potential of ayahuasca in *The Yage Letters* prompts a neo-imperialist gaze on the part of the novella's protagonist Lee, a gaze that helps Lee reconsolidate a known and knowable self. Burroughs, however, with his long-standing interest in subjects *resistant* to the mechanisms of control, satirizes this process and produces a multivocal space in opposition to conventional travel orthodoxy. In both Huxley and Burroughs, individualism is both a cornerstone of mid-century "tripping" and the first thing to come under erasure by the processes of consumption implicit in bringing travel and drugs together. In both cases, the paradoxical, unorthodox versions of travel and subjectivity the writers articulate can be read (and misread) as assertions of singular identity. In both cases, plurality and multivocality also offer more flexible subjectivities and more flexible understandings of the spaces through which travelers move. In the next chapter, I explore at greater length how these threads come together in Huxley's final novel, *Island*. The balance of this study, in dealing with responses to Huxley, Burroughs, and the counterculture they helped inaugurate, examines the creative potentials of (re)creating reality through drugs while yearning nostalgically, in complexly related ways, for a stable subject.

PART II: UTOPIAS AND FAILED UTOPIAS

Chapter 4

The Mind's Antipodes:

Psychedelic Utopia and the Horrors of Consumption in Huxley's *Island*

Part II of this study employs the theoretical and literary frameworks outlined in Part I to explore a recurring thematic facet within the confluence of travel and drugs: the utopian space. Most scholars of utopian literature acknowledge, in one way or another, the ambivalent nature of the genre as part of what David Ayers calls “the ambiguity of the utopian drive” (102). Peter Ruppert, for instance, has noted that while utopias provide “unearthly visions of peace and perfect harmony, homogeneous regions of order and precision and happiness,” they also “appear to ignore difference, to reduce multiplicity and diversity and to exclude choice, conflict, complexity, history” (ix). Such limitations frequently ensure the impossibility, even in the fictional imagination, of realizing the utopian dream. Even the etymology of the word “utopia” suggests the concept’s impossibility: “utopia” comes from both “eu-topos” (“good place”) and “ou-topos” (“no place”). In noting the utopia’s investment in the notion of stagnation, in calling utopia an “eddy or self-contained backwater ... an enclave ... [a] pocket of stasis within the ferment and rushing forces of social change” (*Archaeologies* 15), Fredric Jameson argues that “the best Utopias are those that fail the most comprehensively” (xiii). Indeed, the failure of utopia seems almost inevitable. Ruppert writes: “the realization of utopia would mean its inevitable destruction, since in the process of being realized it would lose its defining characteristic as an indeterminate no-place” (154).

That indeterminacy lends some fertile possibilities to utopia – the ability, for instance, to imagine new forms of subjectivity – but such possibilities can prompt in some of these texts the reactionary instantiation of conservative space that re-disciplines the subject.

The texts under consideration in Part II, Aldous Huxley's *Island* and Alex Garland's *The Beach*, suggest that utopian spaces are unworkable because of the ubiquity of mass consumption. Mass consumption, they charge, too frequently takes the form of hedonistic intoxication or the commodification of destinations by (neo-) colonial tourists, and as such, cuts the subject off from the natural world and from authentic subjectivity. Huxley and Garland seem to be aware of the truly radical potential that consumption, as Avital Ronell and Jeffrey Nealon articulate it, has to reorganize subjectivity. In establishing a conceptual link between drugs and mass culture, for instance, Ronell claims that Emma Bovary's excessive consumption of novels constitutes a "solitary experiment of eluding a politics of community ... [that] frees her into a domain of precarious pleasure" (102), a domain in which the hyper-consumer can explore the endless possibility of what Ronell calls "fractal interiorities" (15). Similarly, Nealon's work on William Burroughs argues that drug addiction, rather than producing "isolated reveries that cut the subject off from alterity" (174), in fact extends desire beyond mere personal individuality and moves toward "an unrecoverable exteriority beyond need" (175) and wholly other. Huxley and Garland first try to defuse the dangerously progressive potential of consumption using nostalgic, primitivist utopian spaces. Such regulation must fail due to the inevitable indeterminacy of utopia, and in dramatizing its destruction, they disavow the radical potential of consumption-as-consciousness-alteration.

Aside from highlighting their shared interest in depicting the construction and eventual failure of utopian spaces, linking these two British authors also allows me to raise some additional points. For one, the work of both Huxley and Garland contains a series of tensions that bear upon British national identity. One such tension arises when the isolation and insular tendencies of a small island nation in the North Atlantic collides with its own perceived cosmopolitanism and multiplicity as a country also located at a global crossroads. Another such tension comes to the fore via Britain's history of colonial practices. The tension between exporting an identity abroad in the pursuit of apparently limitless expansion and limiting identity (through ethnocentric assumptions, for example, or through the professed moral burden of enforcing those assumptions) appear insistently in Huxley's and Garland's novels. Huxley and Garland also illustrate, in a concern directly related to the thesis of this study, how drugs in global contexts both threaten and secure colonial identity, a duality that, since the beginning of its interests in Chinese tea and opium, Britain has long embodied. These national concerns constitute a subtle but salient backdrop to Part II of this study.

Arrival

Unlike novels such as Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) or Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), which, like *Island*, were influential to early sixties counterculture but which explore the corrosive effects of institutions on individuality, Huxley's novel imagines the value of institutionalized drug use and formalized religio-philosophical practices. Standing in sharp contrast to Huxley's much earlier dystopian *Brave New World* (1932), *Island* is a utopian novel. While the history

of Huxley's conflict with psychedelic popularizers like Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg in the late fifties and early sixties – a history that highlights Huxley's exclusionary thinking about drugs – lies outside of this chapter, his mescaline experiments of 1953 convinced him of the value of psychedelic drugs and their potential roles in constructing utopian space. The notion that these substances render the mind of the user open to things beyond itself, and the notion that "[t]he totality is present even in the broken pieces" (*Doors* 33), would become central to Huxley's fictionalization of the psychedelic experience in his 1962 novel *Island*, generally considered a synthesis of the thinking he had been doing since the 1930s.³⁹ Those notions would embody the positive dimensions that allow for progressive human potential and resistance to what Huxley saw as anti-intellectual, stifling mainstream American society. They would also simultaneously contain the negative dimensions that allow Huxley to depict the failure of his fictional utopian society.

Often ignored on aesthetic grounds,⁴⁰ *Island* offers an intricate, ambivalent understanding of "tripping" which enters into a complex relationship with his own earlier, more colonial formulations of drug use. In this chapter, I analyze the means by which Huxley uses travel to understand psychedelic drugs and the psychedelic drug experience. I first argue that he understands the alteration of consciousness specifically

³⁹ Gorman Beauchamp, for example, calls *Island* Huxley's "final and maturest thoughts on the fate of humanity in the modern world" (59). The fact that *Island* is Huxley's only single-word title prompts Alex MacDonald to speculate that the title "illustrates clearly the movement toward unity which is characteristic of Huxley's thought" (103).

⁴⁰ Harold H. Watts, for one, calls *Island*, "esthetically unsatisfactory" (74) and "an esthetic failure" (82), and John Atkins calls it "second-rate and tedious" (xxx). D.H. Stewart claims simply that "*Island* is not a profound book" (334). C.S. Ferns, on the other hand, takes issue with "the narrow-mindedness, stupidity, and dishonesty of much of what passes for Huxley criticism" (233), claiming that "part of the critical misunderstanding of *Island* can be explained as being due to the application of narrowly aesthetic criteria to a work whose implications are considerably wider" (232). I believe the aesthetic arguments over Huxley were hashed out in the sixties and seventies when the advent of postmodernism found value in stylistic pastiche, so I shall leave them aside here, but his propensity to attract misunderstanding signals the fundamental ambivalences inherent in "tripping."

as an expansion of consciousness (an enormously popular formulation during the sixties), as a process by which the self is made receptive to the heaven and the hell of psychedelia. To depict this process and to work through its problems and contradictions, Huxley draws on an understanding of travel, outlined in the previous chapter, as simultaneously engendering endless possibility and inevitable disappointment. This approach allows Huxley to frame consciousness alteration as a journey through a utopian space. While *Island* is in many ways Huxley's most optimistic book, the utopia he depicts ultimately founders. The novel's idyllic society succumbs in the end to military invasion by a neighboring country, "a twist to the plot of *Island* that is unusual, if not unique, in the utopian genre" (Beauchamp 70). "Tripping" in this novel illustrates how the implicit limitations of utopian travel and society reflect a conception of drugs in which the hellish dimensions of psychedelia are inseparable from the heavenly ones. Inspired by one critic who, commenting on the overt didacticism of *Island*, noted that it is "as if the essayist had indeed swallowed the novelist" (Meckier "Cancer" 633 n. 10), and by another who called the novelistic aspects of *Island* "the sugar coating for the philosophical pill" (Beauchamp 63), I hope to draw out the similarities between the concept of ingesting drugs and the type of consumption endemic to colonial exploitation, between consuming expansion and expanding consumption.

As a didactic so-called novel of ideas, *Island* has been called by Peter Bowering (one of its more generous critics) "a highly charged dialectic of ideas shaped in the form of a moral fable" (5) and, by Frank Kermode (a less generous critic), "one of the worst novels ever written" (472). Both critics perhaps overstate their cases, but the extremity of their views encapsulates the often polarized discussion of the ambivalences *Island*

evokes. The novel is set on an imaginary Southeast Asian island called Pala, whose inhabitants use, among other things, a psychedelic mushroom Huxley calls *moksha*. Founded by a Scottish doctor and a Buddhist rajah, Pala combines Huxley's interpretation of the rationalism of Enlightenment philosophy with his glorification of the irrational and a particularly Eastern brand of mysticism that was becoming increasingly popular in the West by the middle of the twentieth century and that would achieve significant flowering in the sixties. Unlike the post-nuclear-holocaust California of Huxley's earlier dystopian novel *Ape and Essence* (1949), a society governed by "the worst of both worlds" (*Ape* 138), *Island* combines the best of the East with the best of the West, as Huxley conceived of them, into what Fredric Jameson, in a brief reference to *Island*, calls Pala's "hallucinogenic *bonheur*" ("Of Islands and Trenches" 20). As part of the society's investment in synthesis, the young Palanese are taught mystical, Tantric sexuality (tempered by cautious, Western-style birth control), pragmatic industrialization (limited by ecological awareness), and mind-expansion through drugs ("although the uninitiated take it only under careful supervision" [Watt 157]). *Moksha* "opens some kind of neurological sluice," explains Dr. Robert MacPhail, a descendent of the original Scottish founder, Dr. Andrew MacPhail, and a major mouthpiece in the novel for Huxley's philosophy, "and so allows a larger volume of Mind with a large 'M' to flow into your mind with a small 'm'" (162). In contrast to the *soma* of *Brave New World* (1932), which functions as shorthand for political enslavement, psychedelic drugs in *Island* are part of a utopian ethos in which the enclosed ego Huxley saw at the root of the problems of Cold War America is made permeable to enlightened, universal totality, what the novel tends to define as "One in all and All in one" (161).

Palanese society appears ideal, but horror lurks – quite literally – beneath the surface: the island is rich in oil. When its citizens refuse to give in to international oil companies seeking concessions, the protagonist of the novel, an English journalist named Will Farnaby, arrives. Secretly working for an oil tycoon back home, his intentions are initially to secure oil rights, but he is eventually won over by Pala’s philosophies and by *moksha* after being given a guided tour.⁴¹ The novel ends, however, when the neighboring country of Rendang, perhaps suffering from what the 2006 U.S. Presidential State of the Union address referred to as an addiction to oil, invades Pala with dreams of wealth and consumer affluence on its mind. Pala succumbing to colonial invasion dramatizes the proximity of heaven to hell within the novel’s acts of consumption – of drugs and, later, in the novel’s near but unrepresented future, of oil – that on the one hand introduce the self to the Mind-at-Large and on the other hand destroy the enlightened self. Consuming oil evokes the society Huxley cautioned against in *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence*, a militarized, industrialized world in which the individual is heavily constrained and deeply fragmented instead of opened up to the infinite. As such, the “best of both worlds” demonstrates in fact that otherworldly enlightenment is always potentially vulnerable to the ethnocentrism and colonial entitlement within the modes of travel that make enlightenment possible.

This proximity of heaven to hell that colored much of Huxley’s thinking and that will figure in his climactic destruction of utopia appears early in the novel. Will Farnaby,

⁴¹ Travel metaphors emerge frequently in the critical work on utopian literature. Jerome Meckier, for instance, claims that “Most utopias bog down under the weight of ‘the necessary exposition,’ the extensive Baedeker the author must supply so that the reader comprehends the *modus vivendi* of the ideal society” (“Cancer” 622-23). Similarly, Northrop Frye notes that “in utopian stories a frequent device is for someone, generally a first-person narrator, to enter the utopia and be shown around it by a sort of Intourist guide” (qtd. in Jaeger 126). Frye’s use of the term “Intourist guide” and Meckier’s equation of tourism with “bogging down” additionally perform the critical work of denigrating the utopian genre, generally, as totalitarian, superficial, or commercial.

having landed on the island, remembers a love affair he once had with a woman named Babs. The affair took place in her bedroom,

with its strawberry pink alcove and the two windows that looked on to the Charing Cross Road and were looked into, all night long, by the winking glare of the big sky sign for Porter's Gin on the opposite side of the street. Gin in royal crimson – and for ten seconds the alcove was the Sacred Heart, for ten miraculous seconds the flushed face so close to his own glowed like a seraph's....But punctually at the count of ten the electric clock would turn on another revelation – but of death, of the Essential Horror; for the lights, this time, were green, and for ten hideous seconds Babs' rosy alcove became a womb of mud and, on the bed, Babs herself was corpse-coloured, a cadaver galvanized into posthumous epilepsy. (9)

In his travelogue *Jesting Pilate* (1926), Huxley notes that Hollywood studio lighting, partly responsible for the visionary effects of films as he outlined them in *Heaven and Hell*, also “gives to living men and women the appearance of jaundiced corpses” (261). Huxley's comment in that travelogue prefigures both the bedroom scene in which ecstasy and agony conjoin in the light of the advertisement and the visionary drug experience Will undergoes on the island.⁴² The room's windows, “looked into, all night long,” confound notions of public and private space and prefigure the permeability necessary for subsuming selfhood. The source of the simultaneously miraculous and ghastly light flooding the room is a larger-than-life representation of alcohol, which foreshadows the link Huxley will develop between mind-altering substances and the experience of heaven and hell. As I have detailed in my introductory chapters, drugs – including those as familiar and domestic as Porter's Gin – are fundamentally ambivalent, offering with one hand joy, loquaciousness, or transcendence while presenting despair, sullenness, or

⁴² The closeness of heaven to hell was an abiding concern of Huxley's even before he wrote *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*. Peter Conrad notes that when Miranda in *The Tempest* marvels at the brave new world, “Prospero remarks sourly that it is new only to her. What she sees as heaven he knows to be hell. Huxley borrows this ambiguity when he calls his own nightmarish fantasy *Brave New World*” (249).

addiction with the other. The duplicitous intoxicant appears here, however, in the form of a billboard advertisement. Consistent with Huxley's attitude toward alcohol in other places in the novel, the scene serves to identify drunkenness as commodified and as located firmly within vulgar, bourgeois corporate culture, a contrast to the more enlightened, more elite *moksha* consumption on Pala. In attempting to discriminate among intoxicating substances, Huxley presumes the existence of what Stuart Walton calls "the inherent moral valencies of drugs" (228), an assumption that, in certain circumstances, can be used to stretch the drug continuum in particular political directions. "Good" intoxicants provide nothing short of cosmic, universal insight, while "bad" intoxicants do no less than destroy the human soul. The consequences of the play between vulgarity and elitism appear in Huxley's use of the commercial billboard as a catalyst for hellish experiences. Such a moment is indicative of a trend in a great deal of counterculture literature: the denigration of commercial consumer culture as instantiating false needs, as dwelling in the simulacrum of inauthenticity. Such denigration is often unproblematically adopted by agents and celebrants of counterculture, but Huxley's elitism is somewhat more complicated.

That Pala is a unique place for drug consumption comes to the fore in some of the initial descriptions of the island, descriptions that also begin to figure Pala as a special place for "tripping." The double duty served by some of these descriptions indicates the ways in which Huxley uses travel to frame the drug experience:

Here was Pala, the forbidden island, the place no journalist had ever visited. And now must be the morning after the afternoon when [Will had] been fool enough to go sailing, alone, outside the harbour of Rendang-Lobo. He remembered it all – the white sail curved by the wind into the likeness of a huge magnolia petal, the water sizzling at the prow, the sparkle of diamonds on every wave crest, the troughs of wrinkled jade. And eastwards, across the Strait, what clouds, what

prodigies of sculptured whiteness above the volcanoes of Pala! Sitting there at the tiller, he had caught himself singing – caught himself, incredibly, in the act of feeling unequivocally happy. (12)

The metaphors in this passage activate one of the most significant aspects of “tripping”: its ability to help define the role of perception in encountering the world. First, the passage establishes a strong link between Will observing his natural environment and his persistent tendency to stylize it or to shape it into something else. We see this artistic impulse in his comparison of water to diamonds, which must be mined, cut, and polished, and to jade, typically fashioned into ornamental or functional shapes. The wind has “curved” the sail of the boat into the likeness of a flower petal, and the water “sizzling” off the boat evokes cooking, another shaping and transformative activity connotative – to appropriate from Claude Lévi-Strauss – of civilization over and above savagery.⁴³ Will sees the clouds, too, explicitly in terms of sculpture, of more items fashioned from raw material for aesthetic consumption. This shaping vision, which *The Doors of Perception* has shown to be one of the key results of the psychedelic experience, produces an extremely malleable world – a world where travel can be transformed into psychedelia and vice versa. These transformative efforts are part of the inhabiting process de Certeau, Lefebvre, and Foucault would say is essential to producing “[t]he space in which we live” (“Of Other Spaces” 23). Will understands his physical environment in terms of how he can shape it, how he can bend it to suit his desires, and that environment thus becomes a tool for understanding other things, including psychedelia.

He also understands the world as one eminently suited for artistic or economic consumption. The objects of natural beauty, especially the diamonds and the jade, are notable as items of economic exchange, with the jade’s Eastern connotations making it

⁴³ See *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss’ anthropological account of food as a marker of “culture.”

particularly exotic. Will's metaphors here confirm the long-standing link between travel and plunder; moving through physical and semantic landscapes marked by alterity (the "forbidden" and "virginal" status of the volcano-ringed island, the "exotic" name of Rendang-Lobo) becomes an opportunity to collect material wealth and cultural capital. The motif of manufacturing or shaping raw material and the general sense of pliability and fluidity in this passage evoke three types of shaping processes: the ways consciousness is shaped by psychedelic experience, the ways psychedelic experience itself is shaped by moving through physical landscapes, and the ways both of those processes shape the world. Furthermore, the happiness Will feels at the end of the passage, as a good self-improving traveler, is the aesthetic pleasure of "consuming" the picturesque landscape. His happiness is tempered, though, when he makes note of his isolation – "Yes, all alone. Alone on the enormous jewel of the sea" (13) – and thus establishes a firm sense of individual subjectivity. The selfhood Will brings to Pala is an explicitly imperial one, with the "jewel of the sea" – its diamonds and jade – as pirate's booty, but he is always already vulnerable to the self-transcendence Huxley sees as integral to the psychedelic experience.

After his vessel starts to founder in the jewel-like harbor, Will manages, "by sheer miracle, to take his sinking boat through the breakers and run it aground on the only sandy beach in all those miles of Pala's rock-bound coast" (13). Readers thus encounter the landscape Huxley will use to explore the process of subjecting the mind to a psychedelic experience. The island, a motif we shall see again in the work of Alex

Garland, has been an ideal site for utopia since Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1515).⁴⁴ Like More's utopia, Huxley's island is "rock-bound," an image of enclosed, singular subjectivity, an intransigence that halts the transience of the traveler and acts as a precondition for utopia. Will does manage to find a vulnerability, a sandy beach that allows him to penetrate the island, but Pala remains an enclave:

The cliffs towered above him; but at the head of the cove there was a kind of headlong ravine where a little stream came down in a succession of filmy waterfalls, and there were trees and bushes growing between the walls of grey limestone. Six or seven hundred feet of rock climbing – in tennis shoes, and all the footholds slippery with water. And then, dear God! those snakes. (13)

The forbidding nature of the climb Will has to make – up a slick wall of stone inhabited by snakes – secures the locale as isolated and inaccessible, a place marked by exclusivity and remoteness. Meanwhile, the use of the word "filmy" to qualify the stone walls enclosing paradise renders paradise ephemeral, obscured, and obscuring. In its mystery and undecidability, the island attains a visionary quality wherein the traveler can project a paradise of his own devising. In much the way that an island can be understood as a miniature model of the world, the world, like the "totality ... present even in the broken pieces" (*Doors* 33), can be found within the island.

Despite these generally positive interpenetrations, a utopian island requires, as Fredric Jameson points out, strict secession from mainstream society in order to function. The "ruthlessness of Utopian foreign policy" (*Archaeologies* 5) necessary for maintaining those distinctions between us and them, inside and outside, tends to result in the downfall of utopia. Essentially, encasing an ideal society in a nearly impenetrable barrier, a common trope in utopian fiction and culture (futuristic cities globed in glass, for

⁴⁴ Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) has also proven influential to the genre because it "generated a series of further elaborations of the island narrative, particularly after the work's utopian potential had been endorsed by that great patron of modern utopianism, Rousseau" (Bann 3).

example, or the fortified compounds of religious cults), preserves cultural exclusivity, with two opposing effects. Such a motif first produces a sense of solidarity, but the towering cliffs or the barbed-wire, there ostensibly to keep outsiders out, also immobilizes those who dwell within and cuts them off from the outside world they paradoxically require for their own senses of exclusivity and for whatever artistic or societal changes they imagine themselves to be effecting. Mr. Bahu, the ambassador of Rendang, offers insight into the circumscription of Palanese utopia:

So long as it remains out of touch with the rest of the world, an ideal society can be a viable society. Pala was completely viable, I'd say, until about 1905. Then, in less than a single generation, the world completely changed. Movies, cars, aeroplanes, radio. Mass production, mass slaughter, mass communication and, above all, plain mass. (66)

The ambassador politely implies that Pala, trying to perpetuate an idyllic existence out of sorts with reality, is hopelessly outdated. His comments suggest that their naiveté renders the Palanese unable to cope with mass society. As a resident of Rendang, however, Mr. Bahu is a mouthpiece for Huxley's notion that mass society requires a further shoring up of exclusivity (as opposed to an attempt to engage with and therefore perhaps solve the problems associated with mass production and mass slaughter). As I suggested in the previous chapter, Huxley's elitist attitudes are problematic, not least because of the fascist potential Jameson locates within utopian ideals. The immobilization immanent within the mobility necessary to establish utopia draws attention to the fact that limitations obtrude upon the artistic and societal interventions these utopias are supposed to be effecting.

The novel develops this link between the exoticism of exclusivity and the horror of isolation in other ways as well. For instance, Will says, "Even outside of Pala one can

find occasional islands of decency. Tiny little atolls, or even, every now and then, a full-blown Tahiti – but always totally surrounded by the Essential Horror” (274). Assuming, of course, that he is conveniently ignoring the history of imperial conquest informing twentieth-century Western romanticizations of Tahiti, Will’s glorification of isolation stands tempered by its sharp contrast with the horror on the outside. Similarly describing death, Will says, “For of course nobody can help, nobody can ever be present. People may stand by while you are suffering and dying; but they’re standing by in another world. In *your* world you’re absolutely alone” (275). Will seizes upon the horrors of loneliness, of “an isolated consciousness, a child’s, a boy’s, a man’s, forever isolated, irremediably alone” (276), indicating that he has glimpsed the full duality of isolation, both its exotic potential and the stark way it makes the self conscious of its own limits. The idea, therefore, that the remoteness of a travel destination indexes its value as a repository of alterity runs up against the elitism that suggests that discovering and deploying that alterity drains it of its subversive power. By consequence, the concept of “tripping” as a potentially subversive act abuts upon the realm of imperialism when its practitioners, by virtue of *being* “trippers,” must constantly scour the globe for locations untouched by other “trippers.” The problems associated with Huxley’s island enclave, the restraints it imposes upon its inhabitants and the exceptionality it foments, highlight the imperial dimensions of Huxley’s coding of the psychedelic experience as travel.

Nevertheless, perpetual travel and the constant redefining of what constitutes the remote and the exotic has, within the logic of “tripping,” a corrosive effect on selfhood that can be coded positively or negatively. When Will gets to the top of the cliff and breaches the boundary between the exotic and the mundane, he is shaken: “Violently,

uncontrollably, he was trembling from head to foot” (14), and later, “his body had ceased to belong to him. Someone else was in charge, someone malevolently determined to humiliate him, to make him suffer” (18). Will’s first encounter with the otherness of Pala causes him to feel that something or someone else has transgressed the boundaries of his identity. Will experiences this initial instance of dispossession as humiliating and the presence of the transgressive force as malevolent, yet the full import of crossing boundaries does not yet register with him. The loss of selfhood, which “tripping” will later encode as empowering, is for now terrifying. Since visionary, transcendent experiences tend radically to transform individuals, the motif of the loss of bodily control, of a negatively-coded deindividuation or loss of selfhood, recurs in the literatures of travel and in the literatures of drugs. In both genres, the loss of bodily control represents the surrender to otherness, a confounding of the borders of bodily identity that leads to paralysis. That the dissolution of selfhood can be re-characterized as a *displacement* of selfhood indicates the important role spatializing consciousness plays in “tripping.” In much the same way that mysticism implies the exploration of a transcendent realm from the perspective of an ordinary one – a combination of mobility and stasis – Will is able to participate in Palanese society but, after an injury, must hobble around for much of the novel with an “immobilized leg” (185). This synecdoche for limited mobility, of stasis-within-mobility, reflects the tension between the forceful assertion of an enclosed and resolved identity (embedded, for instance, in the name Will) and the subsequent unstable selfhood, of not having a leg to stand on.

Will reflects such a tension in other ways. His primary role is that of journalist, a profession that would occupy an increasingly prominent yet uncertain place in the

American public imagination as the 1960s would unfold and as the so-called new journalists such as Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, and Hunter S. Thompson would blur the boundary between reporter and participant. Huxley deploys the newly uncertain status of the journalist to help explore one of the primary themes of *Island*: the instability of identity.⁴⁵ For Will is not only a journalist:

In another manifestation he was the South-East Asia Petroleum Company, he was Imperial and Foreign Copper Limited. Officially, Will had come to Rendang to sniff the death in its militarized air; but he had also been commissioned to find out what the dictator felt about foreign capital, what tax rebates he was prepared to offer, what guarantees against nationalization. (28)

In playing this dual role as reporter on the impending conquest of Pala and active agent for foreign petrochemical industries, Will subordinates his identity as an individual, *becoming* the conglomerate (“he *was* the South-East Asia Petroleum Company”), yet remains still somewhat committed to the conventionally understood role of the journalist as mimetic reproducer of reality. In this dual sense, Will sends whiffs of “militarized air” back home to citizens presumably concerned about Rendang’s military power while at the same time himself helping to catalyze Pala’s destruction. His conflicted role as journalist and agent of change, therefore, speaks to those pervasive anxieties about where textual, political, and bodily boundaries lie, and at the same time, the multiplicity of his character serves to keep meaning – of drugs, of character, of travel – open and rewritable.

In this volatile role, Will embodies the clash of genres that marks Huxley’s novel. Critics – in their tamer moments – have accused *Island* of didacticism, of blurring to a too great extent the boundaries between expository essay and narrative fiction. The lengthy philosophical monologues (what David King Dunaway calls “speechifying”

⁴⁵ Parts of Huxley’s portrait of Will probably arise out of the author’s general distaste for journalism. He found the work exhausting and intellectually dishonest, telling some journalism students in 1957 that it was “an awfully good field to get into, if you make sure that you get out of it” (qtd. in Murray 163).

[xiii]) occlude character development, they argue; utopian sexual or pedagogical institutions are described instead of shown; and the book is essentially plotless. Not really a novel and not really an essay, *Island* evokes anxiety in part because of an abiding critical concern with clearly demarcated genres, an echo of the West's anxiety over ostensibly pure states of consciousness. A text that deliberately incorporates alterity, like a consciousness deliberately altered, violates a primal literary taboo Derrida articulates in "The Law of Genre": "as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity" (57). There is, of course, an argument to be made for rejecting the "impurity" of *Island* on aesthetic grounds, but doing so ignores the possibility, as Derrida puts it, that "lodged within the heart of the law itself [is] a law of impurity or a principle of contamination" (57) that *compels* mixing. Despite Will's autonomy-asserting name, his inescapable role as journalist and agent of change represents Huxley's compulsion to mix. Those critics, such as Harold H. Watts, who call *Island* an aesthetic failure because it is "a mixture of most of the genres in which Huxley worked" (145), exemplify an investment in the notion of pure genres and thus an anxiety over policing their borders.⁴⁶

The novel, in opposition to these critiques, tries to trouble borders in part by distancing the "tripping" subject from purely Western science, rationalism, religion, and modes of intoxication. The human subject is inherently irrational, long before the destruction of selfhood begins. The dissolving self Huxley anticipates in Will Farnaby's unruly body and conflicted role as visitor to the island is in fact the precursor to the destruction of these confining Western constructs and the creation of a new "tripping"

⁴⁶ By contrast Wayne Booth asserts in an early review that *Island*, as an "amalgam of narrative and undisguised ideas" (630), thwarts novelistic conventions in ways that should "be handled by both author and reader lightly, even playfully" (631).

subjectivity. The Principal of a Palanese school says: “Violent feelings, we tell the children, are like earthquakes. They shake us so hard that cracks appear in the universal Buddha Nature. You get cross, something inside of you cracks and, through the crack, out comes a whiff of the heavenly smell of enlightenment” (243). The cracking subject and its expected metaphor of decay get rewritten in this passage. No longer merely the victim of corrosion, the “tripping” subject releases the enlightenment within in the form of a heavenly odor “[l]ike champak, like ylang-ylang, like gardenias – only infinitely more wonderful” (243). As part of a larger reformulation of the relationship between inside and outside, Huxley’s decaying subject becomes, through the novel’s critiques of conventional subjectivity, liberated from Western strictures and recoded as one that always already contains enlightenment, that both seeks out and encloses a Shelleyan oneness, that foregrounds – to return to the language of *The Doors of Perception* – the “totality” over the “broken pieces.”

This notion of releasing the enlightenment within has an unexpected effect on the concept of “tripping.” Ingestion and consumption are no longer (if indeed they ever were) a way of encountering otherness. Instead, Palanese culture understands consumption as a means of attaining awareness of the present moment in order to attain awareness of the otherness within. On Pala, Will’s guide first explains,

we don’t say grace *before* meals, we say it *with* meals. Or rather we don’t *say* grace; we chew it....Grace is the first mouthful of each course – chewed and chewed until there’s nothing left of it. And all the time you’re chewing you pay attention to the flavour of the food, to its consistency and temperature, to the pressures on your teeth and the feel of the muscles in your jaws. (230)

As a version of what Tilmann Vetter calls “spiritualized materialism” (7), chewing grace is “[a]ttention to the experience of something given, something you haven’t invented”

(230), what Huxley calls “[t]hings without pretensions, satisfied to be merely themselves, sufficient in their suchness” (*Doors* 23). Like the island’s trained mynah birds that repeatedly call out the reminders “Attention” and “Here and now,” the *moksha* medicine, which the Palanese call a “reality revealer,” focuses attention on the present moment in order to open up the “reducing valve” of the mind and permit what Will calls “a union with unity in a limitless, undifferentiated awareness” (309).⁴⁷ Despite the Buddhist incarnation here of the concept of mindfulness, a focus on the present world has a long tradition in American thinking and would appear in countercultural discourse subsequent to the publication of this novel.⁴⁸ Huxley framing his novel with the concept of mindfulness (“Attention” is the first and last word of *Island*) allows Will Farnaby’s consumption of *moksha* at the climax of the novel to reverse *Brave New World*’s drugs-as-escape formulation. It also allows Will to fuse his self-as-monad with the not-self-of-transcendence to achieve an elevated perspective on his own sensory experiences. The Palanese concept of selfhood, a reconciliation of conscious consumption and the unconscious dwelling in transcendence, allows the *moksha* user to, in the words of one island dweller, “catch a glimpse of the world as it looks to someone who has been liberated from the bondage of the ego” (158).

As Will comes to understand this need for attention and this recasting of selfhood, he has a series of encounters with otherness, the most striking of which revolve around

⁴⁷ The mynah birds are often cited as one of the more transparently didactic elements of *Island*. Huxley foregrounds this didacticism, though, throughout the novel, drawing out its self-evidence as a way of altering conventionally aesthetic perception. On the other hand, though, Geoff Jaeger makes the valid point that *Island* has been criticized in part because it “does not take advantage of the metafictional features already evident in the text and use them in a more deliberately intrusive manner” (130).

⁴⁸ For example, Rowland A. Sherrill describes Ralph Waldo Emerson’s philosophy as “an ideal form of American self-definition radically rooted in the primary data of the experiential domain: the authentic person comes to full integrity by virtue of that person’s possession of his or her experience in the most heightened ways” (222).

the image of a praying mantis. Insects seem to take on peculiar prominence in drug literature, possibly because of our contradictory relationship with them: they share our spaces; they permeate our language and culture; they are, for many of us, the first forms of other life we encounter; but at the same time, they are profoundly disturbing to us due to their radically alien segmented bodies, their tendency to metamorphose, their multiplicity, and the uncanny features Eric C. Brown identifies when he refers to “their armored exoskeletons, their relatively superheroic strength, their incessant seasonal reappearances, seemingly out of nowhere, and especially their tendency to become virtually two-dimensional when slipping through wall cracks or cabinet seams” (xii).⁴⁹ Though the mantis comes to signify most insistently in the novel’s climactic chapter, it makes an earlier appearance following a scene in which Will is given a brief history of the role of hypnosis on Pala. A mantis alights nearby, and Dr. MacPhail examines it closely through a magnifying glass: “‘*Gongylus gongyloides*,’ he pronounced. ‘It dresses itself up to look like a flower. When unwary flies and moths come sailing in to sip the nectar, it sips *them*. And if it’s a female, she eats her lovers’” (146). In explaining how the mantis “sips” its insect victims, Dr. MacPhail (whose name foreshadows the downfall of Pala) reverses the predator-prey relationship and thereby intimates the potential horrors lying in wait alongside consciousness alteration.⁵⁰ The drug user consumes a

⁴⁹ On the mantis more specifically, Nicky Coutts’ essay in Brown’s edited collection *Insect Poetics* makes a note of that insect’s ambivalence: “on the one hand, it more closely resembles human form than most other insects; on the other, it is precisely because of this familiarity, blended disconcertingly with the unfamiliar, that it appears so overwhelmingly strange and ‘otherworldly’ to us” (298-299). The strangeness and seeming irrationality of insects generally places them in long-standing discourses of madness and, as some who “bug out” on drugs may attest, discourses of intoxication.

⁵⁰ That this horror appears in the guise of a dangerous, loathsome female – as it did in the corpse-like appearance of Babs – is another one of these moments that should give us pause over Huxley’s ideological stance toward gender. Beyond the scope of this chapter are questions concerning the relation between “the overrepresentation of male authors in the pharmaco-panthéon” (Lenson xv) and the tendency to embody dangerous alterity in feminine form, as well as connections between the mantis’ monstrous consumption

substance of choice with the expectation of pleasurable or enlightening or healing results, but the semiotics of drugs ensures that this relationship can in fact operate in both directions. Ingesting a mind-altering substance forms the “tripping” subject, but the potential results of that ingestion cast the self in unpredictable ways depending on whether the ingestion produces pleasure or exposes the user to the “Essential Horror.”

Undoing the Self

This section of Chapter Four will examine how the novel depicts Will’s responses to these profound changes in consciousness. The fifteenth and final chapter of the novel, as something of a full flowering of the ideas Huxley outlines in *Heaven and Hell* but has only hinted at thus far in the novel, is taken up almost wholly by Will’s *moksha* experience. First, a rewriting of selfhood: “Behind his closed eyelids an ocean of luminous bliss poured upwards like an inverted cataract. Poured upwards from union into completer union, from impersonality into a yet more absolute transcendence of selfhood” (310). The “inverted cataract” overturns the “filmy waterfalls” that first presented such an obstacle to Will’s penetration of Pala. The play on the word “cataract” alludes also to blindness, with its inversion now granting Will access to transcendent truth and beauty. The second sentence implies a hierarchy of self-constructions: “impersonality,” a milder form of ego-transcendence, is desirable in the way “union” is, but “completer union” brings one closer to the complete transcendence of selfhood. The term “luminous bliss” affirms the desirability of abdicating identity in this fashion.

Moments after entering this state of bliss, Will claims: “This, self-evidently, was the mind’s natural state” (309). This construction seems to oppose his earlier imperial

and the modernist anxiety over how mechanization and industrialization were leading to the general feminization of mass society itself.

eyes and their tendency to shape and sculpt the natural world into consumable objects. Now valorizing the natural world, Will is able to accommodate the alterity in which drug users traffic. His deployment of “nature” is, of course, consistent with the proximity of space to intoxication that the concept of “tripping” identifies. Once again, Huxley imagines the space of the outside world as one that helps Will Farnaby understand his drug experience. Like the windows of his flat in London that look out and are looked into, drugs confound categories of inside and outside. With this conceptual fluidity, Will again returns to the inversions that always seem just beneath the surface of the concept of consumption. To sip or be sipped? To eat or be eaten? Those are the questions. They are troublesome questions in part because the answer is always both at once.

Just prior to his experience of the hellish dimensions of the psychedelic experience, Will realizes that “Openness to bliss and understanding was also ... an openness to terror, to total incomprehension” (319). Since both states can arrive at the same time, Huxley uses several phrases that hint at their simultaneity. One such phrase appears in the sentence: “In the firmament of bliss and understanding, like bats against the sunset, there was a wild criss-crossing of remembered notions and the hangovers of past feelings” (309). The bats contaminate the transcendent vision of sunset with gothic horror. “[R]emembered notions,” repressed and uncanny, intrude upon the bliss of the experience, and “hangovers,” another of the novel’s negative evocations of alcohol, try to yank the transcendent subject back into the material agonies of the body and the poison of escapism.⁵¹

⁵¹ While I am suggesting here that these amalgam phrases mark Will’s transition from heaven to hell, they also evoke the *pleasurable* yoking of opposites that characterizes “tripping,” such as the experience of having “well-worn [and] familiar” knowledge become “novel and amazing” (313) perceptions under the influence of *moksha*. In one such example, Will opens his eyes and confronts a table and a rocking chair

Accompanying Will's panic in the face of this horrifying shift, though, is evidence of the desire – seemingly always beneath the surface even of positively coded ego destruction – to restabilize the self. Huxley writes: “By what sinister miracle had the mind's natural state been transformed into all these Devil's Islands of wretchedness and delinquency?” (309). The phrase “sinister miracle” again captures the process of fusing binary opposites, a process that hints at the simultaneous duality of Pala, of the religious and scientific histories of the island itself, and of the fusion of the dualities underlying, at a most fundamental level, the philosophy Huxley was attempting to articulate. His reference to “Devil's Islands,” however, in addition to having a preservative effect on selfhood by giving that self a place to be, turns the visionary potential of islands into vortices of horror. The “Devil's Islands” reference constitutes one of the reactionary colonial flashbacks through which Will wants to see Pala. It draws upon the rhetoric of travel to construct a space that will preserve the threatened self in the face of dangers to come. Typical of “tripping,” this move allows Will to shift his psychedelized mind from one riven by ontological uncertainty under the influence of dramatically altered perceptual frameworks to one whose boundaries are still intact but who is moving through the threatening space of “Devil's Islands.” A psychedelic, as Humphrey Osmond articulated, *manifests* the mind in space. Such manifestation, of course, reveals the ideological power of colonial discourse; the exotic space the traveler innocently visits (with ethnocentricities hidden in his luggage) inexplicably becomes the terrifying, incoherent space of the savage native.

against a wall. “How,” he asks, “was it possible that things so familiar and commonplace could be *this*?” (316). The familiar domestic scene becomes “*this*” – unfamiliar and irrational and impossibly beautiful – because altered states of consciousness short-circuit the rational process yet, to put it in F. Scott Fitzgerald's terms, nonetheless allow the subject “to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function” (*The Crack-Up* 69).

Now caught in a momentary “bad trip,” Will spots a so-called bloodsucker lizard on the floor. His openness to alterity has shifted into a fear of contamination and invasion: “Like some alien creature lodged within his chest and struggling in anguish, his heart started to beat with a violence that made him tremble” (319). The invasion of otherness again produces a terrifying loss of selfhood signaled by an unruly body. Like the Porter’s Gin sign that turned Will’s lover’s rosy countenance into a death mask, “A glow of sheer evil radiated from every grey-green scale of the [lizard]’s back, from its obsidian eyes and the pulsing of its crimson throat, from the armoured edges of its nostrils and its slit-like mouth” (319). Everything in the room takes on this same agonized appearance. The formerly beautiful Cubist abstractions of walls and furniture “had turned into intricate machines for doing nothing malevolently” (319), and the gem-like books on the shelf become “indescribably vulgar ... Christmas tree decorations, only the shallow glare of plastic and varnished tin” (319). The room becomes “a cosmic Woolworths stocked with mass-produced horrors” (319). Drawing on the mescaline experience he recounted in *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley characterizes Will’s horror in this moment in terms of mass culture. Will’s anxiety over consuming alterity becomes an anxiety over consumption in general. Huxley’s contemptuous view of mass culture informs both the subjective angst his psychedelized character is going through and the eventual destruction of Pala. For the moment, though, Will’s guide for the *moksha* experience, a Palanese woman named Susila, quickly defuses the horror of the lizard when she reassures Will that they do not actually suck blood: ““They merely have red throats and go purple in the face when they get excited. Hence that stupid name. Look! there he goes!”” (320).

Reassured only momentarily, Will then sees more wildlife in the room: two praying mantises mating. ““*Gongylus gongyloides*,”” Susila says, trying to keep him in the heavenly realm. ““Do you remember?”” (320). Will remembers, but doing so sends him back across the border into the hellish realm: as one of the “remembered notions” (309) that are “like bats against the sunset” (309), the mantises contaminate the holy vision and eventually precipitate a headlong rush into hell. First, Will gazes at the “inch-long monsters, exquisitely grisly” that nonetheless flutter “like petals in a breeze” (320). “[E]xquisitely grisly” is another combinatory phrase that signals a liminal state of mind, as is the proximity of monsters to petals. But “now even the flowery colours had undergone a change” (320). The insects, like the Woolworth’s gimcracks that were once jewel-like books, become “brightly enameled gadgets in the bargain basement” (320), another metaphor borrowed from disdained commodity culture to characterize a hellish drug experience. The mass-produced Woolworths knickknacks of Will’s previous oscillation into horror, like the bargain basement insects, signal Huxley’s investment in characterizing the hellish component of the drug experience in terms of commodity culture. The process of consuming drugs lies uneasily close to consumerism, to what Huxley will critique emphatically when the rapacious and greedy mobility of Rendang destroys Pala as utopian space. When consumption takes on the grotesque proportions of one mantis eating another, Huxley revises the notion of “chewing grace” Will first experienced as a wondrous aspect of Palanese society: “The female machine snapped at the oozing stump, caught it and, while the headless male uninterruptedly kept up his parody of Ares in the arms of Aphrodite, methodically chewed” (320). The methodical chewing, as a parody of chewing grace, foreshadows Rendang’s cannibalization of Pala

and urges discrimination between types of consumption that, despite superficial resemblances, produce radically opposed “trips.”⁵²

The hellish experience concludes when, most horribly of all, the lizard creeps over and eats both insects: “Protruding from between the champing jaws, the edge of a violet-tinted wing still fluttered, like an orchid petal in the breeze; a pair of legs waved wildly for a moment, then disappeared from view” (321). Momentarily flying yet immobile, the insect evokes that key paradoxical component of “tripping” we saw earlier in Will’s injured leg: paralysis-in-mobility. The insect’s momentary, futile (im)mobility reflects the tension Will feels between his embrace of his new perceptual vantage point and his complicity in Rendang’s invasion.⁵³ The lizard’s eventual savage, mindless, tragic consumption of the mantis echoes the hectoring language of anti-consumerist discourse Huxley uses to characterize a bad trip in *The Doors of Perception*. Because bad trips, for Huxley, reflect the mindless, utilitarian consumption at the heart of the contemporary experience, they surface here in *Island* to caution against the proximity of that kind of consumption to ideal, Palanese consumption.⁵⁴

⁵² The passage again echoes the scene between Will and his mistress, though – to Huxley’s credit – Will now recognizes *himself* as the exploitative party in that scene, consuming Babs in the act of lovemaking.

⁵³ This passage might be a sinister echo of a scene in Malcolm Lowry’s hallucinatory, alcohol-soaked novel *Under the Volcano* (1947), arguably another entry in the canon of “tripping” literature. In that scene, a cat is chasing an unspecified insect: “The creature had at last caught the insect but instead of devouring it, she was holding its body, still uninjured, delicately between her teeth, while its lovely luminous wings, still beating, for the insect had not stopped flying an instant, protruded from either side of her whiskers, fanning them” (144). The insect escapes unharmed. Momentarily flying yet immobile, the insect in Lowry’s novel, also constitutes an instance of paralysis-in-mobility. In *Island*, of course, this condition ends in death for the insect, another of Huxley’s indictments of rampant consumption.

⁵⁴ Though hellishness, via the horror of mass consumption, is the most prominent dimension of this scene, the image of petals fluttering in the wind again provides a temporary link back to the heavenly realm, another indication that these states are never mutually exclusive but rather contained within one another. “[T]he simultaneous agonies of death and copulation” (321) that replace his earlier heavenly visions remind Will that “[w]hat he was seeing now was the paradox of opposites indissolubly wedded, of light shining out of darkness, of darkness at the very heart of light” (328).

This proximity produces a problem typical in interpretations of this dimension of Huxley's psychedelic philosophy, a problem that rests on stereotypical conceptions of drugs. Gorman Beauchamp's article, for instance, in the process of situating *Island* in the genre of the utopia, calls the horrific aspects of Will's trip "a twist to Farnaby's vision that, momentarily at least, calls into question the efficacy of the *moksha*-medicine to reconcile the individual with the Universal Mind" (68). In minimizing Will's encounter with hell by calling it a "twist," in characterizing it as aberrant, Beauchamp makes the same mistake the counterculture – as Hunter S. Thompson would charge – made when it refused to accept the possibility of horror and failed to imagine the reconciliation of opposites. Beauchamp, as many seem to do, assumes any text about drugs should only be advocating or celebrating them. When the horror of a "bad trip" arises, it must be a "twist," a momentary anomaly in what should be an exclusively delightful experience. As Huxley says, though, in the Blakean vein that "Without contraries is no progression" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* pl. 3 ln. 7), a truly mystical experience can occur only after the subject has encountered *both* heaven and hell, unified them, and moved beyond them. "Mystical experience," he writes in *Heaven and Hell*, "is beyond the realm of opposites" (102), and the climax of Will Farnaby's drug experience occurs when he experiences an "awareness so acute and ... so absorbing that he had nothing to spare for the inner light or the horrors and vulgarities revealed by it" (326). He is a subject so "absorbing" that he is left exhausted by the experience, depleted and emptied by its intensity, and most importantly, *beyond* both visionary states of inner light and horror.

The simultaneous possibility within the psychedelic state of reconciliation and self-referentiality, however, reinforces Huxley's earlier need to spatialize the intoxicated

self. In one such instance of spatialization, Will notes that experiencing eternity involves inhabiting the paradoxical space of “out there, in here and nowhere” (314). As a result of this spatial understanding, his oscillation between states has the potential to be an endless spiralling in on himself. ““One slips back so easily,”” Susila says, ““Much too easily. And much too often”” (329). Swinging back and forth between heaven and hell, oscillating between “out there” and “in here,” produces that state so characteristic of “tripping”: ceaseless mobility leading to immobility in a liminal state. This immobilization, dependent on states of mind as spaces, constitutes Huxley’s caution against solipsism and mindless indulgence in the experience of mind-alteration. Self-referentiality, he warns, can lead to restriction and self-arrest.

Undoing Pala

In the final part of the novel, Huxley extends the consequences of this type of consumption and its spatial analogue to depictions of Rendang. Immediately following Will’s final revelation, Rendang invades Pala. Looking out the window for one more moment of ecstasy, Will stands “motionless, gazing, gazing through a timeless succession of mounting intensities and ever profounder significances” (332). Will is immobilized by the throes of psychedelic pleasure, and the repetition of the word “gazing,” besides recalling the need for focused attention, also momentarily immobilizes the text. Such stasis occurs at the instant Rendang deploys mobility for its imperialist invasion of Pala. Travel, so often undertaken and represented in the service of empire, is here aligned with immobility and the petrifying image of one island cannibalizing another. Those invocations of paralysis constitute a chief feature of the concept of “tripping.” The

surrogate movement drugs provide and the metaphors of alterity travel makes available, ostensibly in the service of imaginatively empowering “trippers,” can have the effect of confining and impoverishing them when deployed without due care and attention.

As spaces that reflect psychedelized consciousness, Pala and Rendang consolidate their borders in part through practices of consumption. Those practices help explain the kinds of spaces “tripping” produces in this novel and help reveal some of the problems inherent in Huxley’s cautionary narrative. In contrast to the close attention to the moment characteristic of Palanese consumption that Dr. MacPhail evokes when he says “we make a point of being materialists concretely” (174), Rendang’s abstract thirst for oil and aggressive foreign policy enact rapacious, destructive, and mindless forms of consumption. Pala’s future rajah, for instance, a sulky adolescent named Murugan who resents his own island’s enlightened primitivism, establishes an obsequious homosexual relationship with the leader of Rendang and gets introduced to Western-style consumerism through a Sears Roebuck catalogue. The catalogue seduces Murugan with images of motorbikes, guns, and lacy undergarments. The pointless variety of the items in the catalogue, together with its status as an item of glossy mass-mediation, establishes Western-style consumption as abstract, superficial, and in sharp contradistinction to the concrete materialism of the Palanese. As sexual “deviant” and conspicuous consumer, Murugan precipitates Pala’s contamination.⁵⁵ Through Murugan (and through Will in his early complicity as representative for Big Oil), Huxley cautions against mass society’s

⁵⁵ The homophobic resonances in Huxley’s depiction of Murugan, one of the most obvious problems with this formulation, should be noted here. These resonances remind us that “tripping” frequently requires orthodox, heterosexist masculinities – with more than a dose of machismo – in order for it to authorize the reciprocal relationship between travel and drugs. “Domesticating” the disturbing psychedelic experience, for instance, demands the kind of (decidedly non-domestic) imperial mobility usually associated with and valorized by masculinity.

rapacious interest in intoxicating substances. Consuming an agent of alterity allows the gluttonous consumer to discover the alterity within, but under certain circumstances, such discovery can turn into inescapable, mindless self-interest.

As Jerome Meckier has pointed out in his article “Cancer in Utopia: Positive and Negative Elements in Huxley’s *Island*,” oil consumption serves as commentary upon *moksha* consumption, with Huxley employing the metaphor of cancer – a disease from which he was suffering at the time of the novel’s composition and that would claim him less than a year after its publication – to criticize mindless consumption. Cancer, says Mary Sarojini, one of the children Will first encounters on Pala, is “what happens when part of you forgets all about the rest of you and ... just goes on blowing itself up and blowing itself up as if there was nobody else in the whole world” (281). The consciousness expansion offered by *moksha*, like the dark side of the cellular biology upon which we depend for life, carries with it the potential for endless self-referentiality, for addiction, for the possibility of producing a solipsistic ego overly preoccupied with its own material existence and threatening to destroy the social body in which it resides. Rendang’s oil consumption, linked to the conspicuous consumption represented by the Sears Roebuck catalogue, stems from isolated egotism and cancerous self-referentiality: the simple power to consume eclipses the possibility of dissolving the ego through the encounter with otherness.

By contrast, Georges Poulet, in discussing the effects language has on the world and subjectivity, provides a construction useful to understanding mindful mind-alteration: “since everything has become part of my mind thanks to the intervention of language, the opposition between the subject and its objects has been considerably attenuated” (58).

Such rapprochement, far from undesirable to the “tripping” subject, is what Poulet identifies as psychic elasticity, as freedom “from my usual sense of incompatibility between my consciousness and its objects” (58). Such freedom produces an “astonished consciousness” (63) out of a greater, more productive “intimacy” (59) between self and alterity. In mindful consumption, the subject and the object temporarily become one. Echoing this formulation, Pala becomes a space of enlightened primitivism Will and the Palanese use to reflect and understand the psychedelic experience.

As Marianna Torgovnick notes, however, “the West’s fascination with the primitive has to do with its own crises of identity, with its own need to clearly demarcate subject and object even while flirting with other ways of experiencing the universe” (96). This is precisely the theme “tripping” pinpoints in Huxley’s work: seeking alternate forms of perception and subjectivity, even “mindfully,” frequently also reaffirms the difference between object and subject, them and us, there and here. For Huxley, the Palanese serve this fundamentally nostalgic end and thus signify his neo-colonial investment in primitivism.

Readers glimpse that investment at several places earlier in the novel. For example, in one of Huxley’s few self-reflexive gestures – a moment he perhaps imagined was a self-deprecating comment on *Island*’s own material circulation as literary commodity – he has a Palanese teacher say to Will: “what trouble we have with books in this climate! The paper rots, the glue liquefies, the bindings disintegrate, the insects devour. Literature and the tropics are really incompatible” (206). This representation of the tropics as corrosive and antithetical to traditional literary endeavor depends upon a stereotypical understanding of “the tropics” as a land of sensuality, spontaneity, and

contingency – a land too primitive for literature. In other words, *Island* flashes back to standard colonial canards as it attempts to display contemptuous disregard for consumption. In another such instance, the desire for a stable, authoritative self sneaks into the supposedly counterhegemonic and creatively resubjectifying Palanese philosophy. Such philosophy attempts to articulate an indissoluble union of self and other and of heaven and hell, with the island's preeminent mystical text, deflatingly called *Notes on What's What*, assailing the basic foundations of Western rationalism: "The religiously-minded dualist calls home-made spirits from the vasty deep. The non-dualist calls the vasty deep into his spirit, or, to be more accurate, he finds that the vasty deep is already there" (205). The Palanese reject dualism on the grounds that it denies the permeability of the self to what the passage calls "the vasty deep," embracing instead non-dualism for its ability to relocate "the vasty deep" within the subject and make the search *out there* for knowledge and awareness unnecessary. The *Notes on What's What* explicitly says: "Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there" (42). Founding Palanese philosophy thus seeks to *restrict* mobility, to underscore its uselessness and to turn mobility into liability. Palanese philosophy embraces change in one breath but reveals, in the next breath, its investment in the stable unitary subject, constrained to the space of "already there" and unmolested by the inconstancy of travel.

These figurations anticipate other ways Huxley reveals the importance of neo-primitivism in his constructions of the spaces of Pala and Rendang. Huxley's injunction against mass culture, in which consumerism can never be a source of liberating alterity because its hypersimulated sphere inhibits productive collisions between illusion and

reality, reaffirms his elitist views. Such views, on display in *The Doors of Perception*, *Heaven and Hell*, and other earlier writings, serve to narrow the scope of people he deems worthy of productive psychedelic realignment. Denigrating consumerism on the grounds of aesthetics or culture or morality, which is perhaps most insistent in Huxley's work in *Brave New World* and its caution against the passive consumption of Western commodity culture, would appear wholesale in countercultural critiques of mainstream society and serve to establish clearly demarcated boundaries and incontrovertible hierarchies between the natural world and the world of commodities, and between those who take drugs for enlightenment and those who take drugs out of a mindless desire to consume. Aside from its obvious simplifications, Huxley's distrust of mass culture overlooks the alternative modes of consumption offered by the semiotics of excessive drug consumption itself. Avital Ronell's theorization of "fractal interiorities," for instance, obviates the charges of solipsism so often attached to drug use by including within the mind itself, in the way it unfolds infinitely into itself, what Huxley would term the Mind-at-Large. By evading these possibilities in his attack on mass culture, Huxley is himself guilty of domesticating drugs and cementing consciousness alteration as the sole privilege of an intellectual elite.

Huxley acknowledges subversive potential, but his spatial dichotomization of modes of consumption into "Pala" and "Rendang" submerges it in elitist cynicism. He thus tends to frame utopian consumption in *Island* as imbued with a sense of nostalgia for colonial modes of drug consumption. Such consumption would constitute an example of what Peter Mason, inspired by Derrida's general argument in *Writing and Difference*, calls "the violence of comprehension" (2), a process that tends "to reduce other to self ...

[and] to deprive the other of the very alterity by which the other *is* other” (2). In its efforts to unite with the Mind at Large, to bridge the gulf between the ego and the infinite, the self Huxley articulates in *Island* might not be taking into account how its own permeability collapses distinctions, how it might in fact be domesticating alterity. Will Farnaby’s anxiety over his disintegrating identity, over the hell-within-heaven he discovers inside his own mind, can be assuaged by inhabiting a utopian destination with its careful regulation, its secure boundaries, and its “enlightened” modes of consumption. Moreover, turning on the intellectual mind for the sake of constructing a philosopher king (e.g. Pala’s Dr. MacPhail) sets aside all of the other minds in the community who, because of their dangerous potential interest in mass culture, cannot have a voice in constructing a genuinely resistant heterotopia.

In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin quotes a lengthy and deeply snobbish passage from Huxley’s *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, concluding that Huxley’s conception of mass society “is obviously not progressive” (248 n. 14).⁵⁶ Huxley’s problematic translation of this attitude into a literary conceit intended to caution against mass culture, for all of its problems as I have outlined them above, nonetheless has something of a progressive effect. Often lost in clichéd, ironic, or dismissive representations of drugs and drug users is Huxley’s representation of selfhood as simultaneously permeable to infinity yet vulnerable, via inattention and arrogance about subsuming difference, to what amounts to the colonization of consciousness

⁵⁶ The passage Benjamin quotes includes the following lament about how mechanical reproduction has increased exponentially the amount of art and literature being produced while only allowing the number of talented people (Huxley calls them “men”) to increase geometrically: “It follows from all this that in all the arts the output of trash is both absolutely and relatively greater than it was in the past; and that it must remain greater for just so long as the world continues to consume the present inordinate quantities of reading-matter, seeing-matter, and hearing-matter” (*Beyond the Mexique Bay* 274).

Chapter 5

What's He Smoking?:

Drugs and Backpacking in Alex Garland's *The Beach*

While Aldous Huxley's *Island* lingers on the edges of cultural amnesia, virtually unread today thanks in part to a general backlash against the very counterculture he helped inaugurate, Alex Garland's complex, ironic novel *The Beach* (1997) occupies the oxymoronic status of best-selling cult novel.⁵⁷ Similarly, while the image of Huxley is that of a remote, cerebral scholar from Surrey with an indomitable intellectual pedigree, Garland's is that of a precocious, Gen-X writer whose brooding author photographs suggest more than a passing acquaintance with the contemporary youth culture of the streets of London. These contrasts, in addition to the themes and tropes *The Beach* and *Island* have in common, evoke some of the other facets of "tripping" Garland's novel will illuminate as I examine its representations of drugs through the particular conceit of smoking. Like Huxley's spatialization of two islands that allows for preserving a unified self in response to drug-induced permeability, Garland, too, produces a particular kind of beach in response to a sense of self, engendered by its encounter with cannabis, that understands the world as a Baudrillardian one in which "authenticities" circulate as commodities. Like Huxley establishing and demolishing a utopian set of possibilities

Parts of this chapter appear, in quite different form, in my article, "Trafficking Trips: Drugs and the Anti-Tourist Novels of Hunter S. Thompson and Alex Garland." *Studies in Travel Writing* 11.2 (2007): 127-53.

⁵⁷ I am not the first person to suggest a connection between Garland's novel and the now-obscure *Island*. A *Times Literary Supplement* review, reproduced in the front matter of the Riverhead paperback edition of *The Beach*, also makes this connection.

distinctly suited to the 1960s, Garland conceives of and criticizes utopian possibilities in a globalized, twenty-first-century, “post-tourist” world.

Garland’s novel, operating under the influence of countercultural notions of global bohemianism that Huxley and Huxley-inspired writers both romanticized and criticized, is about a twenty-something backpacker in Thailand named Richard. Typical of what Graham Huggan calls the anti-tourist tourist, Richard is a “sensitive, sometimes tortured soul [with] felt contempt for the vulgarities of package tourism and romantic belief in the myth of an unsullied Native culture” (198). Richard arrives on the Ko Sanh Road in Bangkok, a street of guest houses, bootlegged videotape vendors, and other backpacker necessities. “The main function of the street,” Richard tells us, “was as a decompression chamber for those about to leave or enter Thailand; a halfway house between the East and the West” (5). As a liminal space similar to the desert that so fascinated Aldous Huxley, the Ko Sanh Road supplies some of the dislocating alterity the backpacker craves, but as James Annesley points out, “Garland’s character sees Thailand transformed into a diluted and deterritorialized culture in which everything is ‘halfway’ between one thing and the other” (562). Richard, as an anti-tourist backpacker, uses his assumptions about cultural and national purity to denigrate the Ko Sahn Road, a synecdoche for Thailand, as emblematic of the pervasive inauthenticity of the mainstream tourist world. This tourist space serves as a distinct contrast to the space Richard will produce when he finds a map depicting an exclusive beach on a protected, tourist-free island near Ko Samui, a fantastic space, an idyllic locale where “a select community of travelers pass the months” (58). Tourists, and even fellow backpackers not enlightened enough to leave their Lonely Planet guidebooks behind, are not worthy of the beach. The

“island commune of free spirits” (98), as Richard imagines it, constitutes utopian escape from an inauthentic, contaminated country.

In sharing the topos of the exotic, exclusive island, Garland and Huxley employ similar means of thematizing the fraught dialectic between mobility and immobility, freedom and imprisonment, inside and outside, and heaven and hell. In delineating specific kinds of space, their novels also both thematize the ways intoxicated consciousness can be understood using space and spatialization. *The Beach* does, however, reimagine “tripping” in an important new context. It is a so-called post-tourist novel, a type of fiction that came into its own in the early 1960s following the enormous growth in mass tourism engendered by more affordable air travel and a boom in guidebook publishing, and exemplified by writers Casey Blanton calls “splenetic travelers” (82): figures such as V.S. Naipaul and, I would add, Paul Theroux. The crankiness of Naipaul and Theroux often appeals to a younger generation of post-tourist writers dealing with modern global travel, some of whom adopt and reproduce, and some of whom are critical about, such rhetoric and perspective. The contemporary post-tourist tourist can splenetically lament the lack of authentic travel experiences and search high and low for them, as Garland’s Richard does, or he can acknowledge that the staged reproduction of an ancient custom or the decontextualized “local” ceremony are spectacles put on for tourists with enough disposable income to witness them. Steeped in the logic of late twentieth-century global capitalism, either version of the post-tourist novel can claim, to different ends, that mass culture, mass commodification, and mass consumption have obviated the search for the kind of “authenticity” that Huxley’s nostalgic utopia proposed. Huxley and Garland both seek to locate utopia’s corrupting

influences simultaneously inside and outside the utopian community, but *The Beach* is especially critical of the naïveté of late twentieth-century global travelers who, despite their fluency in irony, nonetheless hope that the remote, isolated island will allow them to distinguish themselves from “other travelers.” *The Beach* criticizes, therefore, what Diana Loxley calls the “ideological process of wish-fulfilment” (3) concomitant with utopianism, and it does so in the ways it joins travel and drugs together.

As my previous discussions of travel and drugs have proposed, the two concepts are primarily about encounters with and responses to otherness. I wish to emphasize again, though, that drugs and travel are not interchangeable as sources of otherness, nor do they operate in consistent ways within a given text. The characters in *The Beach* see conventional travel as depressingly commodified, as a source of thoroughly attenuated cultural otherness, of alterity watered down by mass tourism and the mass mediation of that tourism. Life on the beach purports to offer a “real” alternative to tourism and thus an “authentic” means of harnessing the alterity of the drug experience, but the novel satirizes it as stagnant and imprisoning. This portrait of travel, as I will discuss, inflects the novel’s depiction of the alterity of cannabis in various ways, but it does so by means, thus far unacknowledged, of depictions of nicotine consumption. This chapter, therefore, refracts the portrait of the relationship between travel and drugs offered in the previous chapter and provides insight into how Garland uses travel to generate an ambivalent, discriminating representation of drugs.

As is often the case with literary representations of intoxicating substances, drugs in *The Beach* allow fact and fiction to interpenetrate, blending and juxtaposing reality and dreams so as to provide, at times, pleasurable new perceptions and innovative means of

subversion. Consistent with the ambivalent logic of “tripping,” though, Garland also depicts drugs as heavily distorted by mass mediatization, as perversely deployed for the preservation of cultural exclusivity, and as restrictive and immobilizing. Furthermore, by trafficking satirically in the motif of ridiculing tourism, Garland’s novel accuses the countercultural “traveler” of shoring up the same privileged identity with which the hegemonic, vulgar tourist commodifies cultural otherness. This mode of “tripping” allows Garland to imbue drugs with the capacities to reveal travel as a mélange of the authentic and the inauthentic and to destabilize the binary opposition between “traveler” and “tourist,” but it also sounds a cautionary note against assuming that utopian enclaves against globalization, cultural homogenization, and capitalism are possible or even desirable, especially when it comes to preserving the exclusivity of the drug experience.

Bratpacking

This section articulates the kind of travel – and the spaces through which such travel takes place – that Garland’s protagonist uses to anticipate his understanding of intoxication. In his 1999 article, John Hatcher calls *The Beach* an example of “backpacker fiction” (134), a genre that emerged particularly forcefully at the turn of the twenty-first century. This genre, aimed primarily at a youthful subset of North American and Anglo-European travelers, includes those recent novelists I mentioned in Chapter One – Sutcliffe, Fragoulis, Barr, Rhode, Boyle, and Ludington – who expose, in different ways, the conformist strains in supposedly rebellious travel and explode, deliberately or not, the anti-tourist sentiments young travelers use to construct stereotypes of popular destinations and other travelers. It dramatizes a particular kind of international budget

travel that first grew in popularity with the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Tony and Maureen Wheeler self-published *Across Asia on the Cheap* (1973) and *South-East Asia on a Shoestring* (1975), books that eventually became backpacker bibles and that paved the way for contemporary Lonely Planet guidebooks. Such travel tends to concern itself with a return to an Edenic state, and it thematizes the (sometimes contradictory) concerns of the backpacking subculture: unusual or exotic adventure, undertaken communally, as a rite of passage; free mobility as an indicator of self-reliant, individualist bohemianism; and authentic encounters with local culture as a means of distinguishing oneself from other tourists. The backpackers inhabit a series of cultural assumptions and contradictions that comprise a subjectivity strongly in opposition to (yet deeply reliant upon) the denigration of tourists.

Travel in *The Beach* is marked in several ways that help identify Garland's novel as a more self-reflexive example of this kind of recent travel fiction. Richard deploys anti-tourist discourse – characterizing other tourists as indistinguishable hordes and scornfully deindividualizing them, at one point, as “a balcony full of braided hair and dirty T-shirts” (23) – but his familiarity with the Ko Sanh Road and his white, middle-class privilege mark him indelibly as tourist. In another instance, Richard meets Zeph and Sammy, two spaced-out U.S. surfers who use phrases such as “Most totally excellent, dude!” and “Like, utterly outrageous, compadre!” (44). Initially fooled into getting his anti-tourist weapons at the ready, Richard soon discovers that they are in fact relatively lucid Harvard students: “Sammy was studying law, Zeph was studying Afro-American literature. Their surf act was a reaction to the condescending Europeans they kept meeting in Asia” (45). Richard appreciates their condescension, but in identifying them

as comrades-in-arms and making them a copy of the map, he misses the fact that he, as a condescending European, is the object of their ridicule. Zeph and Sammy, in echoing Burroughs' Ugly American persona and performing their role as vulgar tourists, function as self-conscious critics of the "tourist angst" (Hatcher 137) characteristic of Richard and his ilk.

Later, Richard speculates on the tourist-traveler dichotomy: "the one difference I could still latch onto was that tourists went on holidays while travelers did something else. They *traveled*" (98). Richard seizes upon conventional understandings of tourist activity as *easy*, while traveling, with its etymological roots in "travail," is presumably much more difficult and therefore much more laudable. Yet only a dozen pages earlier, as he confronts the difficulties of reaching the beach, he does what really can only be called ironic whining: "I was suddenly sick of how difficult this journey had become. There was too much effort, too many shocks and dilemmas to dissect" (86). Such a moment is one among several in which Garland makes clear the proximity of Richard to the tourists he so readily disparages. Another such moment involves Richard's mocking of the Lonely Planet guidebooks. Once a resource for "a select community" of alternative travelers, the guidebooks became hugely popular and, according to Garland's travelers, now signify pretentious, mainstream, derivative tourism. As James Annesley points out, though, Garland ironizes the fact that while his "characters condemn these books, there remains a strong affinity between their ideals and the ethos of the Lonely Planet guide" (553). Similarly, there remains an affinity, often unacknowledged by "real" travelers, between the conspicuous consumption of the tourist and the money

required for “real” traveling.⁵⁸ Garland thus strikes an ironic tone early in the novel and sustains it to critique the anti-tourist discourse so central to this supposedly countercultural type of travel.⁵⁹ We are primed early in the novel for an implicit critique of how Richard uses these dimensions of travel to understand his experiences with intoxication.

The guidebooks are a particularly useful instance of self-reflexivity, another of many clues that the author is not simply endorsing the discourse of “*real* travel.” Garland is well aware of the popularity of the Lonely Planet series and presumably equally well aware of the financial investment required of its adherents in spite of its purported function as a guide to parsimonious travel. Graham Huggan calls the Lonely Planet “that countercultural Baedeker for the modern budget traveller” (202), an interesting point of comparison in light of Dean MacCannell’s analysis in *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976) of the original Baedeker books as insistently upper class (60-62). Richard’s derision of the Lonely Planet’s tendency to popularize destinations and thus force the traveler to go elsewhere reminds us that the guidebooks have, for their publishers, the fortuitous effect of always relocating “elsewhere.” This “neat marketing manoeuvre ... ensures that the traveller always stays in motion” (Huggan 194), that the reading public always needs new guidebooks, and Garland presents Richard’s view of the “colonization” of Thailand as the inevitable, serial unfolding of touristic spoilage. To undermine Richard’s criticism of tourism, Garland juxtaposes his laments with his

⁵⁸ Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson highlight this affinity when they claim that the “traveler” forgets the “simple and obvious fact that overcoming distances requires time and money” (11), and likewise, Victor Alneng notes that “in a global context it takes a relatively gigantic purchasing power to go country-hopping for months on end” (484).

⁵⁹ Criticism of *The Beach* – academic and popular – almost universally identifies the novel as Garland’s attempt to criticize what Roger Bowen calls the “neocolonial desire” (44) to experience unmediated authenticity.

compulsion to spread the news to increasingly larger numbers of “lucky few” (58), to duplicate the map for others he feels are worthy in a gesture that renders him complicit in the spoilage of one paradise after another. In doing so, he can continue to bemoan the loss of exclusivity while shoring up his identity as privileged traveler and, in the words of John Frow, “to defer, perhaps endlessly the vanishing horizon of authenticity” (128).

We can grasp one of the consequences of this position early in the novel by casting that position in the conceptual terms of drug culture. Compelled unremittingly to find new paradises – addicted to travel, in other words – the backpackers are exchanging the ostensible freedom and opposition they amass through mobility for a pursuit that can only be everlasting, for an unbreakable attachment not only to the vulgar tourists who mark a destination as *passé* but to mobility itself, to mobility without end. Like the drug user who ingests forbidden substances and experiences contraindicated states of mind in order to capitalize on what Pierre Bourdieu calls the “distinction” of asserting an oppositional stance, the backpackers assert individualist, oppositional subjectivity by shunning distasteful mass tourism and embarking on “real” travel. But also like the junkie, the backpacker’s individual will gets replaced, in the acts of conspicuously displaying his or her traveling acumen through the demands of what *The Beach* calls “backpacker protocol” (37), by an addiction.

Inflected by this irony, the novel repeatedly calls attention to its own constructedness to undermine its protagonist’s authority. The novel’s extensive use of italics and its frequent chapter breaks, headings, and sub-headings insistently foreground its textuality. Richard, who makes clear that he is narrating the events of the novel some time after they have occurred, also makes several explicit references to the fact that he is

writing a book – and to his ability to “jazz it up a bit” (275) at his discretion – which throws any claims about the “truth” of the events into question.⁶⁰ He also reveals that his perspective is deeply colored by the fashionable circulation of “Asian culture” as a commodity (without differentiation or historicization) when he claims cultural intimacy with the Thai on some occasions but, on others, describes their spoken language in the usual ethnocentric (if not racist) terms: “chattering” (11), “rattling” (25), “jabbering” (354), and so on. Garland has his defiantly individualistic protagonist say things such as “I make quick judgments, often completely wrong, and then stick by them rigidly” (151), or, “I wanted to experience extreme poverty. I saw it as a necessary experience for anyone who wanted to appear worldly and interesting” (162). The deflating aside in the middle of the first quotation signals a distinction between the persona Richard cultivates and his ultimate vacuity, while the focus on *appearing* worldly in the second quotation reveals the superficiality of the “authentic” traveling persona. These strategies allow Garland to hold up a mirror to a traveling culture he sees as idealistically and superficially oppositional – a culture that revels in the exclusivity of resistance while recuperating ethnocentric and orientalist hegemonies.

As part of this mirror, the space of the beach helps establish the community as both an enclave of deviation from the mainstream and a preserve for homogeneity. Early on, Richard asks us to imagine the beach:

Think about a lagoon, hidden from the sea and passing boats by a high curving wall of rock. Then imagine white sands and coral gardens never damaged by dynamite fishing or trawling nets. Freshwater falls scatter the island, surrounded by jungle – not the forests of inland Thailand, but jungle. Canopies three levels

⁶⁰ The metafictional moments in the novel also align it with the other texts in this study in the sense that they bring the issue of generic purity into question. By introducing such Derridean “contaminants,” Garland, like Burroughs, Huxley, Thompson, and Sedlack, reinforces the textually destabilizing effects of “tripping.”

deep, plants untouched for a thousand years, strangely colored birds and monkeys in the trees. (58)

The protective wall of rock, echoing the steep cliffs that constitute an obstacle for Huxley's Will Farnaby, again enclose a locale that establishes a clearly delimited individual identity explorable in isolation from the outside world. The landscape is idyllic, of course, but timeless and, in its arboreal distinction from the country in which it is situated, exotic and unreal as well. This beach is indeed a Jamesonian utopia: a "pocket of stasis within the ferment and rushing forces of social change" (*Archaeologies* 15). Against the "ferment" – an intriguing metaphor suggestive of intoxication – of transnational capital and globalization, the beach is a refuge for its select few, for a predominantly white and European community that works to maintain its separation from the outside world. The beach dwellers are, at one turn, authorized and privileged by the circulation of global capital and, at another, standing in opposition to it – a condition that resembles the paradoxical status of utopia as both a progressive site of human idealism and a conservative enclosure.

The enclosure cannot be perfect, though, and therein lies some of Garland's most trenchant critique. Supposedly sealed off from the mainland yet often connected to it culturally, materially, and even geologically, islands represent, in addition to enclosed identities, instances of fragmented and incomplete identity, which the travelers embody in their simultaneous reliance upon yet defiance of the mainland. As Hatcher and Annesley have noted separately, the backpackers, despite their communalism, have strong ties to the outside capitalist world that limit their ostensible freedom. They have to make trips to the mainland to buy rice, canned food, and batteries for their handheld videogames. For Hatcher, such dependence exposes the nostalgia underlying the deluded

utopianism of global tourism. For Annesley, the voracious consumption of popular culture signifiers of “Vietnam,” signifiers that the backpackers in the novel use indiscriminately to understand their travels in Thailand, atavistically implicates this kind of mobility in the same capitalist system it rejects. A recent article by David Lehardy Sweet comparing *The Beach* to Michel Houellebecq’s *Plateforme* (2001) similarly argues that the consumer impulses in Richard’s travel “are either repressed or rationalized so that the slacker-traveler can maintain a utopian vision of an authentic experience, despite his truer dystopian or hedonistic inclinations” (158).⁶¹ Such ironizing strategies on Garland’s part point firmly to the class-based and ethnic advantages that romanticize poverty and conceal exploitation under the veneer of “authentic” travel. “The point is, as Annesley notes, “that far from being a world untainted by materialism, their life on the beach remains tied to familiar patterns of consumption” (557), a vexed relationship that evokes the Lonely Planet ethos they both spurn and embody. Richard’s insistence on buying a carton of four hundred cigarettes to bring to the beach – and, in capitulating to backpacker “asceticism,” his decision to pare them down to two hundred – exemplifies those “familiar patterns of consumption.” And (to anticipate my discussion of smoking later in this chapter) Richard’s cigarettes serve to fragment his identity, as David Lenson puts it in *On Drugs*, “down into discrete and discontinuous quanta” (104) of nicotine. Richard’s addiction links him irrevocably to the traffic in cigarettes underpinned by the circulation of global capital, and again we find one of the central components of

⁶¹ Sweet helpfully illuminates “the dialectical opposition of responsibility and leisure that operates throughout the text” (162), but his arguments are not sufficiently different from Hatcher’s or Annesley’s to warrant an extended discussion. His characterization of the slacker-traveler, however, as a youthful backpacker whose sense of irony allows him the “capacity for both backpacking and the package tour” (161) (and to appreciate the “cheesy appeal” [161] of the latter) does seem at odds with Richard’s relentless mockery of mainstream tourism.

“tripping”: immobility-within-mobility. The utopia Jameson calls an “eddy” seeks timelessness and nostalgic stasis, yet just as the water that makes up an eddy must inevitably proceed along the current, so the utopian enclave must inevitably founder.

“Just the dope talking”

Aside from Richard’s nicotine and aside from a brief scene involving alcohol intoxication, cannabis is by far the most prominent psychoactive substance in *The Beach*. An extraordinarily protean drug, cannabis speaks especially forcefully to the thematics of *The Beach* because, as Lenson notes, while “[i]t never defeats the cognitive mechanism” (103) entirely, it ensures that “every object perceived under the influence has a simultaneous existence as dreamwork” (103). Because the results of cannabis intoxication are so user-constructed, because dreams and rational thought blend unpredictably in different users, “the point of intersection between these discrete epistemological planes is extremely mobile” (103). Furthermore, the way in which cannabis leaves sensory information intact while altering the cognitive processes with which it is understood “confers on phenomena a certain feeling of distance” (104) from the intoxicated subject. Such distance, says Lenson, is a form of “attractive alienation” (104) congruent with aesthetic experiences of beauty. These metaphors of mobility, “[t]his dialectical pattern of reconcilable estrangement – experiencing first a new distance and then a new relationship that closes that distance” (104) – are perhaps what prompt the thematic links between drugs and travel we see in Huxley’s mescaline-enhanced trip through Los Angeles or in Garland’s collision of dope and backpacking.

Cannabis in *The Beach*, drawing on 1960s countercultural inflections, initially helps express traveler heterodoxy as well as backpacker solidarity. Richard identifies Daffy Duck – the Scottish traveler with the cartoon pseudonym who eventually gives him the map to the beach – as a fellow enlightened traveler when he hears “the crackle of a joint being rolled” (7) in the next room.⁶² Indeed, one of the signs of the worthiness of other travelers to inhabit the beach is their drug use. Furthermore, when Richard is censured by the community for mentioning the beach to Zeph and Sammy, he reassures his accusers that the Harvard surfers were stoned and would not likely remember; drugs, in this case, help keep mum and preserve the exclusivity of the community. In much the same way Thomas De Quincey’s opium-soaked peregrinations among nineteenth-century London’s lower classes established his “solidarity” with them against more threatening Oriental others, drugs in Garland’s novel bring “real travelers” together to preserve the exclusivity of utopia against external threats.⁶³

Cannabis communicates a world composed indeterminately of dreams and reality. As Lenson argues, the power of the drug to provide defamiliarizing and eye-opening distance to its users rests in its ability to fragment perception, to divide it up into separate

⁶² Consistent with the fact that, as in Huxley’s utopia, the anti-tourist tourist operates under the requirements of nostalgia, the map, as Hatcher points out, is hand-drawn. As opposed to the mass produced Lonely Planet maps, which would convey an artificial sense of group solidarity, Daffy’s map is “a relic of a long-gone era of romantic travel storytelling, the mythic world of *Treasure Island* and Victorian schoolboy tropical island romances” (Hatcher 138), and of course, a source of “authentic” backpacker solidarity. As a relic to be whispered over and followed and protected ritualistically, Daffy’s map exhibits what, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin calls an “aura,” its status as authentic artifact counterpoising the mass-produced guidebooks. The map helps raise one of the novel’s most insistent concerns: how does mass consumption – of drugs, of commodities, of touristic experiences – undermine the logic of authentic selves and encounters?

⁶³ In *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, John Barrell advances a useful theory he refers to as “this/that and the other,” in which two formerly opposed domestic groups (the middle and lower classes, in Barrell’s example) can be consolidated against the truly inscrutable, undifferentiated and utterly uncivilized Oriental Other. For more on the role of opium in the construction of De Quincey’s fictive personas, see Robert Morrison’s “‘I Hereby Present You, Courteous Reader’: The Literary Presence of Thomas De Quincey” (*Charles Lamb Bulletin* 90 [1995]: 68-72) and “De Quincey and the Opium-Eater’s Other Selves” (*Romanticism* 5:1 [1999]: 87-103).

strands and then to offer “the subsequent reassertion of unity” (106).⁶⁴ The novel’s italicized opening page establishes what Lenson might refer to as an “integrated life of dream and waking” (113) in its imagistic and impressionistic use of mass media argot and Vietnam iconography:

*Vietnam, me love you long time....
Dropping acid on the Mekong delta, smoking grass through a rifle barrel,
flying on a helicopter with opera blasting out of loudspeakers, tracer fire and
paddy field scenery, the smell of napalm in the morning.
Long time.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of death I will fear no evil, for my
name is Richard.* (1)

This pastiche of cinematic passages, like the combinations of video game imagery, popular music lyrics, and comic book characters that appear throughout the novel, are manifestations of Richard’s subjectivity. The novel’s first-person narration is shot through with globalized and mass mediated voices that leave it elusive and unsettled. Richard is a lost, ironized self undergoing the hellish depersonalization latent in Huxley’s psychedelized self. At times, his perception is made myopic by the twentieth-century lens of recycled popular culture through which contemporary youth view “Asian” alterity, a lens composed primarily of Vietnam tropology such as *Apocalypse Now*, the famous photograph of Kim Phuc burned by napalm, and phrases such as “Charlie,” “DMZ,” and “in country.”⁶⁵ At other times, though, this lens could be called, after Arjun Appadurai, a “mediascape.” Appadurai’s neologism helps refer to the “narratives of the Other and protonarratives of possible lives, fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement” (36). The postmodern space Richard creates

⁶⁴ Mark Simpson characterizes travel writing in a similar fashion: “a key tendency of travel writing as a genre [is] the imaginative and affective collapsing of those distances in space and time it draws into view (or indeed produces in the very process of collapsing)” (156 n. 74).

⁶⁵ See Victor Alneng for a thorough exploration of the appropriation and commodification of Vietnam.

with his relatively indiscriminate references to *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, and Michael Herr's *Dispatches* – though tending to monolithicize “Asian” culture in the novel – also resembles what Paul Virilio calls “audiovisual derealization” (37), which can have the potential to alter radically the perception of human experience. The novel is also possibly made subversive via Richard's direct addresses to the reader, which call directly on that reader and his or her capacities to read resistantly to help construct the novel's radical potential. Together, these subversive possibilities emerge from Richard's cannabis use and reveal his subjective world as one characterized by elaborate Vietnam daydreams, constituted through mass media, and bewildered by hyperreality, yet always amenable to drug-induced reconciliation.⁶⁶

Cannabis achieves its most subversive end in the novel when it brings on Richard's fantasies of communicating with Daffy Duck, the traveler whose “name reinforces his celluloid unreality” (Stephenson 376). Though Daffy dies in the opening pages of the novel, he returns repeatedly to Richard's semi-imaginary world like a ghostly double or gothic revenant (Roger Bowen calls him a Conradian revenant) to disrupt the text with notes of unreality at the same time that he highlights a split in Richard's subjectivity. In one such instance, Richard thinks he hears Sammy, the Harvard law student, using Daffy's condescending catch-phrases “That's the kid” and “That's the boy”:

I frowned. “Sorry? What was that?”
He turned back, also frowning, but with a smile still not faded from his
lips. “What was what?”
“Didn't you just say something?”
“Nope.”

⁶⁶ While my invocation of Appadurai and Virilio is mostly speculative in terms of the novel's subversive potential, my argument about the power of cannabis represents a marked departure from extant criticism of Garland which finds no alternative ways of reading the novel's multimedia discourses.

I looked at Zeph. “Didn’t you hear him say something?”
Zeph shrugged. “I was watching the lightning.”
“Oh.”
Just the dope talking, I guessed. (46)

Eventually, though, the dope produces a more articulate Daffy. The dead backpacker starts to appear bodily to Richard; though Richard is aware of the unreal nature of the experiences, even of the role the media plays in blending fact with fiction, his conversations with Daffy begin to provide him with more profound insight. Much in the way the branches of the canopy over the beach intertwine to create a space Richard terms “strange” (89) and “magically appropriate” (90), reality and dreams intertwine in the figure of Daffy, producing something not entirely real and yet not entirely imaginary.

At one point, Daffy appears to Richard, upset over his own lonely death in the Ko Sanh Road guesthouse: “He shook his head angrily, and through his sobbing I noticed he’d started to sing the theme song from *M*A*S*H*” (182). Trying to comfort him, Richard tells Daffy that he always liked *M*A*S*H*.

“So did I. The helicopters at the beginning.”
“The helicopters were great.”
“It was about Vietnam. Did you know that Rich?”
“Korea, wasn’t it?”
“Vietnam. Korea was the excuse.”
“Oh...” (182).

Daffy’s evocation of *M*A*S*H* is a drug-induced manifestation of Richard’s tendency to collapse those two countries (and those two wars, and media representations of those two wars) with his experiences in Thailand. This exchange interrupts the perpetuation of monolithic “Asian” culture. Bringing Korea and Vietnam into conceptual proximity in this way in fact emphasizes their distinctions, and Richard’s epiphany (“Oh”) signals the reconciliation of that distance. Under the influence of cannabis and of Daffy, the

quintessential “tripping” figure, Richard realizes that Korea and Vietnam are different historical and mediatized phenomena that are culturally appropriable in different ways. In another example of the paradoxical relationship between conceptual stasis and mobility, bringing the two countries together in this exchange has the effect of distancing them in Richard’s imagination. The ellipsis at the end of his realization intimates the defamiliarizing shock and illumination the cannabis user experiences after undergoing the “dialectical pattern of reconcilable estrangement” (104) Lenson claims is the result of cannabis’s intertwining of reality and dreams. Such intertwining, also reminiscent of Baudrillard’s “fantastic telescoping, a collapse of the two traditional poles into each other” (31), reveals the inextricability of fact and fiction, of materiality and imagination.

John Hatcher argues ingeniously in his article on *The Beach* that, as the community starts to disintegrate, “[g]radually we realise that the dead Scot has now returned, hidden inside Richard, working through him to destroy the beach rather than see it succumb to the tourist trade” (141). This process is engendered specifically (though ambivalently) by Richard’s cannabis intoxication. Daffy’s presence, as these two examples illustrate, manifests itself primarily in dialogue – the speaking presence of cannabis that orates at the same time that it fades into dreamwork, that creates at the same time that it destroys. This mode of shifting uncertainty reveals the world to be composed indeterminately of hallucination and reality and thus usefully underscores, as Garland’s critique unfolds, the role of touristic mediation in defining differences – between Korea and Vietnam in the above example and, more generally, between superficial tourist practices and encounters with “real” otherness.

Garland simultaneously embarks on a critique of the means by which these “trippers” use travel to shore up the exclusivity of their tripping experience. Garland makes literal the fact that drugs preserve exclusivity when he reveals that the beach community shares the island with a group of armed Thai drug lords who cultivate and patrol a giant cannabis field. Like the trench in More’s *Utopia* that separates a promontory from the mainland, that breaks from yet relies upon the mainland for its production of a utopian space, the cannabis plantation helps separate the island from the rest of the world while tying it irrevocably to global drug trafficking. The travelers and the drug lords maintain distinct societies on the island but are in the same position in relation to the outside world. “It’s not like they can report us,” Richard says. “If we got raided, then they’d get raided too” (99). Both groups are transgressive outcasts at odds with straight society, but the dope field has the effect of militarily preserving the beach’s idealistic exclusivity, of maintaining what Victor Alneng, in the context of Vietnam tourism, calls “a dividing line between Utopia and the World” (468). When Zeph and Sammy finally turn up on the other side of the island with the intention of crossing it to find the beach, the community decides not to warn them of the drug farmers waiting in the middle, in effect turning cannabis’s reputation as a “gateway drug” around and using it literally as a *gatekeeping* drug. The nefarious and dangerous aspects of drug culture serve to keep out the interlopers and preserve exclusivity. Echoing Huxley’s depiction of paradoxical exploration-in-stasis in *Island*, Garland is here tempering the exploratory rhetoric of global anti-tourists with the language of imprisonment and immobilizing geography. Drugs as markers of selectiveness, once a way of safeguarding the backpackers’ liberal privileges and access to unfettered escape, become carceral and

lethal agents when their connection to the militaristic preservation of the drug economy gets used to produce exclusive space. As agents granting elite access to cultural truths, drugs seem to require a correspondingly utopian travel space, but as this novel indicates, such a space quickly gets ironized as a stagnant backwater, as in fact an instance of ecological and cultural exploitation of “exotic lands” by young tourists.

Jed, one of the members of the beach community and another quintessential figure of “tripping,” helps enforce that preservation through his job as lookout and cannabis harvester. Patrolling the liminal space between the pot field and the rest of the island while occasionally stealing plants for the other beach dwellers, Jed assumes “the oppositional stance of the political dissident” (Stephenson 378). Far from revolutionary, though, he is excluded for the sake of exclusion – he helps secure the division between beach and world. At the same time, he undermines the beach community’s celebration of cannabis as freedom by controlling their access to the drug. Like Jed, Richard distances himself rhetorically, narcotically, and physically from other tourists, but this aloofness – when expanded to the level of the community – has the effect of turning paradise into prison. In fact, at one point Richard admits he believes that the heavily guarded dope field (which the community calls the “DMZ”) is itself “paradise” (282). Garland is again borrowing the irony of sixties counterculture (the supposed “DMZ” between North and South Vietnam – like the one between North and South Korea – was actually one of the most militarized pieces of land in the world) to throw the contemporary countercultural project of a Southeast Asian utopia free of tourists into question. In other words, the ostensibly subversive form of travel Garland’s characters engage in actually more closely resembles, in its stasis effects, the supposedly confining and debilitating mass tourism

they revile. The trope of the island, as it sometimes did for Huxley, connotes insularity and self-sameness, which sits in uneasy relation with the alterity “trippers” hope to find by alighting on its shores. By giving the desire to preserve exclusivity a lethal dimension, Garland satirizes that desire’s pervasiveness, its zealotry, and its chauvinism. The island’s ability to function as both a carceral space reconstitutive of capitalism’s exigencies and as an idealized, utopian space located iconoclastically outside of the mainstream reflects its fundamentally ambivalent status as artefact of “tripping.”

While the drug-induced hallucinations in *The Beach* can hail the instability of the authentic/inauthentic and real/imaginary dyads upon which much tourist discourse is based – while they can encourage, in other words, a more active reformulation of the tourist spectacle – drugs take on, by way of their association with the militaristic preservation of exclusive space, an additional, cautionary note by the climax of the novel. The climax features a frenzied, drug-fuelled celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the beach community, a celebration they call Tet, which in the context of a Thai island, once again appropriates Vietnamese culture as a general signifier of “Asianness.” The festivities are indeed quasi-nationalistic, but like the famous offensive of the same name in the Vietnam War (widely regarded as the point at which popular U.S. support for the war plummeted), they also ironically prefigure the downfall of the beach’s neo-imperialistic ethos. As John Hatcher points out, that ethos allows Richard to co-opt the Thai guards into his own Vietnamese fantasy (142) – to turn one of them, as David Lehardy Sweet puts it, into “an object of study or a trophy of Western power” (165) – and thus secure this novel as Garland’s assessment of the traffic in “global culture.”

At the party, the revellers are consuming fermented coconut milk and stew heavily dosed with cannabis. Richard has decided to leave the island and has been abstaining from these intoxicating substances in order to do so surreptitiously. When his fellow travelers start hallucinating, Richard asks Keaty, another abstainer, what is happening. Keaty's response – "They're all crazy. It's worse than being straight. It's doing my fucking head in just watching them" (413) – suggests that drugs have become narcotizing agents that underscore the blindness and self-importance of the community's exclusivity. There are early intimations of the dark side of "tripping" in the novel – in the decrepit "heroin hippies that float around India and Thailand" (5) and in the corpse of an overdosed "tripper" Richard finds on a run back to the mainland (185) – but in this case, the destructive consumption of drugs (mingled inextricably in the food they are eating) suggests that corruption can come equally from within as from without. In a conceptual move again reminiscent of Huxley, corruption inside the community (in the form of mindless hedonism) aligns itself with the corruption coming from outside (in the form of ravenous global capitalism and its attendant mass tourism practices). By this point in the novel, cannabis has lost its outlaw status and has had its countercultural significance defused. Garland suggests that drugs, once spatialized into a deformed utopia, can no longer offer any productive collisions of reality and fantasy because their oppositionality has been watered down.

The Tet celebration degenerates, following the surprising appearance of the armed cannabis farmers, into a frenzy of violent death and dismemberment. "To be confronted with such a sight," Richard narrates, "would have been bad at the best of times. Directly following the scene with the dope guards would have made it worse. But to have been

through all that while you were tripping – it would make anyone crazy” (424). The sight of the disembowelled backpackers combines in the novel’s climax with the psychic assault of the drugs to provide a dark counterpart to the creative and illuminating effects that the combination of drugs and travel can have, a hell – to cast it in Huxley’s terms – counterpoising Richard’s perceived heaven. The disorientation or outright disintegration of the experiential self, the breakdown of the distinctions between interiority and exteriority symbolized by the damaged bodies of the backpackers or the extreme retreats into interiority signaled by the fear and paranoia of the revelers, are versions of a “tripping” self capable of casting an imperializing gaze or operating under assumptions of entitlement. In this final scene, Richard has been referring casually to the dope guards as Viet Cong, and to the chaotic celebration itself as Vietnam, suggesting that “craziness” comes to stand for the cultural exploitation young backpackers of Richard’s ilk perform when they indiscriminately deploy Vietnam mythology to signal alterity. Drugs, Garland suggests at certain points in *The Beach*, can provide sophisticated understandings of tourism that acknowledge the interpenetrations of self and other. But by this point in the novel, that sophistication has been lost, dragged under by Garland’s depiction of the unworkability of paradise thanks to self-righteous anti-tourist “travelers.” Utopia, as Foucault suggests in “Of Other Spaces,” becomes “society turned upside down” (24) when those sophisticated understandings of tourism are displaced completely by neo-imperialism. Garland’s beach and Huxley’s Pala are both “fundamentally unreal spaces” (24) that, in the end, can only be grasped neo-imperially. In *The Beach*, such neo-imperialism, signalled by the Tet celebration and the dissolution of the community at the end of the novel, allows Garland to illustrate how this combination of travel and drugs

can reveal the spatial consequences of the ideological assumptions and cultural privileges concomitant with “real travel.”⁶⁷

As Lenson notes, “The revelations offered by any drug may or may not be welcome or valuable, may or may not empower the user, may offer knowledge or illusion” (113). Such ambivalence has led to knotty cultural and literary readings of drugs. While extant criticism of *The Beach* (such as Hatcher’s and Annesley’s articles) deals quite effectively with Garland’s attack on the neo-orientalizing effects of so-called post-tourist travel, the drugs in the novel continue to be problematic. William Stephenson’s recent assessment of the novel, for instance, examines Garland’s critique of neo-orientalism and neo-imperialism trenchantly, but in its attempt to tackle the novel’s representation of cannabis more systematically, seems to rely upon orthodox notions and unquestioned assumptions about cannabis that the novel in fact works to undermine.

Stephenson’s premises are as follows: “The frequency and openness of marijuana use is part of the novel’s ironic account of the backpackers’ thrill-seeking orientalism” (370), and “the novel suggests that the West cuts itself off ideologically from less wealthy regions and bypasses ethical engagement with them, by constituting subjective experience as a spectacular play of quasi-cinematic images of which drug experiences

⁶⁷ In dealing with the thematic role of violence in the novel, William Stephenson draws interesting parallels between *The Beach* and the Marco Polo assassin myth. Stephenson argues that “*The Beach* rearranges elements of the Hassan I Sabbah story to suit the contemporary era of globalization, tourism, mass drug use, and Hollywood’s recycling of Vietnam as spectacle” (372), arguing that Sal, the leader of the community, echoes Hassan I Sabbah in her ability to deploy drugs and the island paradise to order the politically efficacious murders of other beach dwellers. On the relationship of the tale to this novel, Stephenson writes: “The Hassan I Sabbah myth is reworked to demonstrate that the assassin is no longer simply an external bogeyman, the embodiment of an alien fanaticism or oriental cruelty, but is a necessary consequence of the West’s need to set itself apart from the rest of the world and guard its privileged isolation by any necessary means” (373). Regarding Sal’s role as a “proto-fascist,” Sweet makes the interesting claim that “Garland ‘redeems’ Richard by conveniently displacing the narrator’s more suspect impulses onto his female counterpart, thereby imputing to femaleness in general, perhaps, the ideological susceptibilities the novel anticipates in the male slacker” (165).

and violent confrontations with the East are merely intensified variations” (370). In detailing Garland’s critique, Stephenson assumes that cannabis in the novel is solely, and stereotypically, for the purposes of “enhancement.” He calls the beach dwellers’ community “an illusion, a chemically-enhanced vision of peaceful isolation that crumbles when they realize they are prepared to use or condone violence or coercive means to maintain the secrecy of the community” (374). Likewise, he disapprovingly cites a scene in the novel in which the characters smoke pot and watch glowing algae moving in the water as another example of their reliance upon “a pleasure-giving commodity, cannabis” (374), an instance in which they need an artificial supplement to what should be an inherently beautiful “natural underwater phosphorescence” (374). In addition to buying into the long-standing platitude that a commodity is morally suspect if it is “pleasure-giving,” Stephenson downplays the fact that the plants the beach dwellers use are filched from the cannabis plantation, that they have been *removed* from the contaminating influences of mass cultivation and global consumerism. The pleasures of drug use, in Stephenson’s formulation, become simply a debilitating source of irrationality, danger, and exploitation. This, in spite of his approving use of Lenson’s characterization of cannabis as a drug which produces “a reordering [of the subjective world] that somehow exists side by side with the predrug arrangement without superseding it” (105). So even when Stephenson rightly points out that cannabis functions as a “catalyst for ludic experiments with identity” (371), he nonetheless disapproves of “the juxtaposition and partial blurring of dream and reality often cited in Western writing as a side effect of cannabis” (375). In employing the phrase “side effect,” he implies that such blurring is

an unwanted, secondary result; what the primary effect of cannabis is supposed to be is left unclear.

Stephenson also draws upon conventional associations between cannabis use and the so-called amotivational syndrome to explain Richard's violence. He cites the moment in the novel when Richard kills Christo, one of the Swedish beach dwellers who has been attacked by a shark and left comatose, as an instance of violence that "suggests that Richard has become desensitized rather than sadistic; he is detached from the stoned, bellicose intensity that is overcoming the other beach dwellers" (376). In arguing that Richard is looking for an expedient way to get Jed, who has been nursing the injured Swede, to join him in his escape from the beach, Stephenson overlooks the fact that smothering Christo is a mercy killing. Richard has in fact been *sensitized* to Christo's pain and suffering, and as Jed himself points out repeatedly, it is the rest of the beach dwellers who are detached from Christo's plight.

Stephenson grasps the ambivalence of cannabis in *The Beach*. He notes that it is "a source of stupefaction and silence but also of narrative" (371), and he quotes Lenson's assessment of cannabis as something that "always brings about some sort of fusion between cognition and dream" (103). But his orthodox understanding of the drug as primarily hallucinatory and his characterization of hallucination as a form of misleading supplemental verbosity allow his otherwise useful article to recapitulate some of the same assumptions about authenticity that cannabis use in *The Beach* calls into question. It is, after all, the protean nature of the drug that facilitates the reorganization of subjectivity and that subverts the violence of global capitalism. Finally, Stephenson's reading of

cannabis causes him to overlook Garland's use of nicotine in instantiating a significantly trenchant portion of his critique.

Nico-noclasism

Because my coinage "tripping" attempts to deal with drugs in relatively broad terms (while still stressing the importance of avoiding undifferentiated formulations), this chapter would be incomplete without a discussion of the other major psychoactive substance in the text: nicotine. Aside from passing references, such as the one to "Richard's nicotine-fueled narrative" in a *Publishers Weekly* blurb included in the front matter of the Riverhead paperback edition, the way in which cigarettes and cigarette-smoking punctuate the novel has been largely overlooked. Richard Klein's lyrical and provocative book *Cigarettes Are Sublime*, a seminal text for the burgeoning field of intoxication studies, argues that smoking cigarettes is about the relationship between what we consider the self and what we consider the not-self. Klein's book draws on the Kantian notion of negative aesthetics. It suggests that the poison of smoking is its appeal, both physiologically (in that it concentrates and then alleviates tension) and aesthetically (in that it is a fundamentally destructive act whose compulsive futility and distaste nonetheless evokes a much tastier glimpse of the infinite).⁶⁸ Klein claims that by smoking "we perform an act of projection/identification/interiorization whose movement corresponds to the physical process of lighting up, drawing deeply, exhaling slowly into the space around" (38). Klein continues: "The smoke penetrates sharply, then exudes,

⁶⁸ In light of the confluence of drugs and travel that forms the focus of my study, it is worth noting that a number of the reviewers of *Cigarettes are Sublime* comment explicitly on the brief mention Klein makes of cigarettes being banned on airline flights. See, for example, Annette Schwarz review (*MLN* 109.3 [1994]: 573-576) and Vladimir Bukovsky's "Got a Light?" (*National Review* 15 Aug. 1994: 66-68).

softly envelops you in the experience of extending your body's limits, no longer fixed by the margin of your skin. The tobacco's vapor is atomized into atmosphere that halos your exterior form, after having been condensed within the cavities that harbor your most intimate interior" (105). This practice "mimes the desired transformation of an object into myself through an act of appropriative possession" (38). Such appropriation, Klein argues, becomes an attempt to confirm the boundaries of the self as much as to expand them, to affirm selfhood as much as to complicate it. The destruction of the object of consumption affirms the supremacy of the consuming self and secures the boundaries of its identity. As such, I argue in this section that smoking cigarettes, as an act that consolidates the self, also helps cement the space of the beach as one within which exclusivity may be preserved and through which intoxication can be spatialized and made comprehensible.

To that end, cigarettes in the novel tend more often than not to affirm orthodox selfhood. In the first chapter, for instance, Richard arrives at his Ko Sahn Road guesthouse and, lying awake in bed, overhears a young couple (who eventually turn out to be his French travel-mates Etienne and Françoise) arrive in the next room and make love: "After they'd finished I had a powerful urge for a cigarette, empathy maybe, but I stopped myself. I knew that if I did they'd hear me rustling the packet or lighting the match. The illusion of their privacy would be broken" (10). As opposed to monolithic representations of "Drugs" which tend to characterize them all as sources of oblivion, as the cause of obliterated subjectivity, cigarettes in this early moment signal Richard's intrusive *presence*. Klein in part argues for cigarettes as consolidators of subjectivity: "In novels, the cigarette is often a surrogate of the self, a visible sign of mind and heart"

(154). Instead of unmooring him into the ether as conventional drug rhetoric would have it, or instead of threatening his body with disease and death as more specifically anti-tobacco idiom does, cigarettes make Richard “visible,” affirming his subjectivity and fixing him securely in the space of the next room.⁶⁹

Despite this apparent affirmation of selfhood, cigarettes, like other mind-altering drugs, can have scouring effects on a character’s sense of selfhood. In another echo of Will Farnaby’s drug-fuelled engagement with alterity in *Island*, Garland draws on one of drug literature’s apparent animals of choice and has Richard meet a lizard.

It was about three inches long with enormous eyes and translucent skin. The lizard had been sitting on my cigarette packet for ten minutes and when I’d got bored with watching it, waiting for a tongue to lash out and lasso a fly, I’d reached out and picked it up. Instead of wriggling away, as I’d expected, the lizard had casually rearranged itself on my hand. Surprised by its audacity, I let it sit there – even though it meant keeping my hand in an unnatural position, palm facing upward, which made my arm ache. (42)

The lizard, as an exotic inhabitant of Thailand, is resolutely other and, like Huxley’s lizard, is a serviceable symbol because it is alien. It has a strange appearance and, signalled in part by the indefinite article “a” used to describe its tongue, a certain fragmentariness that removes its agency and sections it oddly. Its proximity to the cigarettes and its ability to capture flies associate it with consumption, reminding us that “tripping” is about ways of ingesting that which is other, and while the encounter with the lizard produces mild surprise, the “unnaturalness” of his position and his aching arm remind him bodily of the limits of extending boundaries and altering selfhood through intimate engagements with alterity.

⁶⁹ In doing so, the cigarette in this scene has an obvious conceptual affinity with the “crackle of the joint being rolled” (7) that identified Daffy to Richard in the novel’s opening pages.

Such limits come to the fore in *The Beach* when cigarettes and their consumption, despite their long association with transgression and despite Klein's argument that the poisonous effects of cigarettes are precisely their sublime appeal, signal a means of importing the space of mainstream orthodoxy into a space previously cleared for the subversive effects of "tripping." Cigarettes, in other words, function like Huxley's islands did in providing a means to reassert conventional subjectivity and, as the Tet celebration makes clear, reinstitute the neo-imperial gaze. To accomplish this shift, Garland links Richard's cigarette smoking with naiveté early on. After finding the map, Richard, Etienne, and Françoise briefly debate its legitimacy. "I leaned back on the bed and lit a cigarette. 'That's settled then. The map is bullshit'" (25). Richard punctuates his conclusion with a puff of certainty-filled smoke, but the map turns out to be anything but bullshit. His confident cigarette smoking here in fact signals Richard's ignorance and inaccuracy. Garland also suggests that cigarettes do not provide nearly the same degree of subversive potential and boundary violation as psychedelic drugs like cannabis. When Françoise lights a cigarette a few pages later, Richard notices "a tiny dolphin tattoo half hidden beneath her watch strap" (27) and then observes that she merely takes "a delicate puff on her cigarette, barely taking the smoke into her lungs" (28). Unlike Klein's appropriation and interiorization, and unlike the profound changes Huxleyan *moksha* wreaks on consciousness, Françoise modifies the limits of her subjectivity in very small, well-controlled increments. Her nearly invisible, barely transgressive tattoo (brought to light by her smoking) and her delicate puffing emphasize the distinction between what *they* offer and what more fundamentally disruptive "tripping" provides.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Despite Klein's assertion that a smoking woman has historically been a telling index of subversive femininity, the discretion and delicateness of Françoise's use of tobacco suggest that Garland's

Richard's use of cigarettes on the beach also serves to maintain the link between himself and the exploitative, condescending, and orthodox attitudes characteristic of the conventional tourism he has supposedly left behind. For one, his addiction to cigarettes ensures many literal returns to the outside world to get more. Furthermore, when Françoise worries that Richard may have told others about the beach, he denies it with irritation and "stub[s] out [his] cigarette hard. It was tasting like shit" (48). The cigarette's sudden unpleasantness reflects his annoyance at the accusation, of course, but also his horror at the possibility of breaching the exclusivity of his utopian commune. The cigarette here helps punctuate the tourist snobbery intended to secure the space through which drug exclusivity may be retained.

Another moment in the novel helps secure the role of cigarettes as links between utopia and the world Richard left behind. As Richard and the French couple make their way across the island, they find one more obstacle in their way: a waterfall. With no way around, and with rock walls too steep to climb down, the trio – like Huxley's Will Farnaby – contemplates how they are going to continue their journey. Richard eventually lights a cigarette, pauses, then jumps off the cliff into the lagoon below. When he resurfaces, having crossed the final barrier to paradise, Françoise asks him if he is alright: "'I'm fine! I'm brilliant!'" Then I felt something in my hand. I was still holding my cigarette – the tobacco part had been torn away but the brown filter sat in my palm, soggy and nicotine stained" (86). The cigarette, a strong link to the world, is now mangled, intimating a break from the world and encouraging a new permeability to the "tripping" insights of utopian beach living. Crossing that final boundary momentarily effaces the

reaffirmation of her femininity is more important than exploring her ability to express transgression through drug use. This moment, as with many in the pantheon of "tripping" literature, marks a moment when a woman is unable to access the full subversive import of "tripping."

pre-beach sensibilities the cigarettes represent, but clinging persistently to the remains of the cigarette points to the strength of his bond with the past and the outside world and thus foreshadows the conservative way Richard will understand the eventual end of the beach community.

As the community heads toward ruin, the novel increases the frequency of the associations between smoking and the tourist snobbery that results from Richard striking a distinction between his behavior and the exploitative travel practiced by “mere tourists.” Depressed after a visit to the mainland, Richard notes: “I chain-smoked two and a half cigarettes. I wanted to chain-smoke three, or even more, but the third gave me a five-minute coughing fit” (175). Less than a page later, he decries the carelessness of tourists who arrive at and destroy one island after another, chasing the real travelers away: “The serious travelers had already moved on to the next island in the chain” (175). The repetition of the word *chain* links the practice of “serious” travelers, which Richard lauds while regretting its necessity, with his ravenous desire for and mechanistic consumption of cigarettes that only ends in the “coughing fit” of bodily breakdown. As the connection between cigarettes and travel suggests, “real” travelers like Richard, who practice anti-tourism, are as complicit in the systematic destruction of paradise as hordes of tourists. In Garland’s novel, the mass-produced, rapidly smoked cigarettes evoke the same kind of indiscriminate consumption responsible for mass touristic spoilage.

When most of the beach dwellers (Richard excepted) succumb to food poisoning, another metaphor for the problematic nature of ingestion and a reflection of the community’s disintegration, Richard craves nicotine: “I wanted a cigarette so severely I thought my chest was going to cave in, but my supply was at the other end of the

longhouse and there was no way I could get them. In an effort to help, Cassie rolled a joint, but it didn't do any good. It was nicotine I needed. The dope only made the craving worse" (286). As the integrity of the backpackers' bowels and stomachs dissolves, the communalism and insight facilitated by cannabis breaks up so much that it gets displaced entirely from Richard's repertoire of desire. He falls back into longing exclusively for cigarettes and for the simple comfort and innocence of the outside world they call to mind. After he realizes that paradise is the dope field, that the violent and immobilizing aspects of "tripping" have been mistaken for utopia, he returns ever more insistently to cigarettes. So when the three Swedish members of the community are attacked by a shark, an event that sends the dissolution of the beach into overdrive, Richard has two thoughts: "Number one was that I now had a chance to get my cigarettes" (289). The Swedes are merely thought number two. Cigarettes in this instant signal his selfish individualism. Their compulsive quantification serves as a contrast to the "model of consciousness as continuous waves" (Lenson 104) enacted by cannabis, and their attachment to the outside world reminds readers of the rapaciousness with which late twentieth-century capitalism incorporates the subversiveness of "tripping."

Klein's theorization of cigarettes continues to help us understand Richard's incessant smoking. Cigarettes allow access to atemporality: "Every single cigarette," writes Klein, "numerically implies all the other cigarettes, exactly alike, that the smoker consumes in a series" (26). Like the (im)mobility Huxley's Will Farnaby experiences, the smoker understands time as a series of identical points: "Each one of those cigarettes implies the repetition of several small ritual actions....But the inevitable, ceaseless return of something indistinguishable from what precedes it and follows it is like the circle or

cycle of time's passage, each 'now' ... exactly identical to the now it replaces and anticipates" (82). Cigarettes are, quite simply, a means for Richard to return time and again to his pre-beach sensibilities and, in the process, to reconsolidate his illusion of orthodox individuality.

My purpose in discussing how cigarettes operate in *The Beach* is two-fold. First, I want to emphasize again how intoxicating substances cannot be rendered into the monolithic entity known as "Drugs" and considered (usually in order to be dismissed) without any internal categorical discrimination. Garland offers a strong contrast between cannabis and nicotine, and I argue that his distinction is key to understanding the tone of the novel and his attitude toward "tripping," as well as the nuances "tripping" acquires from the different substances that make up its pharmacopoeia. Secondly, I argue that cigarettes in this novel signal the difference between so-called mainstream thinking and the thinking purportedly offered by "tripping." Richard's repeated returns to the cigarette mark the moments in the narrative when he forgets or ignores the insights granted to him by "tripping" – both the positive ones about the powers of communalism and the aesthetic pleasures found in his perceptual juxtapositions, and the negative ones about the roles of exploitation and orientalism in his brand of travel. Despite helping to declare his outlaw status, cigarettes in the novel signal instances in which Richard's subjectivity is threatened – when he is afraid, nervous, embarrassed, or overconfident – and when he repudiates the insights "tripping" can grant. Perhaps because, for Richard, cigarettes are mass-produced and indiscriminately consumed and thus evoke the world outside the beach, they allow him to domesticate the subversiveness cannabis has shown him in his surroundings. Regardless, they allow a nostalgic return to the world he left behind.

I have thus far been underscoring some of the resistant and ironic potential of Garland's text: its ability to undermine the spurious distinction between "real travelers" and "mere tourists" and to expose the problematic nature of so-called enlightened travel. Using a textual commodity aimed at the same youthful, subversive demographic it criticizes, Garland traffics on the literary marketplace in figures intended to satirize exploitative travel, but such trafficking, thanks to the ambivalence inherent in this confluence of travel and drugs, can be reworked and redeployed in unexpected ways. In concluding this chapter, I will address some examples of how the market has tried to co-opt this text, to domesticate it and diffuse its critical and subversive power.

Cutting the Merchandise

The possibility of such domestication is a source of extreme anxiety among self-styled cultural dissidents and (to risk an ironic appellation) their followers. What countercultural musician, artist collective, activist group, protest organization, rogue website, or other subversive outfit, has not at some point worried about "selling out"? A number of critics have weighed in on the counterculture's vulnerabilities. Thomas Frank, for example, argues in *The Conquest of Cool* that 1960s "counterculture may be more accurately understood as a stage in the development of the values of the American middle class, a colorful installment in the twentieth century drama of consumer subjectivity" (29). Echoing Frank, Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter argue that contemporary counterculturalism does not really exist at all, that the supposedly subversive deployment of revolutionary thinking "has been one of the primary forces driving consumer capitalism for the past forty years" (2). In spite of subsequent critiques along the we-are-

now-post-postmodern lines, Fredric Jameson's influential articulation of postmodern culture argues that its concerns with surface and spectacle make it simply too commensurate with capitalist consumerism and its traffic in mass images to do anything but homogenize local politics into global systems of exchange.⁷¹ In *The Postcolonial Exotic*, Graham Huggan wonders if the anti-tourist mode more specifically gets co-opted in part because it substitutes "a counter-myth of cool detachment" (208) – evident perhaps in Garland's media persona – as equally unsustainable as the myth of authentic alterity. These propositions suggest that in spite of the ways its complex implied versions of drug and tourist subjectivities reveal a sophisticated understanding of otherness, harness the forces of "global culture" in creative and often resistant ways, and provide insight into the dynamic, reciprocal nature of the global market, *The Beach* remains open to such co-optation.

Aside from Garland's status as both a cult author and a best-selling celebrity – his place both within and in opposition to the mainstream – the cultural positioning of *The Beach* offers one clue as to how it remains open to collusive forces. When the novel became a guidebook for thousands of tourists who, like Richard, sought authentic experience in the world of the global commodity, it produced a feedback loop: a text purporting to stand outside the mainstream quickly becomes engulfed when the mainstream, encouraged by the resistant text's use of its own fashionable vocabulary, expands to include the particular mode of dissent exemplified by that text. Despite the effective way the novel describes "a world in which every gesture of refusal becomes

⁷¹ See *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Elsewhere, Jameson picks up on Herbert Marcuse, who, Jameson claims, "argues that it is the very separation of art and culture from the social – a separation that inaugurates culture as a realm in its own right and defines it as such – which is the source of art's incorrigible ambiguity" (*Archaeologies* xv). Separating art from "the social," according to this formulation, facilitates irrelevancy, trivialization, and co-optation.

absorbed by a voracious materialism” (Annesley 559), it ironically (and perhaps inevitably) participated in that very process when it became a standard item in the backpack of thousands of young tourists in Thailand.

The capitalist gentrification of the counterhegemonic mode, the means by which the culture industry can absorb even a very critical work, reaches an apex of sorts in the film adaptation of *The Beach*, a production the Salon.com writer Rolf Potts would like to subtitle “Heart of Dork-ness” (n.p.). John Hatcher points to the irony haunting the production from the start that a film critical of tourism was being made with the assistance of a government trying to open up Thailand to more tourism (144), and James Annesley notes that the movie’s fashionable young director, Danny Boyle, cast the U.S. actor Leonardo DiCaprio to play Richard in a move that represents “a colonization of an English novel by American capital (20th Century Fox) and the American cultural priorities that accompany that finance” (557).⁷² Moreover, tales of the environmental destruction wrought upon Maya Beach on the island of Phi Phi Le in Thailand during the production of the film illustrate how a narrative intended to criticize asymmetrical cultural and ecological relations can in fact create the conditions for reaffirming them. Commenting on the way the film “sanitizes the story for the very culture and age group Garland’s novel is at pains to critique,” Roger Bowen writes: “As played by Leonardo DiCaprio, [Richard] becomes an American; and romance, absent in the novel, is

⁷² Danny Boyle is perhaps best known for directing, in 1996, an adaptation of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*. That film, according to Lawrence Driscoll, is “comfortably anti-drug” (25). It “slavishly rehearses the major elements of twentieth-century representations of drugs” (25) in its graphic and insistent depictions of the most gruesome aspects of the most depraved versions of addiction. These depictions, claims Driscoll, “rather than being the truth about drugs, are only *a* truth, one that we have come to accept as *the* truth” (25). With his more recent works, the zombie movies *28 Days Later* (2002) and its sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007) – both about horrific airborne infections – Boyle seems preoccupied with the threats posed to selfhood by those agents capable of permeating bodily boundaries, a phenomenon that twentieth-century literature and culture often embeds firmly in drugs.

inevitably foregrounded. Garland's political and cultural ironies are lost, and the violent disintegration of the commune is sidestepped" (55 n. 10).

I add my voice to this critical consensus with a brief comment on how the film represents drugs. First, cannabis plays a greatly attenuated role. While the scene in which Richard talks to Daffy through the netting that separates their rooms at the guesthouse pivots on the joint they pass back and forth in order to construct their subsequent interactions as chimerical interminglings of reality and dreams, the film generally eschews the suggestion that cannabis could accomplish any other subversive provocations. Furthermore, cigarettes are erased almost completely from the film despite serving, as the *Publishers Weekly* blurb asserts, as fuel for the novel's narrative. It is perhaps a testament to the anti-smoking lobby that a Hollywood film aimed at a youthful demographic would be anxious about the depiction (which, especially when it comes to drugs, is often simplistically understood as the "glorification") of legal, mainstream cigarettes yet be somewhat less hesitant about portraying an illegal substance. Interestingly, though, Sal, played by Tilda Swinton, takes pains to inform Richard (and the film's viewers) that the beach community grows its own cannabis rather than stealing from the farmers. This reassertion of individualistic self-reliance is perhaps more palatable to American audiences than the anti-capitalist act of stealing the substance. It also enables the film to eliminate the Jed subplots and reconstruct Richard's exile as more of a punishment handed down to an outspoken rebel than an example of his complicity in the preservation of an exclusive and unworkable utopia. The film ends, however, with Richard on the move once again, and checking his email at an internet café. An old

group shot of the beach dwellers comes up on his monitor, securing Richard's nostalgic investment in the reality of paradise and emphasizing his capitulation to orthodoxy.

To conclude Part II, I emphasize that *The Beach* and Huxley's *Island*, as texts that thematize ways in which space can help their fictional "trippers" understand, maintain, or delimit their psychedelic experiences, offer a relatively conservative articulation of selfhood. The self, even when (or because) open to the alterity of drugs or the derangements of the universe, casts its experience in terms of travel in order to maintain stable boundaries around identities. These newly stabilized identities are supposed to be free from disconcerting shifts in perception, unnerving racial or cultural relativity, and problematic history. The self in Huxley and Garland frequently looks nostalgically toward reinstating clear boundaries between conceptual categories and seeking out the comforting familiarity within otherness.

While Huxley lived much of his life in the United States, and Garland depicts a character whose British national identity "is already subsumed by an American war and a popular culture associated with it" (Bowen 46) (not to mention by an American actor in the film), both authors are British. When "tripping" identifies their turn toward the interior – their use of external space to shore up the subjective core – it underscores an analogue between that process and a significant component of British history and identity. British colonialism operated according to the logic of exporting an identity abroad and benefiting from it; that identity remains, at least from its own point of view, stable and coherent, accruing benefits from the world in which it moves the way a Burroughsian super-consumer does. "Tripping" does produce new meanings and new

insights into cultural alterity through the surprises and juxtapositions it supplies, and both *Island* and *The Beach* deploy “tripping” to achieve distance from, and then (consistent with Lenson’s articulation of how cannabis works) reconciliation with, the concept of global exploration. But Huxley and Garland, as British writers keenly attuned to class distinctions, remain preoccupied with the problematic nature of the traveler-tourist dichotomy. Recapitulating that dichotomy in various ways, both authors depict the failure of utopia as a way of resolving the tension between desiring stable identity even in the face of defamiliarizing psychedelic experience and the sheer impossibility of realizing such a desire. Part III of this study will extend this line of argumentation about the production of space into the work of two North American writers, finding therein some modification of the purpose and process of spatializing intoxication.

PART III: MONSTERS AND EXCESSES

Chapter 6

“Man, This Is the Way to Travel”

Drugs and Tourism in Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

I turn my attention in Part III of this study to two texts that, while also invested in exploring the problems of utopian idealism, suggest some possibilities for genuinely oppositional space. Like Huxley’s and Garland’s novels, Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Robert Sedlack’s *The African Safari Papers* unite travel and drugs to effect certain social critiques, but the facet of “tripping” they present also raises alternative formulations of the “tripping” subject and lends resistant possibilities to the type of tourism they criticize. While the texts in Part II depict drugs as potentially dangerous colonizers of consciousness that require the disoriented subject to call up the orthodoxies of travel to set things right, the texts in Part III depict drugs (not unproblematically) as agents of knowledge, or even gnosis, that make potentially troubling travel comprehensible. In extending the argument of Part II, I focus in Part III – following Henri Lefebvre’s contention that the production of space lends itself to the production of alternative, liberating strategies – on how these two authors offer sites of resistance. Such resistance may emerge from what Lefebvre identifies as lived spaces (as opposed to perceived or conceived spaces), what he calls representational space: “Representational spaces...need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness” (41). Such spaces are extra-logical or irrational, prone to emerging from things like intoxication and effective at countering hegemonic totalities. The strangeness of Thompson’s fictional world lends credence to Lefebvre’s contention that “inasmuch as

abstract space tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences” (52). Because, as Peter Ruppert asserts, “utopian ideals are inevitably deformed – and, indeed, can become monstrous” (11) – the perversity and the monstrosity in these texts, their outrageous depictions of excessive drug use, violence, or sexuality, help constitute yet threaten to overwhelm the spaces these authors depict in which creative rearrangements of subjectivity are possible. In Part III, I explore Thompson’s and Sedlack’s monstrous “tripping” with an eye on some of the colors Huxley contributed, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, to the palette of this study. I aim to complicate Huxley’s dismissal of consumer culture, pick up on his notions of limitlessness, and combine them with the resistant possibilities of Garland’s globalized anti-tourist. Thompson’s and Sedlack’s travelers express distaste for their destinations and for the predominant modes of travel associated with those destinations, but they are able – in various and ambivalent ways – to harness intoxication for the creative revision of their understandings of space and travel.

Huxley’s distillation of the island motif and its broader thematic concerns, and the ways in which they were picked up by neo-countercultural writers like Alex Garland, resembles Hunter S. Thompson’s construction of the Gonzo traveler and that persona’s appropriation by a subsequent generation of writers that includes recent Canadian novelist Robert Sedlack. In presenting these texts according to this doubled historical narrative, Part III of this study offers more of a refraction than a continuation of the mode of “tripping” outlined in Part II. While primarily refractory, the shift from Part II to Part III does have a historical dimension (*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was published after

Island, and *The African Safari Papers* was published after *The Beach*) and thus shifts toward the contemporary and its particular concerns. Perhaps because, for example, they are inheritors of the legacy of sixties excess and hedonism Thompson and Sedlack both – in a thematic not generally on display in Huxley and Garland – render sublime (Richard Klein might say “darkly beautiful” [17]) what is generally considered merely profane. The latter texts, in contrast to the former, depict the wholesale enjoyment of perversity, depravity, the grotesque, the deformed, and the intoxicated.

In so doing, they help construct the thematic refraction integral to Part III of this study. They posit bemusement and, as is especially prominent in Thompson’s title, terror in the face of conventional Western notions of consciousness, bodily integrity, and – evoking William S. Burroughs’ perennial concern – social control. As variations of being “on the road,” a location Bakhtin claims is where “the unity of time and space markers is exhibited with exceptional precision and clarity” (*Dialogic* 98), they combine perceptual categories seemingly with more insistence and open up through juxtaposition possibilities that are seemingly harder to close down. They are also Rabelaisian in their focus on comical violence, sexuality, corporeality, and those dimensions of corporeality “through which the body itself goes out to meet the world” (Bakhtin *Rabelais* 26).

Fear and Loathing and *The African Safari Papers* also make an appropriate pair because of their humorously appalling excesses. By contrast, Huxley and Garland are quite serious about their satirical takes on the problems of utopia – dour, even – but Thompson and Sedlack offer resistance to social and cultural norms in part through recourse to humor. Often constituted by sudden, unexpected shifts from one conceptual sphere to another, by incongruous or absurd contrasts, or as D.H. Monroe writes, by

“[i]mporting into one situation what belongs to another” (40), humor is a particularly efficacious means of altering perception. As such, there are general resemblances between humor and the affective responses to both the drug experience and the act of encountering other spaces and cultures through travel. Indeed, the oft-noted hilarity that arises with the use of certain drugs (cannabis and nitrous oxide, for example) may be the result of heightened sensitivities to the incongruities of language or the otherwise unnoticed non-sequiturs of daily life. Humor, like the perceptual alterations of intoxication and the defamiliarization provoked by encountering cultural Others, grants the possibility of exploring unusual ideas, of breaking free from established categories and hierarchies, and of catalyzing insight. Augmenting the effects of “tripping” through humor, Thompson and Sedlack pile on the destabilization that helps produce alternative spatial and subjective possibilities.

Even in their titles, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *The African Safari Papers* demonstrate a shift in focus from *Island* and *The Beach*. *Island* and *The Beach* foreground specific locations in their titles to the exclusion of all else, while the texts that comprise Part III suggest more mediated pursuits. Thompson’s title foregrounds a specific set of emotions – fear and loathing – over where they occur, while Sedlack’s novel foregrounds textuality: its title refers not to an African safari so much as a set of papers *about* an African safari. Huxley and Garland depict forms of travel and intoxication that have concrete spatial objectives, while Thompson and Sedlack complicate that project, hint at its possible lines of mediation, and begin to intimate what may emerge from alternative constructions of space.

As North Americans, Thompson and Sedlack write from former colonies, cultures anxious about their lack – relative to Britain – of more solidly defined histories and identities. Thompson and Sedlack write already and always from less secure subject positions. As a result, the versions of “tripping” they articulate are less interested in using space to hold identity together and more interested in how space, apprehended through a psychedelic lens, can be creatively redeployed. Thompson, for instance, writes about subjects Brandon Hall calls “peculiarly American” (49) – presidential campaigns, the Hell’s Angels, the Super Bowl, the Kentucky Derby – but using an affect that undermines conventional subjectivity: “Always America is presented as a vaguely ominous, amoral nexus of homicidal and self-destructive forces against which the author stands bemused, awed, and ultimately terrified” (49). Of such a mind, Thompson criticizes travel and drugs for being too easily co-opted by American hegemony, but in the process (and in a way that is again consistent with the ambivalence of the *pharmakon*) he reveals their ability to provide resistant space. Hall’s description of Thompson’s work – of his fear and loathing – pinpoints the wholesale destruction of the self in which Thompson (and Sedlack) engage. Such destruction, though, as I will argue, leaves open the possibility for creative reformulations congruent with Foucauldian heterotopia. Where Part II looked to space as a way of understanding intoxication, Part III looks – in something of a reversal of the prism of Part II – to Thompson’s and Sedlack’s depictions of drugs and intoxication as a way of understanding the spaces through which their “trippers” move.

Packing Heavy

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Hunter S. Thompson's 1971 piece of quasi-autobiographical semi-fictional reporting, begins with the "Doctor of Journalism" Raoul Duke (Thompson's fictive persona) and his three-hundred-pound Samoan attorney, Dr. Gonzo (the avatar of Thompson's attorney, Oscar Acosta) in Los Angeles. Flush with the expense money provided by the editors of *Sports Illustrated* for whom Duke is covering the Mint 400 motorcycle race, Duke and Gonzo fill the trunk of their car with a famous catalogue of drugs: "We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half-full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers ... and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls" (4).⁷³ Playing on a notion, popular since Walt Whitman's itemizations, that the catalogue provides an inventory of the bounty and variety of the United States, Duke's list of mind-altering substances brings American plenitude on the road. It borrows "Whitman's expansive efforts at the inclusion into himself of all others" (Sherrill 315 n. 26), casting, in this case, "all others" in terms of the cultural alterity provided by Mexican tequila, Caribbean rum, South American cocaine, and even the distinctly American but linguistically-other Budweiser. Signalled by the "whole galaxy" of drugs he intends to ingest, this passage borrows the sixties argot of cosmic-oneness-and-infinitude-within and, in joining it to the depravities that are to come, casts aspersions on the supposed American ideal of harnessing abundance and multiplicity for moral improvement.

Parts of this chapter appear, in quite different form, in my article, "Trafficking Trips: Drugs and the Anti-Tourist Novels of Hunter S. Thompson and Alex Garland." *Studies in Travel Writing* 11.2 (2007): 127-53.

⁷³ Thompson uses ellipses and italics frequently in his writing. All typography is therefore his unless indicated by square brackets or parenthetical note.

Duke's perverse trunk load also repudiates the catalogue's supposed ability to portray America "as it really is" by accounting for all of its diverse elements. No longer is the catalogue a formal means of documenting reality; in that it enumerates a constellation of psychoactive substances, it becomes in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* an account of the seemingly endless ways reality can be created and recreated by the psyche of drug users. At the same time, rather than striving for inclusiveness it revels in a set of cultural artefacts considered morally suspect in order to document Duke's profoundly marginal and self-alienated status.

In an opening phrase that immediately links travel and intoxication, Duke's drugs take hold "somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert" (3), a "tripping" space that offers through its liminality both freedom and constriction. With Dr. Gonzo's exhortation, "'Man, this is the way to travel'" (4), they plan to "do the next hundred miles in a horrible, slobbering sort of spastic stupor" (4) through the "same lonely desert [that] was the last known home of the Manson family" (5). Almost immediately, drugs in this post-sixties period, "this foul year of Our Lord, 1971" (23), are no longer the tools of glorious hippie mind expansion. They are for straddling uncomfortable boundaries (a process Thompson calls "edge-work" [80]), for deranging the body and mind, for exploring the violent insanity made famous by Charles Manson, and for initiating in Las Vegas two weeks of anarchic "toxic schizophrenia" (74), a phrase Marianne DeKoven borrows from Tom Wolfe to describe the sensory and pharmacological overload apparently so characteristic of the Las Vegas experience. This text is not, as it is sometimes assumed, a utopian romp in a psychedelic wonderland or a simple joyride through sixties counterculture. It is in fact a scathing critique of the sixties and of

foundational American mythology. Its subtitle – *A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* – evokes Joseph Conrad’s famous tale of finding corruption and decay within, and the excessiveness of its main characters’ drugged behavior functions as a comment upon the grotesqueness of the search for the American Dream in Las Vegas. For Raoul Duke, Las Vegas tourism and Las Vegas itself prompt only disgust and disdain, so the primary dimension of this chapter will be the critical ends to which Thompson puts travel and drugs. Consistent with the inescapable ambivalence of “tripping,” though, my examination of the text’s depiction of intoxication will help uncover an emerging resistant potential in Las Vegas as the site of Thompson’s satire of the American Dream.

When the lavishly inebriated and loudly raving Duke and Gonzo pick up a hitchhiker on the road – disconcerting him at once by telling him, “‘We’re your friends[....]We’re not like the others’” (5) while simultaneously “admiring the shape of his skull” (6) – Thompson lays the groundwork for his critique of travel. The open road, long a means of realizing the American Dream, becomes the nightmarish refuge of sixties burnouts like the Manson family and, of course, Duke and Gonzo themselves. Straining to explain their mission to the frightened hitchhiker, Duke “whacked the back of the driver’s seat with [his] fist. ‘This is *important*, goddamnit! This is a *true story*!’ The car swerved sickeningly, then straightened out” (8). Duke’s ironic appeal to the truth – part of Thompson’s controversial straddling of the boundary between fiction and journalism – together with the instability of travel signaled by the swerving car undermine his epistemological standpoint. The hitchhiker trapped in their car is an early example of how the text troubles the notion that free mobility is emblematic of American idealism

and exceptionalism by implicating it in its exact opposite: enforced mobility. Duke will discover the limits of travel as the narrative unfolds, but this hitchhiker, essentially kidnapped and dragged along on a mad voyage, runs up against these limits in the opening pages of the text. He has been forced into what Mark Simpson calls “vagabondage” (117), and travel, even at this early juncture, takes a sickening swerve away from any countercultural capacity it may have had during the sixties.

As the mode of “tripping” instantiated by this opening section of the text suggests, Thompson represents both intoxication in and travel through Las Vegas with deeply critical ends in mind. He joins travel and drugs in his critique in part because they negotiate the boundaries between rebellion and conformity in similar ways in the historical period under his purview. Travel, for example, has a long history of providing anti-authoritarian cultural capital but undergoes an explosion in popularity among the middle classes following the post-war development of tourism industries, and the counterculture, frequently emblemized by backpacking hippies, saw such tourism as an embrace of middle-class conformity. Instead, they sought a version of mobility characterized by lower-class signifiers and incipient resistance to the burgeoning mass domestic tourism movement. This form of backpack-revolution mobility was adopted, as the previous chapter indicated, by large numbers of young global tourists in the 1990s and early twenty-first century, but Thompson’s critique is one of the first to question whether hippie anti-tourism and mainstream tourism were all that different.

Powerful psychoactive substances in the U.S. followed a similar pattern, becoming countercultural only after first starting out as the purview of the establishment. In the late 1940s, the Central Intelligence Agency, like the Nazis in Germany, borrowed

the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann's serendipitously discovered LSD and tested it, along with other exotic hallucinogens, as a mind-control substance.⁷⁴ When the CIA discontinued its acid experiments in the mid-fifties, however, a change was already in the air as the Beat generation and, later, the hippies saw drugs much in the way they saw travel: as a means of escaping the affluent, white, middle classes and experiencing the lived alterity of other cultures. By the end of the sixties, though, many commentators like Thompson were decrying the corruption of the drug culture through its misuse of psychedelic drugs. Such misuse, along with the seemingly unending war in Vietnam, the spectre of addiction returning soldiers brought with them, the disastrous Altamont music festival in California, and other debacles, was prompting a reactionary rise in political and social conservatism. One of the earliest and most outrageous indictments of the failed promise of the 1960s was Thompson's own *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

“Heinous Chemicals”

While a significant portion of Thompson's critique arises out of the text's construction of Las Vegas as tourist destination, understanding that space first requires an overview of how he depicts drugs and intoxication in the text. Thompson's own public persona, which is often unthinkingly embraced or condemned for “celebrating” drugs, tends to overshadow the deeply ambivalent and even critical representations of drugs and

⁷⁴ The CIA's “peddling” of LSD often brings with it whiffs of conspiracy-theory paranoia, but John Marks' *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: The CIA and Mind Control* (New York: Times Books, 1979) and Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain's *Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD, and the Sixties Rebellion* (New York: Grove, 1985) are meticulously researched and lucidly presented historical overviews of the role of the CIA in popularizing hallucinogens in American culture. Marks traces the CIA's covert deployment, in a series of experiments conducted between 1950 and 1964, of psychedelic drugs as agents of manipulation. Lee and Shlain extend the narrative. They discuss the roles Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, and others played in moving the psychedelic experience out of the preserve of the CIA and into the hands of the masses for the purposes of exploring radical and dissenting consciousness.

intoxication he deploys. The text (and this may be why popular receptions of *Fear and Loathing* see Thompson as “celebrating” drugs) indicts a morally indignant mainstream society that trumpets the evils of the drug culture yet remains wholly ignorant of that culture and the phenomenology of its substances of choice. For example, the attendees of the National District Attorneys’ Conference on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs are, as Thompson depicts them, hypocritical boors. The police are “crude-looking rednecks” (140), while the speakers are “second-rate academic hustlers who get paid anywhere from \$500 to \$1000 a hit for lecturing to cop-crowds” (139). The conference’s keynote speaker is a prissy and imbecilic version of a well-known (in 1971) anti-drug academic, Dr. E.R. Bloomquist, who had written an anti-drug book Duke pronounces “a compendium of state bullshit” (139). The young D.A.s “from someplace in Georgia” (145) are credulous rubes who believe Dr. Gonzo’s comically insane tales of West Coast drug culture criminality.⁷⁵ In light of a hopelessly ignorant mainstream, a culture that “didn’t know mescaline from macaroni” (143), drugs can be read in terms of a humorously insubordinate semiotic that demolishes mainstream expectations and platitudes about drug culture. Duke and Gonzo take great pleasure in subversively furthering drug fiend mythology among the district attorneys, exposing ignorance and spreading disinformation for the amusement of acid freaks everywhere.

On the other hand, though, drugs for Thompson, as in Garland’s ultimately conservative representation of intoxicating substances, are also a potential source of alienation. Immediately after Duke’s first drug-induced hallucination – when “suddenly

⁷⁵ Gonzo tells the D.A. about some drug-abusing Satan worshippers who kidnapped a waitress in Malibu. The D.A., jaw agape, asks, “‘What did they *do* to her?’” (146). “‘*Do?*’ said my attorney. ‘Jesus Christ man. They chopped her goddamn head off right there in the parking lot! Then they cut all kinds of holes in her and sucked out the blood!’” (146).

there was a terrible roar all around us and the sky was full of what looked like huge bats, all swooping and screeching and diving around the car” (3) – Dr. Gonzo, casually working on his tan, mutters, ““What the hell are you yelling about?”” (3) and disrupts the hallucination. The incongruous bats supply a moment of terror for Duke, but it is a moment inaccessible to Dr. Gonzo, a moment in which a deeply solipsistic drug stupor separates the two men. Later, after somehow managing to check in to their Las Vegas hotel, they are sitting in the bar while Duke describes his distorted surroundings to Gonzo: “Right next to me a huge reptile was gnawing on a woman’s neck, the carpet was a blood-soaked sponge – impossible to walk on, no footing at all” (24). Gonzo is hardly fazed: ““Lizards?” he said. ‘If you think we’re in trouble now, wait till you see what’s happening in the elevators’” (24). Perhaps thankfully not described, “what’s happening in the elevators” is a horrible reminder that drugs in *Fear and Loathing* keep the minds of these characters separate. In these two scenes, Duke and Gonzo are clearly occupying different head spaces, individual psychedelic nightmares that the other can never share.

This isolation, unlike the mischief Duke and Gonzo get up to at the conference, translates into a profound sense of frustration with the process of taking drugs for any political purposes. One scene in particular, as Marianne DeKoven has pointed out in her book on 1960s U.S. culture, crystallizes the problems associated with using drugs iconoclastically. Duke and Dr. Gonzo, generously intoxicated on ether fumes, attempt to enter the Circus-Circus casino: “Ether is the perfect drug for Las Vegas. In this town they love a drunk. Fresh meat. So they put us through the turnstiles and turned us loose inside” (46). Culturally and conceptually, ether is a “drug” (as opposed to socially acceptable alcohol) and, therefore, should constitute antiestablishment resistance. Las

Vegas, however, thinks they are merely drunk and lets them enter its casino. In embracing them as fuel for its capitalist machinery, Vegas tames their alienating narcotica and brings their drug-inflected marginality into the mainstream.⁷⁶ Drugs cannot compete with Las Vegas: “In a town full of bedrock crazies”, says Duke, referring to those who come to see a garish stage show by Debbie Reynolds, “nobody even *notices* an acid freak” (24). The countercultural drug user is domesticated and ultimately erased by the true crazies of the United States – tourists. “Psychedelics are almost irrelevant,” says Duke, “in a town where you can wander into a casino any time of the day or night and witness the crucifixion of a gorilla – on a flaming neon cross that suddenly turns into a pinwheel, spinning the beast around in wild circles above the crowded gambling action” (190). Such a sight, part of the show and therefore not at all unusual in the Circus-Circus casino, again reminds readers that drugs are innocuous in a totalizing, all-absorbing place like Las Vegas. Going to Vegas to perform one’s drug-addled assault on mainstream tourism is doomed to failure because drugs never signal absolutely or even reliably; depending on the economic or cultural machinery at work beyond the drug tourist’s control, drugs can easily be domesticated. Thompson invests drug representation with a pathological extremity that mocks not only mainstream pursuit of the American Dream but also undermines its purported antidote: the countercultural dreams of the sixties. The subversiveness of drugs and hippie idealism is no match for the monolithic cultural wasteland of middle-American tourism. Thus drug use in *Fear and Loathing* criticizes a

⁷⁶ Shortly after they leave the Circus-Circus Casino for the Mint 400 motorcycle race – during which their drugs have taken a deeper hold on them – Duke starts to get nervous because they can “no longer pass for drunk” (53), again emphasizing the way in which alcoholic drunkenness covers for other, more iconoclastic, forms of altered consciousness.

brand of sixties idealism that was ill suited in the first place to dealing with the class privileges of the generation that worshipped Las Vegas as a tourist destination.⁷⁷

In *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera*, Manuel Luis Martinez interprets drugs in *Fear and Loathing* as evidence that “Thompson enumerates the failure of radical groups to find an ideological center around which to unite except the solipsistic and narcissistic individual, doomed to fragmentation and paralysis” (138). I agree with Martinez that an essential project of Thompson’s is to criticize 1960s manifestations of radicalism, but Martinez’s argument – dependent upon setting Thompson and his Beat forerunners in stark opposition to the more “civitas”-minded Mexican-American countercultural writers of the same period – concludes with the assertion that Thompson “aims only to resurrect the principles of rugged individualism” (140). In lamenting the co-optation of “great individuals” (140) by capitalist forces, says Martinez, Thompson fails, in an echo of the retreats into narcissistic individualism of Jack Kerouac and other middle-class dissenters, “to construct a viable *communitas*” (139). As in much analysis of Hunter S. Thompson, though, Martinez tends to elide the distinction between Raoul Duke and Thompson. Overlooking the self-critical tone and self-satirizing nature of *Fear and Loathing*, Martinez sees Thompson himself as *complicit* in, rather than critical of, the ultimately insufficient mythology of middle-class countercultural mobility. I do not dispute Thompson’s personal commitment to libertarian individualism, but in recalling the distinction between Duke and Thompson and in assessing the relationship between

⁷⁷ Peter Conrad finds it “aptly purgatorial that gambling, an image of external human hope teased out and defrauded by the inscrutable banditry of machines, should be confined to the waste-land of Nevada” (266). While the deserts of the United States, visionary and creative to Aldous Huxley, are for Thompson the final repository for the corpse of the American Dream, it is remarkable that gambling – perhaps *the* primary marker of Las Vegas – comes under erasure and is nearly absent from the novel.

Duke's drug use and his anti-tourist attitudes, a more sophisticated *Fear and Loathing* emerges – one that satirizes the anti-tourist, anti-democratic, and solipsistic impulses of white, middle-class “authentic” travel. Drugs spectacularize Duke, turning his behavior into an entertaining yet terrifying revelation. A satirical indictment of the same attitudes Martinez accuses Thompson of recapitulating, Duke as a drugged spectacle is in fact made helpless by his intoxication. Duke's anti-touristic ether-fueled travel around Las Vegas lies uneasily close to the spectacularly vulgar tourism he disparages, in part because Thompson criticizes the very classist notions Martinez claims Thompson endorses. The “authenticity” of Thompson's anti-touristic drug travel enters ironic quotation marks by virtue of its proximity to gaudy, inauthentic tourism, and as such, his travel and drugs no longer gird the sixties ethos – the one Martinez accuses Thompson of supporting – of individual personal discovery. “Tripping” becomes another form of conspicuousness, another means of gaining visibility and (sub)cultural capital at the expense of actual social dissent, but this process operates within the text's satirical mode.

Part of the role drugs play as the negative half of the Derridean *pharmakon*, the poison to the counterculture, becomes apparent in Duke's descriptions of the phenomenology of drugs. After ingesting, for example, adrenochrome (a substance made out of “[t]he adrenaline glands of a *living* human body” [132]), Duke experiences “[t]otal paralysis now. Every muscle in my body was contracted. I couldn't even move my eyeballs, much less turn my head or talk [. . .] Not even my lungs seemed to be functioning. I needed artificial respiration, but I couldn't open my mouth to say so. I was going to *die*. Just sitting there on the bed, unable to move” (133). The effects of ether, ingested prior to entering the Circus-Circus casino, produce a similar bodily

paralysis: “total loss of all basic motor skills: blurred vision, no balance, numb tongue – severance of all connection between the body and the brain. Which is interesting, because the brain continues to function more or less normally . . . you can actually watch yourself behaving in this terrible way, but you can’t control it” (45).⁷⁸ The sense of disembodiment and paralysis produced by these drugs undermines the introspective foundation of sixties drug discourse and replaces it with permanent horror and resignation. The drug has betrayed Duke’s body and stripped it of its agency. These two instances of drug paralysis lock Duke down into his hotel room (in the case of adrenochrome) or into the endless voraciousness of Las Vegas casino capitalism (in the case of the ether). In either instance, drugs are both appealing and horrifying to Duke because, as Dennis Foster notes about viruses and vampires (similarly sublime invaders of subjectivity), they show total “disregard for the rational subject and its autonomy” (24). In the bodily manifestations of their effects, drugs reflect the instability of the subject under the influence of alterity. Both beautiful and abject, drugs invade Raoul Duke and rewrite the limits of his body in a process similar to the way he travels to Las Vegas to experience otherness but is himself absorbed by its capitalist practices and similarly rewritten.

Thompson does not represent drugs as consistently useful tools with which to uncover the horrors of modern society. He has repeatedly indicted the sixties as a decade gone wrong, with drug use in that era equally subject to *Fear and Loathing’s* Gonzo critique. Thompson charges LSD guru Timothy Leary with having “crashed around America selling ‘consciousness expansion’ without ever giving a thought to the grim

⁷⁸ The repetitive nature of the casino’s name, like Will Farnaby “gazing, gazing” (332) in *Island* and the endlessly recycled mass media imagery and phraseology in *The Beach*, again raises the immobilization motif within a “tripping” text.

meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took him too seriously” (178). Ultimately, drugs are not always the weapons the counterculture wants them to be.

Intimations of Immobility

The full import of Hunter S. Thompson’s critique of the 1960s becomes visible in his depiction of travel and tourism. As fictional space, Las Vegas effects a critique of the mainstream American society hippies were dropping out of, but it also takes to task supposedly iconoclastic hippie subjectivity. Much in the way drugs are many things to many people, the desert city, as destination, is multiple. Las Vegas is a fantastical space, combining disparate architectural, sexual, political and economic elements into a simulacral world that seems poised to offer infinite opportunity to carve out a gap in defiance of the mainstream. Such defiance, whether taking the form of the city’s early associations with the mob or appearing in the cheeky contemporary axiom “whatever happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” generally helps secure the city’s reputation as a travel destination akin to a countercultural Mecca. Such a reputation, however, opposes the material and historical conditions of the production of Las Vegas. Such conditions, in which capitalism and commercialism secured a profitable, well-rooted hegemony in the early history of the city, allowed corporate interests to install intensive regulatory controls that normalized gambling around mid-century.⁷⁹ Las Vegas in the 1950s and

⁷⁹ There are many histories of Las Vegas that characterize the city’s development as one that, far from embracing a countercultural ethos, is deeply concerned with legitimizing the practices that make the city famous and rooting out deviance. Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens’ *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999), for instance, details the importance of mineral and military exploitation, international corporate investment, elite real estate development, federal subsidization and the careful managing of the city’s public image in the early history of Las Vegas. Hal Rothman, in *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), points to affinities between the gentrification of Vegas in the fifties and the reinvention of Vegas in the nineties as a family-friendly tourist destination, and David G. Schwartz, in

'60s, the Las Vegas Thompson writes about, was a tourist destination where middle-class Americans, the *parents* of the dope generation, went for glitz and glamour and for the possibility of striking it rich and fulfilling the American Dream. DeKoven notes that Vegas did not welcome "the sixties neoromantic archetype of the stoned/schizophrenic seer we see in R.D. Laing or Carlos Castañeda, or for that matter Allen Ginsberg or Timothy Leary" (74). Far from a psychedelic wonderland, Vegas was the Establishment, a domestic holiday destination for a country making good after the war.

As Thompson writes, "This was Bob Hope's turf. Frank Sinatra's. Spiro Agnew's" (44). Entering this turf was "like stumbling into a Time Warp, a regression to the late fifties" (156), and DeKoven claims that "[t]o the sixties person, the late fifties (minus the Beats and Civil Rights) is the ultimate cultural anathema" (105-6). Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo are sixties people, and one of the strongest themes in *Fear and Loathing* is the repudiation of Las Vegas, the rejection of the affluent middle class and its gaudy tourist Mecca. Stumbling into the Desert Inn, Raoul Duke notes that "[t]he lobby fairly reeked of high-grade formica and plastic palm trees – it was clearly a high-class refuge for Big Spenders" (44). On stage, "Debbie Reynolds was yukking across the stage in a silver afro wig ... to the tune of 'Sergeant Pepper'" (44). Duke's sneering disgust, his anti-tourist stance, is a rejection of a city nightmarishly antithetical to the spirit of the sixties, a city that co-opts a psychedelic Beatles anthem for the entertainment of middle-

Suburban Xanadu: The Casino Resort on the Las Vegas Strip and Beyond (New York: Routledge, 2003), argues that Vegas promoted itself in the 1950s as a place to escape from the rigidity of post-war suburbia but in a carefully controlled and comfortable environment. The phrase "Whatever happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" also gestures toward the limitations Vegas places on counterculturalism. Like Bakhtin's carnival, Las Vegas hedonism only operates within carefully defined boundaries and only for a limited time – as long as one's vacation lasts.

class squares and that is, in DeKoven's words, a "harbinger of postmodern American inauthenticity" (107).

Delineating the space through which Duke and Gonzo drunkenly weave remains an important task, because Thompson critics generally remain silent on the links between drugs and travel – on what I have been calling "tripping." Sue Matheson comes closest to acknowledging the links in an article that compares Duke to a shaman. Building on Mircea Eliade's well-known 1964 work *Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Ecstasy*, Matheson characterizes the shaman as follows: "The great master of ecstasy, the shaman specializes in a trance during which the spirit is believed to leave his or her body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld" (87). Equating Duke's mind-altering substances to the intoxicants many shamans use in their ceremonies, Matheson claims Duke "deliberately attempt[s] to escape ego-consciousness," journeys into the "imbalance of the psyche of the narrator's culture" (88), and returns with the solution in the form of a "*cultural* corrective" (87 – Matheson's italics). Hers is an elaborate conceit that is fairly convincing but that displays two important shortcomings. For one, it too equates narrator with author – "...Raoul Duke (a.k.a. Hunter S. Thompson)..." (87) – which obscures Thompson's criticism of drugs. For Matheson, drugs are a fully operational heuristic that fling open a window and let a breath of fresh air infuse a troubled culture. She says little, though, about Thompson's not infrequent depictions of that window bouncing back and slamming shut – as in the adrenochrome experience – or, if it stays open, letting in huge bats or bloodthirsty lizards. Another shortcoming in Matheson's otherwise provocative argument has to do with her uncomplicated use of the shamanism's metaphorical travel. She notes, for example, that the shamanic experience is "generally expressed as a

journey” (88), but in failing to explore further the relationship between mobility and mind-alteration, she omits Thompson’s complications of the travel motif.⁸⁰ As a result of this limitation, her article frequently reads like a list or a catalogue of features the narrative shares with shamanic discourse. As my discussion in this section will suggest, travel is for Thompson as often a regressive and atavistic gesture as it is a way of bringing back enlightening knowledge.

Thompson’s use of travel to criticize both mainstream U.S.A. and the counterculture is the first of such complications. Duke’s anti-tourist sentiments, for instance, belie his own complicity in the tourist economy. He expresses anti-touristic bewilderment over the vulgarity and superficiality of Las Vegas, for instance, yet his journalistic credentials give him culturally and financially privileged access to the city. Such privileges narrow the gap between Duke and affluent middle-class tourists, the ones he condemns (yet resembles) as “trying to look casual, all dressed exactly alike in their cut-rate Vegas casuals: plaid bermuda shorts, Arnie Palmer golf shirts and hairless white legs tapering down to rubberized ‘beach sandals’” (106). Duke finds repellent the horrifying spectacle of Debbie Reynolds on stage, yet he insists on being seen – on making a spectacle of himself – as a defiant traveler whose outrageous displays of excess and hedonism are of course “authentic,” as opposed to the excesses of the gaudy, paunchy tourists of Las Vegas. Indeed, the figure of the anti-tourist, while decrying the ubiquitous and searing sight of the tourist, must himself be seen in order to be validated as a “real traveler.” As James Buzard puts it: “Anti-tourists thus [find] themselves faced

⁸⁰ Her article “‘Just Sick Enough to be Totally Confident’: Can American Road Novels and Films Find Time for Apocalypse?” (*Antithesis* 6.1 (1992): 43-54) also briefly alludes to possible connections between drugs and travel (on p. 52) but similarly does not venture into the territory I am exploring here.

with a deeply ironic obligation to display their qualities while simultaneously avoiding making tourist-like displays of themselves” (96-7).

In one such display, Duke and Dr. Gonzo drive down the Las Vegas Strip while a ludicrously inebriated Gonzo shouts at tourists in other cars. “All around me in traffic,” narrates Duke, “I could see people talking and I wanted to hear what they were saying” (29). He briefly considers pulling out a large, high-tech microphone he has with him to hear the tourists, but he reconsiders: “Las Vegas is not the kind of town where you want to drive down Main Street aiming a black bazooka-looking instrument at people” (29). He imagines that the tourists could mistake his microphone for a weapon, that his attempt to document what he sees as horrible reality could be interpreted as part of that horrible reality. In fact, Marianne DeKoven makes that very mistake in her commentary on this scene, claiming in square brackets that the microphone is “one of their weapons” (99); nevertheless, her assessment of this moment is astute: “their insane, violent, aggressive, drugged behavior reflects and enacts rather than repudiates the ‘horrifying disasters’ of the death of the sixties and the endgame of the Vietnam War” (98-99). Thompson has written extensively about the death throes of the sixties – which, in addition to the war in Vietnam, are marked by the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King and the violence at Altamont – and such writing, particularly in light of Thompson’s personal fascination with weapons, often verges on romanticizing violence.⁸¹ In spite of his potential complicity and his paranoid inebriation, Duke is forced to acknowledge that tourists in Vegas are capable of reproducing a reality all their own in which he appears to participate in, instead of merely recording, the horrors of contemporary society. Duke’s

⁸¹ The prominence of weaponry in those signal sixties events, and the anxiety over the “weaponized” microphone in *Fear and Loathing*, reflects a more general anxiety over the violation of bodily boundaries that guns, like drugs, threaten.

intoxication forces him, in other words, to acknowledge the existence of tourist subjectivity.

In light of the recognition of such subjectivity, Thompson takes travel itself to task for being too domesticated, for not being as effective a mode of dissent as the counterculture imagines it. At one point, Duke recounts an anecdote about an acquaintance of his: “about twenty years old: Long hair, Levi jacket, knapsack – an out-front *drifter*, a straight Road Person” who “wanders around the country looking for whatever it was that we all thought we’d nailed down in the Sixties – sort of an early Bob Zimmerman trip” (173). This “Road Person,” a Dylanesque or Kerouacian bohemian, meets an end of sorts when he is picked up and jailed in Las Vegas for vagrancy, a powerful deflation of the myth that freedom is available on the open road. Thompson complements such a debunking with other ironic scenes. At one point, for example, he has Duke claim that “Old elephants limp off to the hills to die; old Americans go out to the highway and drive themselves to death with huge cars.” Duke then adds, “But our trip was different. It was a classic affirmation of everything right and true and decent in the national character” (18). The first sentence characterizes the mainstream’s common mode of expressing the American Dream – driving – as in fact expressing the death of the American Dream. The second sentence – Duke’s assurance that his trip is “different” – in fact anticipates that the trip will be anything but different. As the narrative unfolds and we realize that “everything right and true and decent in the national character” gets subverted by the depravities that have made the text famous, Duke and Dr. Gonzo’s trip to Las Vegas comes to signal everything that is conspicuously profane and dissolute about the counterculture’s manifestation of the American Dream. His staking a claim to

a “different” mode of travel in search of the American Dream in fact highlights the similarity between what Duke and Gonzo do when they drive their red Chevy convertible and their white Cadillac and what old Americans do when they “go out to the highway and drive themselves to death with huge cars.” His anti-tourist sentiments thus satirize both countercultural and square Americans’ hopes of expressing their (oppositional or conformist) identities through mobility.

Thompson, like Alex Garland and Robert Sedlack, criticizes the anti-tourist sentiment in part by depicting as atavistic the mobility his anti-tourists enjoy. The Mint 400 motorcycle race, what Duke calls “the main story of our generation” (19), initially represents the counterculture’s version of the American Dream in Las Vegas. He claims to feel entirely at home among the alcoholic reporters, the gun fanatics, and the motorcycle enthusiasts, noting, “At the Mint 400 we were dealing with an essentially simpatico crowd, and if our behavior was gross and outrageous . . . well, it was only a matter of degree” (109). The hyperbolic characterization of the race as “the main story of our generation” and the subcultural solidarity with his “simpatico crowd” start to unravel as the true nature of the Mint 400 becomes apparent: hundreds of motorcycles racing around endlessly and blindly in the desert.⁸² Covering the race proves impossible, with each lap representing “another hour of kidney-killing madness out there in that terrible dust-blind limbo” (38). As the race becomes increasingly unrepresentable, Duke concludes that “the incredible dustcloud that would hang over this part of the desert for the next two days was already formed up solid. None of us realized, at the time, that this was the last we would see of the ‘Fabulous Mint 400’” (38). The repetitive, circular,

⁸² This scene echoes – significantly but probably coincidentally – William S. Burroughs’ motorcycle cop endlessly circling through the streets of Macoa in *The Yage Letters*.

inscrutable form of travel that constitutes the motorcycle race evokes the travel Duke and Gonzo make to, and within, Las Vegas. Reminiscent of the valley of ashes as a symbolic graveyard of dreams in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a profoundly important novel to Thompson,⁸³ Duke's dream collapses before his eyes into impenetrable clouds of dust, an indication that travel – like drugs – cannot always carry the baggage of countercultural dreams.⁸⁴

The circular nature of the travel that constitutes the Mint 400, the book's allusions to *The Great Gatsby*, and its indebtedness to Jack Kerouac serve to paint travel in *Fear and Loathing* as atavistic. Much in the way Nick Carraway's movement from the Midwest to New York in *The Great Gatsby*⁸⁵ and Sal Paradise's inevitable returns to the East Coast subvert the westering impulse as a means of fulfilling the American Dream, Duke and Gonzo start their trip in Los Angeles and move east across the desert to Las Vegas. "Every now and then," muses Duke, "when your life gets complicated and the weasels start closing in, the only real cure is to load up on heinous chemicals and then drive like a bastard from Hollywood to Las Vegas. To *relax*, as it were, in the womb of

⁸³ As William McKeen and Thompson's numerous biographers have noted, Thompson as fledgling author would type and retype passages from writers he admired, including William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald, in order to get a sense of their style and rhythm (McKeen 6). This well-known anecdote signals Thompson's indebtedness to the ambivalences of compulsive repetition, to the powers and the dangers of the kind of self-effacing behavior most prominent in the pathology of addiction.

⁸⁴ Thompson revisits many of these themes in *The Curse of Lono* (1983), a semi-fictionalized account of a trip to Hawaii he made to cover the Hawaii Marathon and a text that shares many parallels with *Fear and Loathing*: it foregrounds the process of composition; Ralph Steadman again provides some remarkable illustrations (many of them full-page and in color); a sense of frantic excess permeates his travel; the Marathon is pronounced fundamentally unrepresentable; disdain for tourists abounds; drugs and intoxication provide a ubiquitous epistemological filter; and the Marathon itself, like the Mint 400, is depicted as an insane form of grueling travel that emblemizes its decade – the 1980s – when "the nation turned *en masse* to the atavistic wisdom of Ronald Reagan" (55) and turned society into "a brutal Darwinian crunch" (57) inhospitable to freelance reporters and even, or especially, to the yuppies running the Marathon.

⁸⁵ See Robert Sickles' "A Countercultural Gatsby: Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the Death of the American Dream and the Rise of Las Vegas, USA" (*Popular Culture Review* 11.1 (2000): 99-111).

the desert sun” (12). Metaphors of disease, ubiquitous in drug literature, also appear in this passage, setting up the alterity of drugs and travel as “the only real cure” for the illness of familiarity and conventionality. The qualifier “as it were,” though, not to mention the feverish nature of their activities, undercuts the ostensible purpose of the trip east – relaxation – and the ambiguity of the womb imagery suggests that the movement across the desert to Las Vegas is regressive, a return to a prior state. Their disoriented travel, like the paralyzing phenomenology of drugs that arrests countercultural engagement, also operates as the negative pole of the Derridean *pharmakon*. While what DeKoven calls “the sensory, linguistic, semiotic dislocations of Las Vegas” (73) can produce a space open to creative self-fashioning (alluded to in the “rebirth” connotations of Vegas as a womb), *Fear and Loathing* insistently defuses the countercultural cachet of “free mobility.” For one, mobility in Vegas is not free, in either of the two main senses of the word. Duke and Dr. Gonzo’s ostensibly dissident adventures are authorized by the professional privilege Duke’s status as journalist confers (dubious as that status may be) and are enabled by the expense money that seems to them to appear out of thin air. In another critique of mobility’s freedom, Duke as traveler to and around Las Vegas, like the “Road Person” who gets busted for vagrancy in Duke’s anecdote, is disembodied – much in the way he is rendered harmlessly immobile by ether and adrenochrome – to the point where the subversive potential of his travel comes into question.

Thompson furthers his critique of the viability of the American Dream by aligning it with Duke and Dr. Gonzo’s depravities. When Gonzo dizzily wants out of the Circus-Circus casino, Duke upbraids him: ““We came out here to find the American Dream, and now that we’re right in the vortex you want to quit”” (47-48). The implications of

oblivion and destruction in the word “vortex” signal Thompson’s intervention here into Duke’s harangue, Thompson’s contention that Las Vegas is not in fact the space for a potential countercultural utopia. When the revolving bar in Circus-Circus, which Manuel Luis Martinez claims satirizes the notion of sixties “revolution,” becomes particularly nauseating to Dr. Gonzo, Duke tells him: “‘It won’t stop [. . .] It’s not *ever* going to stop’” (49). Instead of allowing them the free mobility emblematic of foundational American traditions – the form of postwar travel mythologized by Beat generation writers in particular – the endless circularity of this false “revolution” offers instead a vortex, a hegemonic imposition upon its countercultural practitioners. Like the endless cycles of the Mint 400 and the paralysis of ether and adrenochrome, it turns Las Vegas from a psychedelic “trip” into a disabling trap.

“All these horrible realities began to dawn on me,” Duke narrates as he decides to escape Las Vegas and return to Los Angeles. “Here I was alone in Las Vegas with this goddamn incredibly expensive car, completely twisted on drugs, no attorney, no cash, no story for the magazine – and on top of everything else I had a gigantic goddamn hotel bill to deal with” (70). His flight is compelled, imposed on him by his own excesses, and even the geography he will traverse impresses its restrictions and disciplines his travel:

There is only one road to L.A. – US Interstate 15, a straight run with no backroads or alternate routes, just a flat-out high-speed burn through Baker and Barstow and Berdoo and then on the Hollywood Freeway straight into frantic oblivion: safety, obscurity, just another freak in the Freak Kingdom.

But in the meantime, for the next five or six hours, I’d be the most conspicuous thing on this goddamn evil road. (83)

Travel to Los Angeles promises security, but his drug-related reasons for fleeing and the trip itself contradict the supposed freedom inherent in American travel mythology. Like the terrified hitchhiker at the beginning of the book having his ideas about the freedom of

the open American road profoundly disturbed upon being caught up in the whirlwind of Duke and Dr. Gonzo, the compelled trip back to Los Angeles functions as an example of what Mark Simpson calls “mobility’s disciplines” (92). Simpson’s study, *Trafficking Subjects: The Politics of Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America*, theorizes that “[m]obility ... is deeply contested under capitalism” (xxii), that the problematic travel of marginalized figures such as fugitive slaves, vagabonds, and displaced natives is a volatile agent acting upon orthodox notions of American travel as expansive and free. Simpson’s work echoes the insights Michel de Certeau generates in “Railway Navigation and Incarceration,” one chapter of his influential volume *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau calls railway travel “A travelling incarceration. Immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by. What is happening? Nothing is moving inside or outside the train” (111). The traveler, “pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car” travels in “a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity” (111). Duke’s travel, disciplined as it is by the voracious capitalism of Las Vegas and by the exigencies of his own excesses, resembles de Certeau’s train travel and thus fundamentally lacks a contestatory edge. Following the discursive slippage between drugs as exciting and enervating and drugs as addictive and soporific, Duke’s travel becomes normalized and narcotized. Furthermore, his visibility in Las Vegas constitutes, along with his public intoxication, more spectacularization. The spectacle he makes of himself through his consumption of drugs and his anti-tourism has shaded over fully into the spectacle of the vulgar tourist. It is in fact his hedonism in Las Vegas – the way he has tormented the locals, run up outrageous hotel bills, and destroyed his rental car – that forces his migration to Los Angeles. By

this point, his trip back to L.A. has become another parody of the westering impulse, this time a *flight from* the American Dream, which we as readers have realized is in fact the hollowness and horror of the vortex of the Circus-Circus casino.

As the trip west progresses, his liberty is further circumscribed by an encounter with the California Highway Patrol. Duke outlines how a countercultural anti-tourist such as himself should deal with that situation:

Your normal speeder will panic and immediately pull over to the side when he sees the big red light behind him [. . .] This is wrong. It arouses contempt in the cop-heart. The thing to do [. . .] then is *accelerate*. Never pull over with the first siren-howl. Mash it down and make the bastard chase you at speeds up to 120 all the way to the next exit. He will follow. But he won't know what to make of your blinker-signal that says you're about to turn right [. . .] [K]eep signaling and hope for an off-ramp, one of those uphill side-loops with a sign saying 'Max Speed 25' . . . and the trick, at this point, is to suddenly leave the freeway and take him into the chute at no less than a hundred miles an hour. (90)

As Duke performs this maneuver with the CHP officer in pursuit, he slams on the brakes and completes “a finely-executed hi-speed Controlled Drift *all the way around* one of those clover-leaf freeway interchanges” (90). After coming to a stop, he gets out and waits for the furious police officer to catch up to him. “Let him unwind,” Duke continues, “keep smiling. The idea is to show him that you were always in total control of yourself and your vehicle – while *he* lost control of everything” (91). Inverting the appearance and discourse of control within the paradigm of car travel – one of the quintessential forms of American mobility – should constitute antiauthoritarian resistance. Tormenting the police officer purports to undermine the rules of the road that structure mainstream middle-American tourism and that restrict the open freedom of American mythology. But like so many of Duke's attempts at dissent, and consistent

with Thompson's satirical take on "tripping" as a means of finding the American Dream, Duke's "Controlled Drift" *fails* as a countercultural signifier:

I also had a can of Budweiser in my hand. Until that moment, I was unaware that I was holding it. I had felt totally on top of the situation . . . but when I looked down and saw that little silver/red evidence-bomb in my hand, I knew I was fucked. . . .

Speeding is one thing, but Drunk Driving is quite another. The cop seemed to grasp this – that I'd blown my whole performance by forgetting the beer can. His face relaxed, he actually smiled. And so did I. Because we both understood, in that moment, that my Thunder Road, moonshine-bomber act had been totally wasted. (91)

In a reversal of the way Circus-Circus thinks his ether inebriation is mere drunkenness, his drunkenness here is too conspicuous to be subversive. The police officer would probably not have noticed Duke's mescaline or LSD intoxication, but the "silver/red evidence-bomb" of the can of beer exposes the performative nature of his subversion and sinks his attempt at a "Thunder Road, moonshine-bomber act." Psychoactive substances thus do not reliably signal "subversion" within the context of travel. This scene points to the inherent limitations of counterculturalism's mobility, a commentary Thompson makes throughout *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

This particular failed attempt at rebellion, this critique Thompson musters of the image of the drug-fuelled countercultural traveler, means that Duke can no longer go on to Los Angeles. He knows the California Highway Patrol would never allow it. So he decides to "confound the CHP by moving *East* again, instead of West. This would be the shrewdest move of my life. Back to Vegas and sign up for the Drugs and Narcotics conference" (95). He frames this move as a deliberate re-embrace of Las Vegas, a means of subverting his subverted counterculturalism, but like his initial decision to leave Vegas, his decision to return is enforced from without. Much in the way Duke must

accept bad drug trips along with good ones as “forced *consciousness expansion*” (89), his travel both away from and back to Las Vegas happens against his will. Duke concludes Part One of *Fear and Loathing* by saying, “I was going back to Vegas. I had no choice” (96). As compelled, habitual travel, Duke’s return to Vegas constitutes Thompson’s continued project of defusing the powers of mobility and thematizing the perniciousness of immobility.

Such depictions of immobility – of both paralyzing highs and highly circumscribed travel – draw upon the discourses of addiction that I have been urging caution against. Duke’s drug use appears to degenerate inevitably into the same lack of agency that prevents an addict from making choices and acting on preferences. After constantly oscillating across the border between one state of consciousness and another, Thompson’s “tripper,” in what amounts to an essentially conservative vision of drug subjectivity, is exhausted by an endless succession of drug-wrought transformations. Too protean to be politically efficacious, Thompson’s “tripper” freezes. The oscillation across states (and state lines) has become so rapid that the subject, trapped in the liminal space between realms or caught in the vanishing point of a vortex somewhere in the Mojave Desert, is no longer moving. The abdication of free will apparent in Duke’s subjection to (rather than deployment of) mobility, a recurring theme in *Fear and Loathing*, brings the pleasures of mobility into question in much the same way the disembodied effects of ether and adrenochrome bring into question the idea that psychoactive substances expand the boundaries of selfhood and perception. *Fear and Loathing* seems to assert the conspicuous consumption of drugs and travel not as countercultural signifiers but instead as indicators of the failure of postwar idealism and

indeed of the death of the sixties. Raoul Duke's endless circling domesticates mobility's resistant possibilities and denies that such possibilities constitute American identity. Just as Will Farnaby's immobilization between the realms of heaven and hell foreshadows the inevitable downfall of Pala in Huxley's *Island*, and just as Richard's endless drug haze precipitates the collapse of his island commune, so too is the visionary ideal of the sixties – cranked compulsively into endless repetition and recycling – stymied and doomed to solipsism in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.⁸⁶

Unstuck in Vegas with the Radical Blues Again

In spite of this grim conjecture, “tripping” does uncover resistant elements in the text. Briefly, two such elements include the book's humor and its challenges to conventional morality. Thompson's humor, to return to the early theories of D.H. Monro, performs an imaginative role, generating and investigating the possibilities inherent in new ideas or improbable predicaments, while Delia Falconer's analysis of *Fear and Loathing*'s moral and legal framework locates its cultural intercession in the way it “problematizes any simple, binary representation of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’” (112). Falconer cites Duke's elegy for “the desperate assumption that somebody – or at least some *force* – is tending that Light at the end of the tunnel” (179) as evidence that sixties

⁸⁶ Circuitously quoting B.M Metzger's *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Christian, Jewish* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1968) via Jonathan Z. Smith, Delia Falconer notes that “this is a problem of many retrospective accounts of the sixties: many countercultural activities have been reduced, from the point of view of nationalist history-making, to the status of the ‘profane,’ enmeshed in a ‘circular movement, leading nowhere’” (“‘Just Sick’” 48). Thompson's work certainly shows evidence of this problem. Especially perhaps in its more violent or misogynist moments, it “profanes” the significance of a host of progressive rights movements shaped largely by the 1960s. My purpose in this chapter, however, has been to suggest some of the effects of the profoundly ambivalent union of travel and drugs – *including* the flattening of difference or the “profanation” of those progressive endeavors most emblematic of the sixties. See Jonathan Z. Smith's “A Slip in Time Saves Nine: Prestigious Origins Again” in John Bender and David E. Wellbery's edited collection *Chronotypes: The Constructions of Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991: 67-76).

counterculturalists had a naïve “belief in paternal authority and linear progress which also underpin the law” (Falconer 118) and which ultimately prove hollow. Falconer’s deconstructive argument claims that the text “replaces the notion of opposition with a – frail – possibility of intervention” (124). At this point, my reading of *Fear and Loathing*, while acknowledging the tentativeness of Falconer’s assessment of the text, locates two additional sites for possible critical intervention.

The first site may be found in the text’s generic status and the confrontation with conventional literary aesthetics such status provokes. *Fear and Loathing* is widely regarded as a fictional riff on a real trip Thompson took to cover a real motorcycle race and a real drug conference, a prime example of his contribution to the famous genre of late sixties writing known as new journalism. As a metajournalistic practice which took the process of “getting the story” to *be* the story, new journalism stressed the subjective over the objective, participation over observation, and subsumed conventional journalism’s quest for historical accuracy in favor of the generic features of fiction. In stressing the importance of fiction to this genre, John Hellman contends: “Admirers of conventional journalism have portrayed the conflict with new journalism as one of objectivity versus subjectivity and fact versus fiction. However, it is actually a conflict of a disguised perspective versus an admitted one, and a corporate fiction versus a personal one” (4). Like fellow new journalism innovators Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Michael Herr, and Joan Didion, Thompson was interested in the representation of historical events, but like the more darkly surrealistic satirical novelists of roughly the same period – William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut – Thompson

employed fictive techniques of an experimental, fabulist, and genre-bending nature.

William McKeen, author of the only book-length academic study of Thompson, writes

Thompson has said ‘fiction’ and ‘journalism’ are inherently artificial categories, and he seems to have taken it upon himself to further blur the distinction. Indeed, it is amusing to see where libraries shelve *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Some classify it as nonfiction, modern history, or sociology. Others place it with novels. And still others consider it a travelogue – although it might frighten off would-be vacationers to Las Vegas. (49)

The indeterminate status of the book and the cultural instability of the journalist (as I mentioned in my discussion of Will Farnaby in Chapter Four) provide certain ideological and epistemological liberties and make clear what is at stake in the book’s deployment of the “tripping” trope. Using drugs and a particular form of horrified and horrifying tourism to assault the American Dream seems, in its mingling of fiction and fantasy, to weaken the fundamental binaries of self and other, reality and imagination, and familiar and unfamiliar.

The undecidability of the book’s genre also works subversively to complicate the process of commodification to which it, like *The Beach*, can be subjected. First, Thompson’s own recycling of the phrase “fear and loathing” in his body of work is a form of self-incorporation or self-ingestion that draws attention to (at the risk of reproducing) the endlessly self-referential immobility engendered by postmodern practices of consumption. Secondly, a more active resisting of the way “generic imposition proves normative and disciplinary” (Simpson 77) makes classification of the book difficult and thus helps distance it from the logic of capitalism and the market. According to Ralph Steadman, Thompson preferred to see the text as “conceptual schizophrenia” (70), an apt descriptor for a genre patently uninterested in logic. Resembling a drug itself, *Fear and Loathing* even transgresses the boundary between text

and reader, with Steadman's splattery and anarchic illustrations, for instance, operating as a Derridean "supplement" and threatening to spill, fluid-like, out of the text and contaminate the reader.⁸⁷ Similar to how Thompson "can't remember what he made up and what really happened" (Woods), "tripping" performs a postmodern mystification of the distinction between complicity and critique and allows the text to explore those mutually dependent processes as they work upon the perceived disappointments and failures of the promises of the 1960s.

The second interventionary site I wish to discuss returns us to an important prismatic facet of "tripping" raised by Part III of this study: the space produced in the text under the influence of drugs and intoxication. Unlike the space in the novels under discussion in Part II, Las Vegas in Thompson's text really can draw upon its fantastical elements and its indeterminacy to reflect the concept Edward Soja, engaging with Henri Lefebvre's tri-partite description of space, calls Thirdspace: "*Thirdspace* too can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the 'real' material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through 'imagined' representations of spatiality" (6).⁸⁸

Raoul Duke's protean perceptions and the ambiguity of the narrative in general help constitute indeterminate spaces from the outset of the book. In the midst of tormenting the hitchhiker in one of the opening scenes, Duke takes stock of their

⁸⁷ The presence of the supplement in a text indicates that the text can never be completely self-contained. Generating a supplement only opens further gaps, thus ensuring that the text is always deconstructing its own assumptions. See *Of Grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). For Steadman's own assessment of his illustrations, see his memoir of Thompson, *The Joke's Over*. There, he claims (with characteristically paradoxical bombast and self-abasement) that "[t]he book was noticed mainly for the drawings and through the years, unknown to me, they were milked and used mercilessly" (74). Such use continues today (presumably with Steadman's knowledge) in, for example, an episode of *The Simpsons* entitled "Viva Ned Flanders" that alludes visually at one point to Steadman's iconographic title page of the novel.

⁸⁸ All quotations of Soja are from *Thirdspace* unless otherwise noted.

situation: “Our vibrations were getting nasty – but why? I was puzzled, frustrated. Was there no communication in this car? Had we deteriorated to the level of *dumb beasts*?”

(8). A typical reading of this scene might flag it as an instance of profound depravity and thus part of Thompson’s critique of countercultural excess. While certainly not incorrect, such a reading should acknowledge the way Duke’s assessment takes the form of multiple interrogatives. “*Was* there no communication?” he asks, and “*Had* we deteriorated” to the level of animals? The unconventional mode of communication taking place in the car – the mode in which Duke has to ask himself, “Did I *say* that? Or just think it? Was I talking? Did they hear me?” (5) – establishes a subjectivity with revisionary potential. These questions, opened up by Duke’s altered consciousness, his uncertain presence “somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert” (3), and his motion through a distinctly liminal space suggest alternative subjective possibilities and thus undermine the truism that excess can only ever be a form of deterioration. From his position in the borderlands, where he echoes the oratorical yet dreamlike presence of cannabis in Garland’s *The Beach*, Duke momentarily exceeds the realm of the speakable when his thinking and his speaking merge. He enacts the dispossession of subjectivity Bataille writes about in *Visions of Excess*, broaching unspeakability and penetrating into the realm in which drugs (in particular) have so often been cast.⁸⁹

Fear and Loathing interjects a similar ambiguity toward the end of the episode in which Duke takes the paralyzing adrenochrome:

⁸⁹ In an analysis of Deleuze and Bataille, Jerome Game notes that “[t]he ultimate goal of the notion of excess in Bataille’s ontology is to overcome the fundamental discontinuity and separation characterizing being” (74). Thompson’s continual reinvestment in individuality suggests that this goal is not realized in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. As Chapter Six will suggest, however, Sedlack’s protagonist is able to make significant strides away from individuality and toward what Huxley has articulated as the infinite.

It was after midnight when I finally was able to talk and move around ... but I was still not free of the drug; the voltage had merely been cranked down from 220 to 110. I was a babbling nervous wreck, flapping around the room like a wild animal, pouring sweat and unable to concentrate on any one thought for more than two or three seconds at a time. (134)

This moment, contrary to the insistently conservative representation of adrenochrome in which the drug brings to a halt any productive introspection, leaves room for resistant potential. Duke is “still not free” in this scene, but his “flapping” body and pouring sweat reintroduce movement (even excessive movement) into the paralyzing experience of profound mind-alteration. No longer is the adrenochrome completely deadening; it now grants Duke a hopped-up agency and a perverse porousness signaled by his verbal and epidermal leakage. Free of the confines of straight rationality, Duke’s mind darts freely from topic to topic. The drug, in this instance, situates in space an alternate corporeality and an alternate way of thinking, an alterity to countervail regimes of Western logic that are as potentially paralyzing as adrenochrome.

A similarly unconventional reading of the scene in which Duke characterizes Las Vegas as “a town where you can wander into a casino any time of the day or night and witness the crucifixion of a gorilla – on a flaming neon cross that suddenly turns into a pinwheel” (190) – turns Las Vegas into one of Foucault’s “counter-sites” (24). Duke’s drug hallucinations alert him so insistently to the revolutionary potential of the space in which he is living that drugs are no longer even required. The surreal scene of the crucified gorilla, readily available for tourist consumption, becomes a tool for challenging rationality on a mass scale and, by way of its simultaneous availability and inscrutability, a means of highlighting the strange logic of tourism. The spinning gorilla, like Debbie Reynolds in the heterotopic space of the Las Vegas stage, makes Duke’s anti-

tourism untenable, because in Las Vegas such irrational sights – approaching the hallucinogenic power of surrogate drug use – are available to anyone. Thompson downplays the importance of drugs here because, as Duke and Gonzo find out in their car and in hotel lobbies all over Vegas, drugs produce individualist isolation of the kind Martinez accuses Thompson of endorsing. Unlike Huxley's sniffy disdain for mass culture, Thompson's quasi-recuperation of countercultural populism underscores in this scene some of the resistant potential DeKoven argues is "attached now to egalitarian postmodern commercial culture" (92). Despite the investment of *Fear and Loathing* in criticizing the revolutionary potential of travel and drugs, the crucified gorilla's stubbornly surreal existence within consumerist logic remains a beacon of possibility. Such surreal moments and the excesses for which the text is famous oppose Vegas' systems of value and valuation and counterpoise its relentless instrumentalizing of everything, including tourist bodies and their drug practices.

The text ends on a final assertion of that possibility when Raoul Duke, using an "Ecclesiastical Discount Card" (203) to swindle some amyl nitrate from a pharmacist, reels off toward the airport bar on an ambivalent note of delight and infirmity: "I took another big hit off the amyl, and by the time I got to the bar my heart was full of joy. I felt like a monster reincarnation of Horatio Alger ... a Man on the Move, and just sick enough to be totally confident" (204). The circularity this final scene imparts, the sense that the madness is just starting over, comes tempered with Duke's realizations about the idealism of self-invention. He is a "monster" of a reincarnation, infected with a social "sickness," yet his confidence grants him joy in the illogic his monstrosity can sow. He is, notably, a reincarnation of Horatio Alger, a figure who, while still believing in the

American mythology of self-invention, exceeds the boundaries of selfhood. Not mere effrontery, his behavior in these spaces of “tripping” can have real political effects in ways the counterculture could not. This sick reincarnation contributes to the heavy doses of skepticism Thompson injects into his book, but it is a skepticism that questions American master narratives at the same time that it opens up, in postmodern fashion, numerous possibilities for reinterpretation. Duke’s excess, an echo of Aldous Huxley’s articulation in *The Doors of Perception* of that which is in excess of the self, allows him to negotiate Vegas by counteracting immobility and offering a more complete understanding of the spaces within which he travels.

Drugs, as we have seen, exist predominantly in imaginative realms, and thus help authorize what Soja calls Lefebvre’s “*transgressive* conceptualization of lived space as an-Other world, a meta-space of radical openness where everything can be found, where the possibilities for new discoveries and political strategies are endless, but where one must always be restlessly and self-critically moving on to new sites and insights” (34). The openness and plurality of space in the texts under consideration in Part III contrast with the carceral singularities of space articulated in the texts that comprise Part II, singularities that help reauthorize a self dispersed by being-on-drugs. It is, for instance, too simple to take Duke’s compulsive returns to Las Vegas as emblematic solely of powerfully regulated travel (and the California Highway Patrolman as the embodiment of that regulatory authority). Resembling Susila’s comment in Huxley’s *Island* that “[o]ne slips back so easily ... Much too easily. And much too often” (329), his movements more accurately resemble a coil, a spiralling movement simultaneously toward and away from Las Vegas. Repulsed by its mainstream excesses yet compelled by its open

capitalistic arms, Duke enters a Foucauldian heterotopology. “[H]eterotopias,” Soja elaborates,

always presuppose a system of opening and closing that simultaneously makes them both isolated and penetrable, different from what is usually conceived of as more freely accessible public space.... Through such forms of spatial regulation the heterotopia takes on the qualities of human territoriality, with its conscious and subconscious surveillance of presence and absence, entry and exit; its demarcation of behaviors and boundaries; its protective yet selectively enabling definition of what is the inside and the outside and who may partake of the inherent pleasures. (161)

The heterotopia’s simultaneous permissiveness and regulation coincides with how Duke perceives the postmodernity of Las Vegas. Its bewilderingly open yet enclosed borders and its pastiche of styles and histories restructure Duke’s understanding not only of essentialist identity categories like “traveler” and “tourist” but also of the concept of the city itself.⁹⁰

Marianne DeKoven’s analysis of Thompson ends with some enthusiastic praise for the postmodern literary modality Thompson helped inaugurate and that informs the text’s resistant space. The text’s “postmodern valorization of popular desire,” she writes, “its embrace of commercial consumer culture and its vernacular styles,” provides a powerful corrective to more modernist forms of “top-down aesthetic totalizations” and the “overweening, manipulative delusions of the cultural elite” (110). She celebrates the “multiple, fluid, multidirectional, indeterminate popular agency” (111) of the text’s postmodernity and the power it discovers in the “everyday, the cliché, pastiche, fun, allusion, inclusion” (112). Inclusiveness is particularly important to Soja’s notion of Thirdspace:

⁹⁰ Thompson’s reconfiguration of the city coincides with the post-sixties explosive assertion of the kinds of defamiliarizing phenomena – the fragmenting effects of ubiquitous electronic mediation, the disjunction between the city’s apparent resistance to fixity and its propensity for confinement and surveillance – that would eventually constitute what Soja calls “the postmetropolis” (199).

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (56-57)

Fear and Loathing, therefore, despite an extensive critique of the city as a repository for dead countercultural dreams, tends to highlight what DeKoven calls the “sensory, linguistic, semiotic dislocations of Las Vegas” (73) and what Soja refers to as its “all-inclusive simultaneity” (57), thus foregrounding its potential for resisting the totalizing, conformist logic of the middle-class tourists Thompson criticizes just as extensively.

Unlike some fiction that puts the unrecognizable states of mind offered by drugs into more recognizable landscapes in the hopes of maintaining a coherent sense of self, *Fear and Loathing* demonstrates that certain forms of travel (to locations as bizarre and contradictory as, for example, Las Vegas) can be made comprehensible by certain representations of excessive drugs and intoxication. The immobility and paralysis that appear in *Fear and Loathing*, and which evoke David Lenson’s speculation that “[p]erhaps the Counterculture’s idea of a mass individualism was always oxymoronic” (38), are attempts to rein in the chaotic inscrutability of Las Vegas. Nevertheless, some dimensions of the text use that chaos for other ends. Las Vegas is not a utopian space – Thompson’s critique of both the ostensible freedom of mobility and the ostensible dissent of drug use make the limitations of counterculturalism clear – but the text does actively resist the kinds of regulation implicit in utopia, and it does allow for the potential to reformulate the “tripping” subject.

Chapter 7

Eating In Africa:

Altered States and Animals in Robert Sedlack's *The African Safari Papers*

He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man

--Dr. Johnson

(epigraph to Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*)

Near the beginning of his 2001 novel *The African Safari Papers*, Robert Sedlack's nineteen-year-old Canadian protagonist catalogues in his diary the drugs and drug paraphernalia he has brought with him to Kenya hidden in his mother's luggage: "My small pipe, cigarette papers, two lighters, two cartons of du Maurier cigarettes, a safety pin, an ounce of big buds from Humboldt County, California, three vials of hash oil, half an ounce of Lebanese hash, six grams of jude in a sandwich bag and a small roll of tin foil" (12).⁹¹ I present this catalogue, which evokes a famous trunk full of drugs speeding across the California desert in 1971, as evidence that Sedlack is writing under the influence of Hunter S. Thompson's drug-travel narrative *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Sedlack's novel, an example of what Fredric Jameson might call "Hunter Thompsonian global tourism" (*Archaeologies* 385), borrows Thompson's tourist-on-a-drug-bender motif and exports it to Africa. Where Thompson offers a suggestive but ultimately cynical critique of the counterculture in the United States in the 1960s, Sedlack demonstrates what those limits look like to the twenty-first-century tourist. Ingesting Thompson's text and its possibilities for creative resistance, Sedlack's novel, as the subject of the final part of my bi-partite analysis of "tripping," employs the effects of

⁹¹ "Jude" is Richard's term for heroin. It most likely stems from a now largely discredited theory that the Beatles' song "Hey Jude" is a tribute to heroin.

“tripping” to entertain another thematic as a possible means of exploring creative, multidirectional, subjective rearrangement: animals.

As in Thompson’s text, Sedlack’s catalogue of drugs has an international flavor – Canadian cigarettes, American cannabis, Lebanese hashish – which foregrounds the relationship between the cultural alterity drugs provide to the “tripper’s” experience and the omnipresence of alterity in commodity form. Encountering difference, and consuming it both literally and figuratively, has been a central theme in this study, and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *The African Safari Papers* both make clear that such encounters are actively sought out because they enable the “tripper” to surpass the boundaries of human subjectivity constrained by orthodox notions of tourism. At the same time, the slipperiness of psychedelic intoxication, its potentially constructive (as opposed to mimetic) interactions with reality, can become arrestingly constrictive (as opposed to liberatory).⁹²

A documentary film-maker, Sedlack received an initial flurry of recognition for his first foray into fiction. *The African Safari Papers* was selected as a Best Book by the *Globe and Mail* in 2001 (overshadowed by Yann Martel’s blockbuster animal novel *Life of Pi*) and short-listed for the Commonwealth Writers prize in 2002. The plot of *The African Safari Papers* involves its foul-mouthed protagonist, named (as in *The Beach*) Richard, bringing a bag of drugs on safari in Africa with his parents, Janet and Ted. As a naïve, scatological adolescent, his prose stylings in his diary are often tasteless and his philosophical musings banal. As their journey becomes stranger and stranger, though, with all hell eventually breaking loose, the vision of Africa against which the novel sets

⁹² I transfer here to psychedelic philosophy Derek Gregory’s phrase about the discipline of geography: “If the critique of realism has taught us anything, it is surely that the process of representation is constructive not mimetic” (8).

its exploration of the relationship between travel and drugs becomes, in increasingly complex and often troubling ways, both inscrutable and clichéd. Reviewers have found the book compelling but often disturbing and off-putting, and literary scholars have neglected it.

The presumed link between drugs and personal confession makes the novel easy to dismiss as self-indulgent, and the long-standing association between travel writing and non-fiction, together with the autobiographical kernel of the narrative, troubles the text's formal status and seems to contribute further to the aversion with which it is often met.⁹³ Nevertheless, the novel raises the same epistemological and subjective issues I have made central to "tripping." Like *Fear and Loathing*, it questions identity and place using a confluence of travel and drugs, but aimed at a youthful audience similar to the one that would read Alex Garland's *The Beach*, it sets "tripping" in the so-called post-tourist period of globalization. Sedlack's novel, like Thompson's, positions itself in the tradition of coming-of-age fiction, but like Garland's, it also positions itself against various hegemonic elements of travel and both criticizes and reproduces the celebration of global diversity. As such, *The African Safari Papers* draws the threads of "tripping" together well and is a fitting text with which to conclude my discussion.

⁹³ Sedlack included a "Note to the Reader" that would reinforce the text's fictional status: "In the summer of 1983 I took a safari to Kenya with my mother and father. The book you are about to read is a work of fiction. It should not be confused with my actual safari, which, by comparison, was reasonably uneventful. Likewise, the characters set forth here should not be confused with actual persons, living or dead" (n.p.). In a personal communication, Sedlack reinforced this distinction: "It's a clunky metaphor but if my experiences in our real-life safari ranged in volume from 1-3 I wanted these experiences to range from 3-10 for the novel. There really wasn't anything exceptional about the real safari I took. It provided a springboard to fiction." Despite the disclaimers, the possibility for confusing the fictional and the autobiographical – especially prevalent when drugs are the topic of conversation – raises as a theme the potential contamination of supposedly discrete categories and the epistemological and subjective problems such proximity generates.

This chapter is organized around a series of shifts in Richard's perception. Initially, he understands drugs conventionally as both the cause of and the respite from a deeply dysfunctional suburban family. The novel connects drug use to the perennial theme of parental disappointment, with a beleaguered Richard taking drugs and fueling more of his parents' persecution. This "drugginess" initially mirrors the African safari as tourist cliché, with Sedlack first depicting Richard's drug use as repetitive and escapist and his travel as tedious and inauthentic. Both depictions change as the novel unfolds. Perhaps appropriate for a text that thematizes consumption, the first sign of this shift, and one of the first things I discuss in this chapter, occurs in the novel's depictions of eating. Initially a way of asserting the boundaries of the self, eating becomes an index for the alternative forms of consumption imbricated in later manifestations of "tripping." Following the shift, Richard no longer looks to consumption – ingesting drugs, consuming Africa, eating food – as a means of healing his psychic wounds. Instead, he comes to see – via the juxtaposition of human and animal and the mediating role eating plays in that juxtaposition – that *being consumed* is a form of what Deleuze and Guattari call "becoming-animal" (233), a means in this novel of prompting healing. The disturbances of "becoming-animal" – the way they engender what Darren Ambrose calls the "infinity of possibility" (144) and the way they produce an environment in which "the vestiges of the human are traversed and swept away" (145) – function as another means by which some of Sedlack's characters can distance themselves from convention (only, perhaps, as I argue in the final section of this chapter, to reinscribe it).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ While no one in the novel actually transforms into an animal, we must keep Deleuze and Guattari's adage in mind: "There is a reality of becoming-animal, even though one does not in reality become animal" (273).

The dedication of the novel contains the seeds of Sedlack's distancing strategy: "*This book is dedicated to anyone who's had cold, grinding, grizzly bear jaws hot on their heels*" (n.p.). An allusion to the song "Shaman's Blues" by The Doors,⁹⁵ the dedication functions as a node through which one of the forefathers of "tripping" meets the final text I examine in this study. Aldous Huxley's "doors of perception," which provided the name for Jim Morrison's band, open upon the shamanic imagery Thompson implies in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and that will prove central to comprehending travel and drugs in Sedlack's novel. The dedication at first seems conciliatory, possibly comforting to those who feel threatened by malevolent forces (represented, as they so often are, by a wild animal) or who feel that the mad consumption they need to perform to escape those forces turns them into animals. In its early pages, the novel confirms this orthodox conception of animals. Richard Clark devours drugs like (as the saying goes) an animal and consumes Africa like a jaded tourist ravenous for the cultural capital that would set him apart from the naively sincere tourists. After he revises his understanding of consumption, though, the threatening figure of the animal in the novel changes. It becomes a finer lens through which to focus the ambiguities of "tripping": the paradox of immobility within mobility, Richard's changing perceptions of Africa, the way drugs render the self permeable to a world that then in turn helps understand how drugs affect the self, and so on. The novel draws animals – the quintessential icon of both the safari and shamanism – into the tapestry of "tripping" to offer alternative conceptions of human subjectivity. More specifically, Sedlack's novel moves away from conventional, anthropocentric assumptions about animals and their suitability as metaphors for ego

⁹⁵ I thank Chris Bongie for, among many other things, drawing upon his encyclopedic knowledge of sixties music to point this out.

dissolution, assumptions apparent in, for example, Hunter S. Thompson's characterization of drug excess as "deteriorat[ing] to the level of *dumb beasts*" (8). The novel's depictions of animals help imagine the transformation of the horrors of consumption into the ostensibly healing nature of being consumed. The novel's dedication becomes, in retrospect, celebratory. The novel is *for* those who throw themselves into the grizzly bear's jaws, those who forsake their humanity, as a shaman might when he "becomes" a guiding animal, for more radical alterity.

Baggage in Africa

I begin with a discussion of the two kinds of "emotional baggage" Richard brings with him to Africa. The first is a bundle of well-known adolescent problems: a lack of direction, a troubled home-life, ennui, loneliness, and so on. Sedlack's protagonist rightly attributes some of these problems to his parents, who, with problems of their own, work out their aggressions toward each other through their son. One of the novel's thematizations of this troubled relationship arises out of Janet Clark's apparent madness and the incest fantasies it spawns.⁹⁶ The other kind of "baggage" Richard brings with him, intimately connected to the first, is drugs. For part of this novel, Richard's drug experiences draw on predictable understandings of psychotropic substances as agents that

⁹⁶ The incestuous dimensions of their relationship – only ambiguously imaginary – lie beyond the scope of this chapter, but they are worth commenting upon briefly. Hiding the drugs in his mother's luggage in the first place attaches bodily pleasures directly to her, and even though many of the anxieties he uses drugs to escape from are related to her instability, she is associated with the distinctly sexualized pleasure of drugs Richard experiences. Incest fantasies also reflect what Susan Stewart calls a "thematic inversion in which the familiar is transformed into its opposite" (42), a classic effect of psychedelic drug use. Incest also echoes the blending of genres – a transgression of the Derridean "Law of Genre" that in fact helps constitute genre – and further strengthens its link with the generic and thematic features of "tripping." Finally, like a sixteenth-century drug known as mummia (made from human flesh and thus blurring the boundaries between life and death, in addition to medicine and poison), the incest theme in this novel violates boundaries and mixes categories when the regulatory social strictures break down between Richard and his mommy.

destroy the sovereign self without effecting any real change in the world, a process Richard exploits to escape his personal difficulties temporarily. The trip to Africa itself is initially conceived in similarly escapist terms, which are clearly unraveling by the time Janet Clark says, “‘The safari through Africa is a lie. We’re all pretending to be one big, happy family taking the dream vacation of a lifetime’” (159).

The novel draws together familial problems (including the incest theme), drugs as escape, and travel as escape in its opening pages when Richard gets nervous on the plane. His mother, depressed and anxiety-ridden, exacerbates her son’s nervousness by talking about wind shear, and the knot in his stomach that she “succeeded in twisting” (2) is only untied after the relief of a “visit to the latrine” (2). Richard’s ambiguous phrase refers to smoking pot (using a straw and a sink full of water to thwart the restroom smoke alarm), but it also evokes masturbation and defecation. The pleasures his mother prompts him to experience and the awareness of his own corporeality she induces make her a central figure in the anxiety/relief dynamic that structures Richard’s initial understanding of drugs and travel along conventional lines. In the face of anxiety, Richard retreats into the physical pleasures of drugs, or else he focuses on the bodily functions whose materiality serves to lower his status from human to animal and thus to escape his distinctly human problems.

Similarly, on the Clark family’s first evening in Africa, Richard retreats to his room: “I smoked some juke about fifteen minutes ago so I am now feeling cozy. And quite sleepy. Perhaps I will take a nap and forget who I am” (54). This, too, is a common enough conceptualization of drugs as substances that allow him to forget himself, to obviate his humanity. The drug experience’s proximity to the biological

function of sleep again reminds Richard (through the act of forgetting) of his own physicality and serves further to dehumanize him. When Richard feels “overwhelmed” (48) by problems, he takes drugs to escape his own disintegrating subjectivity, because that is what “drugs are for” (48).

In the travel journal Richard keeps, the text of which constitutes the novel, he declares that his preferred mode is detachment: “I keep forgetting that my job is to narrate this journey, not become a part of it. I must take more drugs and spend more time listening to music” (121). Drunk at the time of that line’s composition, Richard draws upon the anti-social, depersonalizing connotations of drug use and the blissful reveries supposedly induced by music to detach himself from the events unfolding around him (and, for that matter, from new journalism’s insistence on involvement). Related to the idea that drugs insulate their users from reality is what Richard somewhat whimsically calls, after a surreal cannabis-fueled encounter with his mother and some birds in the hotel garden, “a consistent problem with drug-users. How much of what I saw in the garden was mom and how much was the bowl I had smoked?” (27). Richard jokily refers to the popular idea that the drugs he ingests “infect” a certain, possibly even quantifiable, amount of reality, but this phenomenon is not really a problem for him since his initial motivation is to escape entirely – not determine – the degree of his mother’s insanity.

While cannabis and heroin, in their escapist and self-destructive modalities, are Drugs with a capital-D, more mundane psychoactive substances like alcohol and tobacco accomplish similar effects as well. He drinks, for instance, as a comparable means of divesting himself of his own subjectivity, as a way of ensuring his “mind is empty” (155). Cigarettes – especially his mother’s – bring back childhood memories that involve

violating his bodily integrity: he recalls being “stung by one of her burning cigarettes ... once or twice when [he] was a kid” (47) and being made carsick by her smoking (135). In contrast to the substantial differences I outlined in Chapter Five between cannabis and nicotine in Garland’s *The Beach*, different drugs still produce similar effects at this point in Sedlack’s *The African Safari Papers* because Richard Clark still conceives of mind-altering substances under the homogenizing umbrella of self-destruction. Having internalized drug orthodoxies, Richard cannot ingest drugs outside of the conventionalities he brings with him to Africa.

As a result, we are constantly witness to the ability drugs have to make difficult situations worse. Ted Clark is a dedicated drinker, for instance, assuaging his own nervousness about flying but contributing to the nervousness of those around him by drinking scotch (1). He also uses wine to quell his concerns about his son’s problems, but he quickly becomes belligerent (16). Janet Clark also functions as an insistent embodiment of orthodox anti-drug sentiment, despite (yet because of) her own relationship with certain substances. We find out, for example, that Richard’s face bears traces of surgery to repair a cleft lip and palate, and in one of the novel’s climactic moments, a drunken Ted Clark reveals that Janet attempted suicide when she was unknowingly pregnant with her son: ““Ask her what she did when she was pregnant with you. Ask her about the bottles of sedatives and tranquilizers scattered on the floor when I came home at lunch. Ask her what the doctors said about tranquilizers and birth defects”” (260). Drugs, in this case psycho-pharmaceuticals, display their awful power by reaching into the pre-subjective space of *in utero*, upsetting Richard’s bodily integrity with a birth defect. Such disruption has proven both definitive and deeply unsettling for

Richard: ““There are times when I’m walking down the street, feeling pretty good about things, got a bit of a swagger going, thinking I’m quite the lad, and then suddenly, from a shop window, I catch a reflection of myself. Poof! You see? That’s you. Not that guy in your head”” (125).

Not surprisingly, Richard’s mother expresses grave concerns that ““The drugs have destroyed [his] brain”” (154), that he is ““destroying [him]self with drugs”” (180), and that he needs to stop using them. At one point, Richard recalls his mother finding a vial of hash oil in his clothes once: “she wasn’t just disappointed. She looked shattered.... She held the small vial as though it were a bullet I’d shot into her heart and, through some miracle of self-surgery, extracted it with her fingers” (6). The violent trope Richard uses to assess that event, and the ambiguous, injured syntax with which he expresses it, reflect through bodily and textual disorder the damage drugs can do.

Similarly, in musing on drugs in his travel diary, Richard writes of his mother:

She read a story in the newspaper once about a mother on LSD who had cut out her baby’s heart with a broken beer bottle. She thought that’s what all people did on LSD[.] No mom, just those people that are nuts in the first place. Nuts should not take LSD. Mom doesn’t know I’ve taken it. She would spontaneously combust if she knew how often. And guess what? There’s not a single baby’s heart on the floor. Lots of shattered illusions. Lots of lies. Lots of preconceptions about time, death and glass onions. But, so far, knock on wood, no baby hearts. (7)⁹⁷

This passage again demonstrates, despite Richard’s virtual admission that he himself is “nuts,” that the primary source of the novel’s “anti-drug” rhetoric is his mother. Richard remembers her concerns specifically in the context of a (mediatized) mother violating her child under the influence of drugs. This passage occurs early in the novel, and it anticipates our finding out about the emotional scars she bears from accidentally scarring

⁹⁷ The term “glass onions” is a reference to the song “Glass Onion” on the Beatles’ *White Album*, generally regarded as a song about the propensity Beatles fans have to seek out hidden references in the band’s lyrics.

her son physically with drugs. That she “would spontaneously combust” if she found out about Richard’s acid trips is, like her “shattered” (6) look upon discovering hash oil in her son’s pocket, a reflection of how Richard has internalized the trope of bodily destruction as shorthand for drug use.⁹⁸ Richard claims that drugs give him not a baby’s heart on the floor but “shattered illusions. Lots of lies. Lots of preconceptions...”. We are, I think, invited to read multiple meanings into these phrases. On the one hand, drugs are agents of intellectual breakthrough, having destroyed illusions, lies, and preconceptions. On the other hand, the phrases “Lots of lies” and “Lots of preconceptions” are not necessarily attached to the word “shattered.” In shattering certain illusions, Richard may have left other lies and preconceptions sitting intact on the metaphorical floor. In these instances, then, the novel appears to depict drugs in a fairly conventional fashion, surrounding them with the usual prohibitions and coloring them with the usual power to destroy the self.

Like those orthodoxies about drugs, travel’s orthodoxies and orthodox conceptions of Africa initially structure the Clark family’s safari. Richard is disappointed, for instance, with the “drab countryside” (11) he sees upon first venturing out onto the African savannah (to which his father, perhaps out of anxiety over the money he has spent on the trip, exclaims, ““We just left the airport, shithead. What do you expect? Elephants on the highway?”” [11])). Like the characters his age in Alex Garland’s *The Beach*, Richard is a tourist full of snobby anti-tourist bigotry. “Just once I would like to meet a quiet American abroad” (3), he writes in his journal on the plane,

⁹⁸ Notably, though, the body undergoing destruction in these instances is not that of the drug user but that of his mother. Displacing the consequences of drug use on to someone else fits the paradigm of the irresponsible drug user, but because it leaves the drug-taking self intact, it also leaves room for Richard to frame his own drug use more ambiguously later on.

and when he discovers no other “slobs” (28) will be joining them in their safari van, he exclaims: “Finally, some good news. I thought we’d be sharing the safari with other groups. Wow. This was going to be better than I thought” (28). Annoyed with “the busy streets of Nairobi” (28), he looks forward to “entering the wilds of Africa – the real Africa” (28). His concern with authenticity, and the racist valorization of “wildness” as its chief indicator, is standard anti-tourist rhetoric.

As a result of these conceptions of drugs and travel, Richard’s initial “tripping” – his early combination of the two thematics – echoes the “tripping” most prominent in the texts in Part II of this study: a mode which draws upon colonialist rhetoric to make intoxication comprehensible to a traditionally circumscribed subjectivity. In one of his early comments about his own drug use, for instance, Richard says, “I don’t take drugs as an escape trick like some cheap magician on a cruise ship. I take drugs to find gold, like a greedy prospector in the backcountry” (7). He denies the popular conception of drugs as an escape, ostensibly establishing his enlightened and morally superior drug use, yet he does so – in one of his first anti-tourist comments – using a travel-themed simile. Denigrating the cliché of the magician on a cruise ship reinforces his anti-tourist stance toward his own tourism: a pre-packaged, guided visit to Africa with his parents. He does not entertain any delusions about being a sophisticated traveler, but his drug use is supposed to counteract his status as a vulgar tourist. He compares his status to that of the gold prospector, whose eccentricity sets him at odds with mainstream society and whose freedom takes him through uncharted and unwelcoming backcountry. Richard’s drugs are hard-won “gold,” not corny entertainment. However, this competing image re-enacts a kind of drug snobbery – not to mention a “translating” activity which converts mind-

alteration into travel – in which denigrating tourists shores up his identity as an “authentic” drug-user. The gold prospector, a romanticized figure redolent of nostalgia, is as much a cliché as the cruise ship magician, and his mobility through the backwoods and the mountains of Western myth is just as available to Richard as a metaphor for his own drug use. Furthermore, the “greed” with which Richard ingests his drugs locates the practice firmly in the realm of stereotypically mindless and hedonistic pleasure.

In analyzing a novel about the consumption of drugs and tourist spaces, it is also crucial – especially in relation to changing perceptions of animals – to delineate the text’s representation of one of the most fundamental types of consumption: eating. Perhaps to resist a phenomenon Sarah Gordon has identified as the “blurring [of] the borders between nature and the conventional human construction of identity that occurs with appetite” (348), Richard brings with him to Africa as one of his orthodoxies the belief that eating can hold his identity together. Commenting on his father’s compulsive eating, Richard notes that he has “been popping mints in his mouth for as long as I can remember” (17), an example of consumption tied irrevocably to Richard’s conception of his father’s identity. When his mother, who has been showing signs of instability, eats her dinner without incident, her husband, as Richard points out, relaxes: “She ate all her dinner, which seemed to please dad to no end” (35). Recounting the aftermath of an embarrassing failure to lose his virginity at the age of sixteen with a prostitute for whom he had naively bought a basket of strawberries, Richard writes: “I sat on my bed in the dark that night and stuffed those strawberries into my mouth as fast as I could to keep from crying” (67). Eating as reassurance – “comfort food” – thus becomes a common configuration for Richard. In fact, *not* eating in this novel becomes a sure sign that a

character has lost his or her grip entirely. Ted Clark, for instance, readily associates his agitation over his son's lack of direction with the fact that Richard has not touched his food (17). Ted's pleasure at seeing Janet eat reveals the extent to which the novel aligns her madness with her failure to eat: "Mom didn't show up for breakfast, which should have been an indication that this morning was not going to go well" (74). When Janet admits that her husband "'threw a cabbage at [her] once'" (159), flying food – food not being eaten – becomes a symbol of marital discord. Appetites are the first thing to go when the safari begins spinning out of control. Thus, Ted Clark's declaration, "'I'll get the food'" (147), as an attempt to stimulate his family's appetite, becomes a mantra for him that is supposed to pull his shattered family back together. Echoing the super-consumption of William Burroughs' satirical protagonist in *The Yage Letters*, eating in this novel functions as an assertion of the power of the self through its capacity to incorporate that which is not itself.

The tourist subjectivity Richard brings with him to Africa, however, precludes any interest on his part in African food and thus reveals the limits of eating as a symbol or metaphor for touristic consumption. His first night in Africa, Richard eats "mouthfuls of roast giraffe, which tasted like deer, which is another way of saying it tasted like shit" (16). Richard cannot even appreciate the animals of Africa as food, so he will not be able to "consume" animals as a traveler in any way that alters his perceptions of the continent or of his place in any ecologies. Animals are, at first, literally items on a list, to be checked off as they are spotted (34) and thus accumulated as neo-colonial cultural

capital.⁹⁹ Animals are only assimilable from the safety of the safari van; getting too close prompts fear, as when Richard and Gabriel, the Clark family guide, reel a fish into their boat, and Richard starts shuddering and screaming (43) or when a crab scares off Richard and his father (73). Animals are, in these instances, frightening signifiers of resolute alterity.

Moreover, the thought of becoming one of these animals, which Richard concedes is an inescapable part of the human condition, is horrible:

I have a theory. Before we were born into human form we were spiritual beings. We loved the fact that we didn't have human forms and human functions. We were free. It was a beautiful existence. And then grunt, grunt, sigh, push, oh my god, we suddenly found ourselves trapped in organic shells. And in order to keep these shells alive we needed to consume a variety of substances. And what was consumed, of course, needed to be expelled.... [E]very time we take a dump and wipe our asses we are reminded that, even though our thoughts may be divine, our bodies are no different than a dog's when it squats in the park.... [W]e get depressed and angry when anyone reminds us that we aren't so lofty, aren't so divine. (22)

In Richard's theory, having "human functions" is no different from having animal functions. Becoming an animal, to revise Hunter S. Thompson's epigraph, gets rid of the pain of being a man but introduces the pain of being an animal.¹⁰⁰ In the process, Africa, as the home of these animals, gets reconfigured. It challenges the vision Richard is familiar with thanks to television and other popular mediations, and it shows itself as a

⁹⁹ The list of animals echoes the list of needs Alex Garland's protagonist in *The Beach* constructs to authorize his twentieth-century, neo-colonial, touristic identity: "witnessing poverty ... [b]eing in a riot ... hearing gunshots fired in anger ... having a brush with my own death" (162).

¹⁰⁰ The relationship between animals and humans in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is primarily one of substitution. Animals in the text, from the ones alluded to in the Johnsonian epigraph to the drunken ape Duke wants to take on a plane as his son (190), *stand in* for human characters descending into depravity. This notion of replacement and its concomitant antagonism toward animals (as when, for instance, Raoul Duke shoots at lizards in the desert [99]) actually resembles the process I outlined in Part II by which intoxicated consciousness is spatialized. Humans, like altered consciousness, still exist *as such*; they have just been displaced. In this chapter, however, I argue that *The African Safari Papers* depicts animal-human relationships as more disturbing to conventional understandings of individual identity.

more unpredictable and unmasterable space whose alterity constantly threatens comfortable notions of humanity.

Changing Orthodoxies

As Sedlack builds his representation of “tripping” in *The African Safari Papers*, however, many of those orthodoxies – the baggage the Clarks bring to Africa – start to change. Drugs first slide into ambiguity, and then the events of the novel begin to challenge the anti-tourist rhetoric Richard uses to structure his journey. As animals – and in particular their eating habits – come into focus under the lens of “tripping,” the novel offers the possibility for radical subjective rearrangement, for becomings-animal that alter Richard’s conception of animals and of the place of the human subject in the world. As the conventionalities outlined in the previous section undergo their own prismatic alterations, we will see how the mind-alterations of “tripping” lead to more fundamental alteration in the jaws of animals.

In prompting a shift in the perception of drugs, *The African Safari Papers* acknowledges the problems in which drug users may find themselves but does not consistently rehearse the moral panic and blind adherence to “Just Say No” (non)discourse. Like the other authors in this study, Sedlack depicts drugs in an ambivalent light. Musing on drugs, Richard writes: “There are those who take drugs to be cool and those who take drugs to expand. I am not James Dean. I’m a balloon. And god has a mouth on my hole. And is blowing. And filling me up. And filling me up. One day I will explode. And then I will be free” (7). Too ironic to be cool (and it is notable that he chooses such a dated icon of cool to denigrate coolness), Richard

foregrounds the notion of expansion. Unlike Huxleyan and sixties conceptualizations of drug use as expanding one's perception and one's subjectivity, Richard wishes to take such drug use deliberately to the point of destruction. The destruction of the self, reiterated at first in the novel's preliminary anti-drug sentiments, will eventually come to stand, as it did for Huxley in his quest for the "Not-I," for freedom from the limits of human identity.

Likewise, as Richard deepens his travel into Africa, the novel makes clear that his adolescent anti-tourist rhetoric is untenable.¹⁰¹ When villagers stare at the Clark family with "anger on their faces" (29), and when Richard realizes "two tribesmen with spears" – supposedly real Africans – are wearing Nike shoes "which ruined an otherwise primitive encounter" (49), the novel complicates its protagonist's youthful naiveté and bigoted snobbery with a hefty realization of how the logic of globalization inflects these alleged encounters with authenticity. Such critique also allows readers to discern the weak foundations of a traveling self who relies upon anti-tourist sentiment. Commenting on the way the constraints of the safari van force him to conceal his cigarette smoking from his father, Richard deflates his own rebellious, anti-tourist image: "I have this image of myself as this free spirit, cartwheeling through life, thumbing my nose at 'the man,' but I still think I have to sneak cigarettes behind my father's back like a fourteen-year-old" (29). Complicating Richard's travel are his lack of privacy (15) and his distrust of his safari guide who – with a lawyer for a father and eight years of medical training (30) – repeatedly troubles Richard's understanding of Africa and Africans. As the "real" Africa thwarts his expectations and challenges his self-perceptions, the safari quickly

¹⁰¹ It is possible to argue that Richard was always aware that it was his father's affluence that got them to Africa and not his own "traveler's" savvy. He remarks several times on how expensive the safari was for his father and how helpless he, Richard, would otherwise be in Africa.

turns ugly and catastrophe looms. Such catastrophe, however, much in the way the self-destructiveness of drug use becomes freedom from the limits of human identity, serves by the end of the novel to liberate Richard from the limitations of his anti-tourist snobbery.

Such freedoms will arise only, however, after Richard works through orthodox understanding of animals as “automatic, instinctual, the product of built-in imperatives” (Birke and Parisi 59) – as everything against which humans define themselves. In some cannabis-induced musing on Adam and Eve, for instance, he takes the standard equation of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge with a fall into humanity and casts it as a fall into *animality*: “As soon as our eyes see good or evil we have fallen from grace again. We’re snorting around on all fours, digging for worms under a tree” (87). He explains, at another point, that when he uses a public washroom, he waits until it is empty because he does not like his bodily functions to be audible: “I know I’m an animal. I just don’t like reminding myself when others are around” (38). Similarly, he cites latent animality as his explanation for why he prefers eating alone: “I don’t really enjoy watching others eat. I’m always thinking ahead – eight or twelve hours later when their food is coming out the other end” (111). He uses the apparent fact that animals are chained to their biological processes to denigrate humans – to situate them at the level of animals – but his insistence on eating and shitting alone, ostensibly for the purposes of shoring up his human dignity, only serves to remind him of his own animality. Such reminders appear constantly in this novel and eventually catalyze a reconceptualization of eating that helps him divorce freedom from self-destruction and realign it with becoming-animal.

As we saw with Huxley’s lizards and insects, with Garland’s lizard, and with Thompson’s bestialism, the animal is an important embodiment of otherness in fiction

about drugs, but in none of those texts does the animal figure as prominently as it does in *The African Safari Papers*. From the “primitive” rendering of a bovoid quadruped on the novel’s dust jacket, spine, and title page to the safari animals around which the Clark family vacation is organized, to the hungry lions in the novel’s climax, animals form the thematic foundation of Sedlack’s work.

My reading of animals in *The African Safari Papers* is informed by Cary Wolfe’s complaint, in his recent intervention into animal rights, about conventional understandings of animals: “the philosophy of animal rights, at least in its current state of the art, remains tied to the theoretical topos of the mirror and the look, and as such it reorients the question of the alterity of the nonhuman other once again toward the figure of the human” (169). As any anthropologist or comparative mythologist will suggest, humans and animals have been linked since the dawn of human culture. Shamanism and totemism – to name but two cultural practices – imply the strength of that link, ensconcing animals in prominent but opposing places. For one, they are symbolic repositories of what animal theorist Vicki Hearne – citing the influence of Stanley Cavell – calls the “terror about the independent existence of other minds” (233). For another, they are one of the first things humans encounter when we encounter the world. Animals are, therefore, in the literature of “tripping,” easy markers of exotic spaces. They are also symbols of powerful psychedelic transformation or (depending on the moral register one adopts toward drugs) of the abdication of self-control for the sake of satisfying base bodily desires. Recently reconsidered understandings of animals in literature and culture, however, drawing on work in the cognitive sciences, in linguistics, and in ethology, have argued something that many humanities scholars, until recently, have largely avoided

through their focus on animals as metaphors or animal life as allegory: the nonhuman animal has a subjectivity, too.¹⁰² This idea has served to highlight the substantial yet often ignored strain of speciesism underpinning myriad institutions of uneven power relations – from slavery and war to patriarchal oppression and institutional constructions of madness.¹⁰³ Speciesism, as this burgeoning body of criticism suggests, is the tautological belief that one species, ours, is superior to others by virtue of the rights and advantages granted by being a member of that always-already privileged species.

Speciesism not only resembles other oppressive “isms” such as racism and sexism, but it also *reinforces* those other forms of discrimination. In the discourse of war, for instance, we justify killing other humans by marking them as animalistic and then, more importantly, drawing upon what Wolfe calls “the tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic”

(6). Slavery, likewise, justifies the commodification, abuse, and murder of other humans

¹⁰² Increasingly extensive work in this vein includes Thomas Nagel’s “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” (in *Philosophical Review* 83:4, 1974: 435-50); John Berger’s “Why Look at Animals?” in his *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Harriet Ritvo’s *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Donna J. Haraway’s *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature In the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Carol Adams’ *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990); Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Steve Baker’s *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Marian Stamp Dawkins’ *Through Our Eyes Only? The Search for Animal Consciousness* (New York: W.H. Freeman/Spektrum, 1993); Diana Fuss’ edited collection *Human, All Too Human* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Robert W. Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson, and H. Lyn Miles’ edited collection *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997); H. Peter Steeves’ edited collection *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999); Steve Baker’s *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2000); Jacques Derrida’s “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” (trans. David Wills, in *Critical Inquiry* 28.2 (2002): 369-418); Nigel Rothfels’ edited collection *Representing Animals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Cary Wolfe’s *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Wolfe’s edited collection *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); and Haraway’s most recent volume *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹⁰³ Theorists and scholars commenting on the role of animals in hierarchizing mental states go back some years. In *Madness and Civilization*, for instance, Michel Foucault notes: “It has doubtless been essential to Western culture to link, as it has done, its perception of madness to the iconographic forms of the relation of man to beast” (77).

based on their supposed sub-human status. Wolfe and others argue that the presence of animals in, for example, racist discourse belies an insidious, more fundamental form of exploitation in which animals become a ready point of comparison in the systematic debasement of a racial other. As long as we are free to treat the nonhuman as sub-human, so this argument goes, and as long as we condone what Derrida calls (in an interview entitled “Eating Well”) the “noncriminal putting to death” (112) of animals or the “sacrificial structure” (113) in which they are made to exist, our relationship to otherness will always be fraught and always threaten to tip over into the unethical or the criminal.

In addition to the relevance of what historians and anthropologists have identified as long-standing links between humans and animals, not the least of which is how likely it seems that humans learned about intoxicating substances by watching animals, this posthumanist reassessment of animals is pertinent to this study because it has made “the problem of the animal other a privileged site for exploring the philosophical challenges of difference and otherness more generally” (Wolfe 3). The animal, Wolfe continues, “possesses a specificity as the object of both discursive and institutional practices, one that gives it particular power and durability in relation to other discourses of otherness” (6). Similarly, Steve Baker notes that the animal is “frequently conceived as the archetypal cultural ‘other’” (ix-x). Birds, lizards, and insects in the works of many of the authors under consideration in this study illustrate the durability of that formulation of animals within the literature of “tripping.” When travel discourse offers up animals as markers of exoticism, for instance, or when drug discourse crawls with insects or shamanic animals, those discourses employ the otherness of animals to point toward particular kinds of otherness within cross-cultural encounters or within human

consciousness. In some of these instances of animal representation, speciesist assumptions produce resolutely humanist (and reassuringly hierarchical) ideologies; as distinct places where we locate and seal off alterity, animals are simply tools with which we reaffirm our essential humanness. In other instances, however, the representation of animals offers what Wolfe calls a “postanthropocentric concept of the subject” (11). This conceptualization renders equally naïve the assumption that animals can “stand for” psychedelic transformation or for brutish immorality. The rest of this section will assess the relationship between animals and certain representations of intoxication that purport to oppose the conventional anti-drug instances discussed above. Engaging with this question will help clarify the role the novel’s ambivalent representation of drugs plays in representing travel in Africa.

On his first full day on an island camp in Lake Baringo, Kenya, Richard sets out, without his parents, on “an island tour with three African boys” (85) as guides: Tom, William, and their leader, eight-year-old Sedekia. The island holds much allure for Richard – it is, in his parlance, “pretty sweet” (83) – and, as a visionary place on par with Huxley’s island and Garland’s beach, holds much promise as well. Trailing behind the boys, Richard “discreetly smoked four bowls. My mind grappled with the beauty that surrounded us. I struggled to find some means of expressing it” (85). At first, Richard’s intoxication has the common effect of dissociating logical thought and stymieing efforts to articulate it. Richard likens such effort, however, to “trying to keep a great white shark in captivity. The shark always died” (85). In this instance, Richard takes orthodoxy as his starting point and aligns drugs with a supposedly vicious animal. But such an alignment also resists convention. The illogic and irrationality of drugs, like the shark

itself, cannot reliably be captured and tamed. Both must be left simply to exist, free of arrest and domestication. Holding the great white shark in captivity is as grotesque as suppressing the irrationality of the altered state of consciousness.

Following his allusion to *The Doors* in the dedication, Sedlack next makes explicit the motifs Sue Matheson found implicit in Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*: the shaman and shamanism. Sedlack uses these motifs to shift how we understand the epistemological value of the irrational and altered states of consciousness. Richard is receptive to the possibility that the irrational can be beautiful – indicated by his aversion to the metaphorical dead shark – but a series of shamanic encounters will convince him of its value. Mircea Eliade's encyclopedic study of shamanism defines the process as one that includes both consciousness alteration and metaphorical mobility: “the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld” (5). The trance-like state, which Eliade calls a “technique of ecstasy” (4), can be induced in multiple ways, not the least frequent of which is psychedelic drugs.¹⁰⁴ The trip to the under- or over-world is a voyage in which shamans contact ancestors, converse with spirit guides, and collect sacred or healing knowledge. Among shamans, the travel motif represents access to a real realm outside ordinary perception. The motif is, as Eliade contends, nearly universal among shamanic societies.

¹⁰⁴ Many shamans and other religious figures use means other than drugs to achieve altered states of consciousness and undergo similar supernatural voyages. Repetitive dancing (such as that practiced by Middle Eastern dervishes or North American revivalist congregations), flogging or other forms of ritualistically inflicted pain over prolonged periods of time, and hyper- or hypo-ventilatory breathing exercises are all known to alter brain chemistry and bring on visions. Drugs, however, remain a common means of initiating the shamanic experience. Siberian and North American shamans frequently employ psychedelic mushrooms in their rituals; indigenous shamans in Brazil, Peru, Columbia, and Ecuador ritually consume ayahuasca to achieve visions of the spirit world; and shamans in the central African nations of Zaire and Cameroon use the bark of the eboka plant, loaded with psychoactive alkaloids.

Animals, too, are a near-universal component of the shamanic experience, and the prevalence of animals in visions has been a significant source of speculation and inquiry, especially in anthropological circles.¹⁰⁵ Such inquiry works from the assumption that animals, having evolved alongside humans, play vital roles in our daily lives, our cultures, our art, and our religion and thus tend to provoke anxiety through the disjunctions between their similarities to and their differences from us. As such, they are a significant source of our cultural iconography, including our dreams and hallucinations. They are prominent as, for example, guides in the spirit world (as in the totemic animals in many North American indigenous traditions) and as representations of the shaman itself. Curiously, though, shamanic visionary animals are frequently accompanied by creatures that are part human and part animal. South African anthropologist David Lewis-Williams, in his work linking shamanism to ancient cave art, calls these creatures therianthropes, from the Greek *therion*, meaning wild beast, and *anthropos*, meaning man (29). These therianthropes are thought to depict transformation, instances of transition between human and animal states, and as such, are prominent in cave painting and in other forms of shamanic or visionary imagery. Anthropological scholarship often resists interpreting the cultural meaning of this iconography, but animal-human hybridity – as far as my literary interpretations go – concretizes the intimacy of the relationship between human beings and animals. It encodes the alterity of animals, feared and hated at the

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's *The Shaman and the Jaguar: A Study of Narcotic Drugs amongst the Tukano Indians of Columbia* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1975) and the work of David Lewis-Williams: *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002) and *Images of Mystery: Rock Art of the Drakensberg* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003).

same time that it is deeply familiar, at the level of the body during visionary drug or religious experiences.¹⁰⁶

The figure of the therianthrope enters the novel when Richard, spotting a cave, enters the world of shamanism: “I began to feel that same pull [toward the cave] I experienced with the tree line on the island at Naivasha” (89). Like islands, caves are visionary places, and as Mircea Eliade notes, “concrete symbols of passage into another world” (51). The child guides refuse to enter the cave, but Richard does: “I couldn’t see a thing because of the steam. It was also very hot so I covered my face with my hands. Once I was past the steam and inside the cave, I stood for a moment and let my eyes adjust. I felt really far away from the three boys. The steam provided a comforting barrier to the outside world” (91). The illusion of surrogate travel (of being “really far away”) and the “comforting” distinction between worlds resemble the disorientation of psychedelic intoxication, but they also allow him to maintain a distinction between self and other. “It was also very loud,” Richard continues, “so I heard nothing but hissing. It was kind of like doing juke. That feeling of being in the womb” (91). Like Hunter S. Thompson’s “womb of the desert sun” (12) to which Raoul Duke retreats under the influence of “heinous chemicals” (12), the reference to “the womb,” in addition to again associating Richard’s drug use with his mother, represents an alteration of Richard’s subjectivity to a more profound degree than the shamanic experience’s surrogate travel would. The drug experience is not simply an escape from one place to another; it involves a significant imaginary alteration of who Richard is.

¹⁰⁶ Therianthropes are also prevalent in ancient and contemporary culture, with the Egyptian jackal-headed god Anubis, iconography such as the Great Sphinx, mythological figures such as the Minotaur, and figures from popular culture such as werewolves or vampires occupying liminal states between human and animal.

That alternation deepens when Richard finds paintings on the cave wall: “I did see animal figures. Some I recognized. Some I didn’t. And there were human depictions as well.... they left me spellbound” (91). One image “might have been an elephant”: “there in the middle of the body was a tiny spiral that looked like the shell of a snail, a coiled snake or a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico seen from outer space. What the fuck was it? The intestines? The heart? The soul? Why a spiral? And when I looked at some other animals and people on the wall I saw the same spiral” (91). The animals, both recognizable and unrecognizable, and the mysterious pattern – which Richard elaborates into various potential iconic representations – reaffirm the cave as a visionary place and signal clearly that this scene is shamanistic, a moment where drug-altered consciousness meets the physical mobility of moving through the cave and the conceptual mobility of traveling into another world. This scene lays the groundwork for a realization Richard will have later in the novel concerning the relation animals have to “tripping.”

Well inside the cave now, Richard has a full-blown hallucinatory experience. He hears a booming voice commanding him in several languages to leave Africa:

My eyes darted around. I finally made out a pair of sandals sticking out from a corner. They were decorated with what looked like black and red ribbons.... The legs belonging to the sandals remained completely still. I tried to see what was above the waist but that part was hidden by shadows. I thought I saw the outline of a head that looked too big, and too long, to be human. (92-93)

Fleeing the cave, Richard rejoins the other child guides, and “they looked at [him] fearfully and kept their distance. It was like I had suddenly become contaminated” (94). They tell him he has encountered “‘Crocodile Man. He’s half-man, half-crocodile’” (93). An incarnation of what Darren Ambrose, in an article on cave painting, calls “the dynamic ‘magma’ of primordial animality” (140), Crocodile Man embodies the

transformative encounter between familiar humanity and the otherness of an altered state. His animal half embodies the otherness that threatens our humanity, and his hybridity represents our compulsion to incorporate that otherness at the same time that we fear it. The fear of contamination, which Derrida articulates in terms of the conceptualization of both genre and drugs, is one consequence of such transgressive contact with difference.

The African Safari Papers features another later scene of shamanism that, together with the first, helps reorient Richard's perception of drugs and travel such that he is able to conceive of not only their potential to reorganize subjectivity radically but to effect healing as well. In this latter scene, Gabriel, the Clark family's guide in Africa, decides that Janet Clark could benefit from a shamanic ceremony. Richard, in a state of "enchantment" (105), allows Gabriel to bring him and his mother into a "primitive" (106) hut: "I was almost knocked over by the smell of something burning. It was very potent. So potent it made my ears ring. I saw leaves, or something, burning in a small pit. Whatever it was, it smelled good. Not just good. Intoxicating" (107). In this moment of sensory alteration, Richard's ringing ears – prompted by odor in an example of the synesthesia frequent in psychedelic drug experiences – echo the deafening hissing in the cave and, along with his dizziness, establish the scene as distinctly visionary. Gabriel points to a dark figure sitting on the other side of the hut. "As my eyes adjusted," Richard writes, in another echo of the cave scene, "I began to see the figure in the corner more clearly. My skin started to quiver. It was Crocodile Man. My first instinct was to rush forward and save mom from this man/creature" (107). As the intoxication deepens, as the "man/creature" emerges again like a therianthrope from the walls of an ancient shaman's cave, Richard's body starts to betray the possibility that his subjectivity is

under threat. His quivering skin, a visceral reminder of his embodiment and of his literal and conceptual proximity to the animality of the Crocodile Man, symbolizes his unstable identity and his labile perceptual framework. This scene encapsulates a host of transgressive possibilities which further violate the subjectivity upon which Richard has a more and more tenuous hold.

He tries to tighten his grip on reality, though, when he notes “that Crocodile Man was in fact part man, part crocodile but the top half, the head, was a mask made from the head of a real crocodile. This realization restored a modicum of normalcy. At least he wasn’t a real ‘crocodile man’” (108). Such a notation, though, only serves further to deepen his disorientation. Crocodile Man is, as Richard says, *in fact* part man and part crocodile, a factual preassertion of the reality that Richard then immediately tries to deny by pointing out that the crocodile half is merely a mask. Of course, it is a mask made from a *real* crocodile, a fact Richard calls a “realization.” Such an appellation, such a “making real,” contradicts the relief he expresses in the next sentence, relief that is put into question by the quotation marks he places around “crocodile man.” Richard’s convoluted syntax indicates his disorientation in the face of this encounter with a “realized” crocodile man, a hybrid figure who troubles his notion of identity, but his comments concretize the irreality of the situation in which Richard finds himself.¹⁰⁷

Straddling the boundaries between real and unreal is a foundational move in negotiating with threats to subjectivity. Frequently, if the information coming in via the senses is inassimilable, it is easier to call it “unreal” than to doubt one’s senses. The self

¹⁰⁷ Richard’s palpable but ambiguous relief in this scene contrasts with Raoul Duke’s unqualified horror at the drug-induced human-animal transformations he sees in, for instance, the desk clerk at his Las Vegas hotel: “The woman’s face was *changing*,” he exclaims, “pulsing...horrible green jowls and fangs jutting out, the face of a Moray Eel!” (23-24).

thus remains inviolable, unified enough to straddle such boundaries instead of vulnerable to penetrative outside forces. The inviolable self, as I discussed in Part II, is key to the process of translating the altered state of perception into the motif of mobility. Gabriel, in an example of this kind of translation, informs Richard that his mother is being led by the Crocodile-Man and has ““entered the shadow land”” (108). Spatializing the altered state of consciousness ensures that the experience is that of a unitary self heading off into “another world” instead of being disintegrated by an encounter with such potent alterity. Because Part III of this study complicates the process of spatializing intoxication, “tripping” in *The African Safari Papers* is no longer simply a preservative phenomenon that keeps the self intact and keeps alterity “out there.” It seeks to exceed bodily limits and, in doing so, open up possibilities for more thoroughgoing subjective rearrangements.

The tour guide Gabriel doubles yet extends the Crocodile-Man, helping construct an Africa in which such rearrangement is possible. The Africa the novel constructs, though, is not an exoticist one in which irrational spirituality serves to unite the family. The attempt to heal Janet Clark ends abruptly and unsuccessfully, and Gabriel’s role in the novel is fundamentally a destructive one. Like the efforts of Daffy Duck to destroy the community in Garland’s *The Beach*, Gabriel works through Richard to destroy the family rather than see it endlessly corrupted by its orthodox assumptions about travel and drugs. Like Daffy, Gabriel blurs the boundary – albeit more subtly – between real and imaginary and, in the process, helps construct a critique of the post-tourist mode.

In one of their first interactions in the novel, for example, Richard haughtily looks at Gabriel as little more than a bellhop who should be retrieving his suitcase: “I shot him a quick look and nodded for him to go outside and get the damn thing” (28). Deeming

Gabriel unworthy of even being spoken to, Richard embodies the entitled, arrogant tourist ready to consume the labor of the locals. Gabriel's response, however, unsettles Richard's assumptions while giving him a foretaste, as it were, of what it is like *to be* consumed: "Gabriel looked at me and smiled a huge smile that swallowed me whole. 'I get paid to be the best safari guide in all of Kenya. I don't get paid to load bags for young men who are strong enough to load their own'" (28). Gabriel turns the ingratiating smile of the "inferior" African into a gesture that devours Richard, a moment that links being consumed with a significant alteration in Richard's perception of African tourism.

Gabriel's roles as translator in and initiator of the shaman scene further establish him as a generative force both in and *of* the novel. At one point during the ceremony, Richard, perhaps seeking some "enhancement," pulls out a pipe and some hash: "I got off one big haul before Gabriel tapped me on the shoulder. I hadn't seen him come over. 'This isn't a Pink Floyd concert, Richard,' he said" (109). Gabriel, as his angelic name suggests, uses his elusive, evanescent, dream-like presence to caution against what he perceives as Richard's inappropriate use of drugs. Gabriel tries to get Richard to pay attention to *this* space, the space of the here and now. He stops Richard from interposing a different interpretive framework that would facilitate his touristic consumption of the scene. He interrupts Richard's spatialization of the visionary experience; Richard is not to understand this moment by consolidating his sense of self and transporting it elsewhere – in this case, to a Pink Floyd concert. "I put my bowl away," Richard writes. "Gabriel sat down beside me. He began rocking back and forth. I felt like I was tripping on LSD. The chanting. The drums. I moved my hand across in front of me. I saw tracers – several transparent hands followed my real hand and caught up to it when it stopped. I

closed my eyes” (109). Now in the moment, his one toké on the hash pipe deepens into a much more complex instance of consciousness alteration, one he compares to an LSD experience but one which, signaled by his closed eyes, transforms into a break from his surroundings. Willing, by this point, to abandon his preconceptions and orthodoxies about drugs and travel, Richard opens himself to the more profound alterity of the uncertain shamanic experience. In doing so, he entertains the possibility of a changing perception of Africa. Such a possibility effectively reverses the formulation, treated at length in Part II, in which mobility and travel spaces permit an understanding of consciousness alteration. Drugs, intoxication, ecstasy, shamanism – all now allow for a reconceptualization of travel spaces.

As the experience intensifies, Richard finds himself incapacitated: “I tried to move but could not. I was stabbed, pushed, squeezed. I started to suffocate” (110). The motif of paralysis – which, as we have seen in previous chapters, often indicates how the “tripping” subject employs the limitations of travel to shore up a threatened identity – undergoes its own alteration here in line with how the literature on shamanism interprets it. For example, in *Shaman: The Wounded Healer*, Joan Halifax reads the persistent and cross-cultural wounding theme among shamans as “the essence of the shaman’s submission to a higher order of knowing” (5). Richard’s interest, evident throughout the novel, in dismemberment and bodily destruction reflects his interest in the broader epistemological questions that mark a coming-of-age narrative. For Richard, immobilization and bodily destruction intimate the death of conventional subjectivity and the liquefaction of the boundary between self and other necessary for apprehending the world in which he lives. While momentarily unpleasant, the shamanic paralysis in this

scene moves from the Dantesque horrors of constriction as Aldous Huxley articulates them in *Heaven and Hell* to eventual healing.

Notably, Gabriel is here, as he often is in the novel, the agent of such effects. He repeatedly encourages Richard's diary-writing, for instance, pantomiming the act of writing and giving Richard the thumbs up at one point (73), or nodding at the journal and cautioning Richard: "'Don't lose that'" (82). Increasingly participatory, his role comes more and more to resemble that of a drug itself. He influences the protagonist on a profound level, altering Richard's perceptions by his very proximity. Fairly early in the trip, for example, he confesses to Richard that the story he told the Clarks about the tragic death of his family in a fishing accident was a lie, a ruse to entertain himself on yet another tedious safari with wealthy white tourists. This admission appeals to Richard's anti-tourist sensibilities, and it reveals his awareness of the role of performative African primitivism – what Dean MacCannell calls "a certain mutual complicity" (*Empty* 28) – in the production of commercially viable racial stereotypes. Furthermore, Gabriel's subsequent confession that he dropped out of medical school two weeks before graduation and returned to Nairobi helps Richard apprehend Gabriel's identity apart from the role he performs in the tourist industry (45). Following Gabriel's confessions, Richard sees him as a kind of super-consumer:

A large heron swooped down low over the water. It turned near the boat and glided back into the sky. Gabriel's soul seemed to ignite and his eyes began to glow like the holes in a pumpkin with a flickering candle inside. He took a deep breath. It wasn't just the heron he was breathing in. It was the heron's connection to the sky, to the water, to the trees, to the other animals, well, pretty much to everything that was surrounding us. He took the whole batch in one breath. (45)

Richard wants “to say something stupid to spike it all to hell” (46) but does not, realizing that Gabriel’s “‘moments’ didn’t seem spikeable. They were pretty solid” (46). Gabriel is clearly not the imperialist super-consumer William S. Burroughs satirized in *The Yage Letters*, but he does similarly underscore the hypocrisies of tourism. Gabriel’s mode of consumption deflates Richard’s anti-tourist snobberies and prompts an awareness of the genuine alterity of other subjectivities.¹⁰⁸

As the Crocodile-Man and the heron in these scenes suggest, animals play a prominent role in how Sedlack reimagines the alteration of consciousness through “tripping.” Before Richard undertakes a full-blown becoming-animal, his conception of Africa and his drug-influenced visions alter his perception of eating and of animals. Eating becomes divorced from the project of upholding stable identity when, for instance, the family’s breakfasts together become, in Richard’s words, “exhausted stabs at normality” (183) instead of concrete expressions of Clark solidarity. When eating no longer serves its conventional function, the novel’s conception of animals starts to change as well. First, the line separating human from animal – the line that authorizes some of the “exotic” dimensions of travel in addition to the usual humanist truisms – starts to fade. Not long after the shamanic encounter, Richard tries to visit his mother in her tent, but his father blocks his path. “I stood there, refusing to go away,” Richard narrates. “I didn’t make eye contact. That’s what you’re supposed to do with an aggressive, unpredictable dog. And that’s what he is now” (114-115). Richard’s tactic works, and he

¹⁰⁸ It is significant that this scene takes place in a boat, since as Foucault points out, “a boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea;” a boat is a “heterotopia *par excellence*” (27). As the novel’s visionary character, Gabriel can alter Richard’s consciousness quite effectively from their floating heterotopia. He remains, however, the Clark family’s tour guide, and as such, he anticipates the final recuperative gesture that the novel makes and that I will discuss in the last part of this chapter.

enters the tent. Distraught over his mother's mental condition, he wants to hug her but cannot: "instead I patted her hand like you pet a dog when you don't want to get hair on yourself" (115). The frightened, irrational behavior of his parents could easily be likened to the "nature" of dogs and thus support a symbolic equation between animals and bestialism. The first quotation, however, suggests that Richard's perceptions have changed on a fairly fundamental level. His father, instead of being *like* a dog, *is* now a dog. Even the simile in the second quotation reflects this alteration: Richard does not claim that his mother resembles a dog, but rather notes that it is the *action* of patting his mother's hand that is like petting a dog. His parents are undergoing the process, which Deleuze and Guattari claim is "not content to proceed by resemblance" (233), of becoming-animal.

Two difficult days later, Gabriel takes the Clarks into an observation hut in hopes of showing them a leopard. Janet makes several matter-of-fact assertions about the Clark family's looming demise, including "'We're all going to be torn to pieces'" (170). Ted angrily points out: "'We're here because you wanted to be! This trip was your idea! You love animals! We're here to see animals!'" (170). He is right, but not in the way he thinks. Her "love" of animals, operating without the constraints of conventional logic, describes what will turn out to be her covert willingness to surrender herself bodily to animals. Being torn to pieces represents freedom from the limitations of being human.

Animals are no longer things solely to be consumed, either by the snobby protagonist complaining about the giraffe meat or by his father who, with animal list in hand, insists on getting his money's worth. Instead, animals start to be understood as things that can consume. So when the safari van stops to see some lions eating giraffe

they have killed, for instance, Richard is quickly unsettled by the stare of the large male lion in the pride, a lion with “a nasty gash down the side of his face” (189). The lion’s stare echoes Richard’s earlier description of the shock he sometimes feels upon seeing a reflection of his own scarred face. At this point in the novel, Richard’s perceptions have not altered sufficiently for him to apprehend the lion’s subjectivity fully and, as if the lion were merely a mirror, he sees mainly himself in the animal and feels mainly self-consciousness about his own disfigurement. His “transformation” into the lion echoes the predominantly negative transformations we saw in *Fear in Loathing in Las Vegas*. Though, as Deleuze and Guattari assert, “a correspondence of relations does not add up to a becoming” (237), this instance of correspondence helps anticipate one. “I knew the lion was staring at me,” he writes evasively, “and it was making me uncomfortable” (190). Like Derrida naked before his cat in his essay “L’Animal que donc je suis (à suivre),” Richard is disturbed by the scrutiny of the lion, made anxious by its ability to consume him with its gaze as well as its willingness to see him, literally, as food.

From eating animals to animals that eat, the novel’s shift in the thematization of this relationship indicates how “tripping” undoes the usual human understandings of subjectivity and the relationship to place. This shift, reflective of Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of the power of drugs to “mobilize gradients and thresholds of perception toward becomings-animal” (284), is made concrete by a vivid scene in which Richard sits on the safari lodge’s balcony. The balcony overlooks a salt pit where several zebras and gazelles have congregated. His mother joins him, and they chat as “several female lions” (180) creep toward the salt pit. Richard interrupts his narrative at this point with a self-reflexive comment on the difficulties of the writing process: “Technically, a female lion

is a lioness. Only the males are called lions. Gabriel told me this. But I think that's stupid. It's too hard to say lioness when there are more than one. Let alone write it. Lionesses. What the fuck is that? So, I'll call them lions and I'll know they are females" (180). Sedlack is underscoring Richard's naiveté here, reminding readers that they are reading the travel journal of a juvenile, but the passage also highlights the technical difficulties of producing travel writing. It illustrates that this genre, which foregrounds the purported objectivity of its methodology and the supposed transparency of the relationship between readers and objects, is in fact made immensely complicated by the very immediacy it prizes. The word "lionesses" is awkward to write, especially *in media res*, so by having Richard eschew it for the simpler "lions," Sedlack dramatizes the ways in which the conventions of genre and the cultural (and even the physical) demands of textual production mediate truth and reality. That Gabriel is the one to tell Richard about this crucial distinction between lions and lionesses again reinforces the mysterious tour guide's role as a conduit for knowledge and as a shamanic figure.

As the animals approach, Richard claims to have "seen enough nature shows to know that these lions weren't sneaking in for a lick of salt" (180). He suggests to his mother that they should leave, "But she wouldn't move. She sat there and watched. And I watched. There was such a stench of danger. It smelled like rubbing alcohol. You can't smell that odour through a television" (181). On the one hand, television nature shows have granted Richard a privileged epistemological vantage point – he knows what is about to happen – but on the other hand, television's failure to convey key sensory details marks the difference between this scene and its analogue near the end of the novel. The lions in the salt pit provide a spectacle for Richard and his mother, a vicarious,

preliminary form of the rearrangement of subjectivity that will occur in the novel's climax. As a spectacle it clarifies for Janet Clark what an eating animal can do.

The lions attack a zebra, bringing it down and eating it alive in full view of the balcony's occupants. Nauseated, Richard leaves, but his mother "watched it all. Maybe she watched until the eyelids fluttered shut and the kicking ceased. After several minutes she joined me. She looked completely relaxed, as if she'd just watched a robin bathe in a birdbath" (181). She has eagerly consumed this scene of consumption and appears satiated. Moreover, the narration associates this form of eating with renewal and new life – with the robin in the birdbath that the text has only two pages earlier linked to Richard's birth (179) – and sets the stage for a more conclusive becoming-animal in the novel's climax.

Eaten by Animals

The anxieties over the destruction, both positively and negatively coded, of conventionally understood subjectivity coalesce in this novel around the continuities and disjunctions between humans and non-humans. Our use of the term "animal" is fraught with ambiguity, referring at times to both human and non-human living things and at other times marking the *difference* between humans and non-humans. As *The African Safari Papers* intimates, animals are appropriate figures for thematizing the encounter with and the ingestion of otherness because, for many readers, the defamiliarization that accompanies such an experience corresponds with an understanding of animals as purely irrational beings. Animals are repositories for our nightmares, tools for devaluing by comparison those of whom we disapprove, and as some critics contend, the basis of our

chauvinisms. At the same time, though, they are uncanny reminders of ourselves. The biological and behavioral traits we share with animals never let us forget that we *are* animals. We too are both confined and liberated by biology and instinct. The lens of “tripping” as I have been articulating it thus far allows us to see how *The African Safari Papers* negotiates the paradoxically confining and liberating comparisons humans make between themselves and animals. I suggested in the previous chapter that when Hunter S. Thompson’s Raoul Duke is “flapping around the room like a wild animal” (134) he capitalizes momentarily on the disruptive excesses imbedded in our conceptualization of animals, but Sedlack’s novel, by comparison, offers by way of “tripping” a more elaborate becoming-animal, as Deleuze and Guattari articulate it.

For the most part, animals in Aldous Huxley’s *Island* and Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* remain “tied to the theoretical topos of the mirror and the look” and thus redirect “the question of the alterity of the nonhuman other once again toward the figure of the human” (Wolfe 169). The mynah birds in *Island* can only mindlessly repeat what humans have taught them to say, and the animals in Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* generally symbolize the pure external alterity and the self-indulgent excess of drug use. By contrast, a portion of *The African Safari Papers* depicts human and non-human animals as what Deleuze and Guattari call “a pure multiplicity that changes elements, or *becomes*” (27). These moments of becoming allow the characters in Sedlack’s novel to step away from their own humanness and identify those components of themselves that are Other, those instances of what Wolfe calls “the embeddedness and entanglement of the ‘human’ in all that it is not” (193). Such becomings and identifications are possible because of “tripping.”

Sedlack's novel is suffused with the drug-induced alterations of space, subjectivity, and chronology (the last of which Richard tries to contain through a scrupulous attention to dates and times in his notebook) and with the cultural dislocation and defamiliarization granted by travel and signaled in part by the tumultuous overhaul of his tourist snobbery.

One of Richard's first experiences with the consuming multiplicity of animals comes after a trying night of intoxication and tormenting tourists at the camp restaurant. "In spite of my brief layover at the lip of the bottomless pit last night," Richard narrates, using a telling travel metaphor, "I still had the strength to masturbate. I cleaned up with a tissue and left it overnight on the floor beside my bed" (234). For Richard, who calls masturbation "stapling my mind back together" (234), this moment of autoeroticism, of transcendence without otherness, compensates for the corrosive effects the drugs and other tourists have had on his subjectivity. Yet as he gets out of bed the next morning, he finds himself covered with ants: "After I frantically brushed the ants off I realized that the little bastards had been feeding all night on the tissue and marching back to their nests with bellyfuls of my juice. I am trying to find some symbolism in this. But perhaps some things in the wild kingdom are best left in the realm of the unknown" (235). Richard initially curses the ants because he is disturbed by their insectile multiplicity and their mindless consumption of his essential "juice," but that multiplicity and the ease with which *they* incorporate *him* begin to alter his perception. As he says, he tries to find some symbolism in the incident but cannot. An epistemology that relies upon reading animals symbolically no longer works. As his eventual resignation to the mysteries of "the wild kingdom" suggests, he is, by this relatively late point in the novel, willing to

suspend conventional logic and accepted understandings of animals as “symbolic” and acquiesce to “the unknown” as a legitimate epistemological mode.

Richard’s breakthrough, while important for his altered understanding of animals, hints at some of the problematic and troubling aspects of Sedlack’s formulation. That this shaping event is, for Richard, quite literally seminal signals one of the necessary conditions not just for this creative reformulation of animals but, one could argue, for all of “tripping’s” machinations. As my focus on male authors suggests, “tripping” functions, to no small degree, because of masculinist privilege. This privilege authorizes Huxley, for example, to use in *Island* the homosexual Murugan as a symbol of contamination and a predicate for the destruction of utopia. It allows Thompson to depict subversive excess in part through what Marianne DeKoven calls a “[v]iolent machismo, linked to a fear and loathing of women” (95), in which his male characters berate and abuse female hotel staff. In Sedlack’s novel, this kind of masculinity sits uneasily close to (indeed, it helps generate) his protagonist’s changing perceptions.

Such changes persist, however, after a series of disastrous events (including an elephant stampede that leaves the safari van in a crumpled heap) force the Clark family and their guide Gabriel to spend the night on the savannah. Exhausted from having confronted his parents, from his excessive drug use, and from the trials and tribulations of the safari in general, Richard feels what he calls “*the now, the present*” (282), closing in on him as he sits next to the campfire in the middle of nowhere. “I feel like I am sitting on a swing set with no arms and legs,” he writes in his journal. “I try to get myself swinging back and forth but I’m not going anywhere ... I am stuck on the swing, held fast by the light, the grass, the sky, the sound of the wood cracking in the fire, the smell

of the smoke. It pins me down and says, ‘You’re not going anywhere. Stay here. Stay right here’” (282). Stone sober and apprehending the fundamental immobility of travel, he has a transcendent experience:

I see the shape of something beyond the beginning and beyond the end. The shape of the spiral that I saw inside the animal and human figures on the wall of Crocodile Man’s cave. Something that just keeps going round and round and round. Never beginning. Never ending. If I have a soul, if it is true that we all have souls, then it makes sense that these souls are eternal. And we are all connected in some way. You and me.... I am impressed that my mind can capture something so elusive when it isn’t swimming in chemicals. (282-283)

The “immobility” of the tourist experience – the inauthenticity and tedium his anti-tourist faculties perceive and that have manifested themselves in various forms in all the texts examined in this study – has become, in this moment of transcendence, a way of inhabiting the present and exceeding the bodily limitations that initially tied him to the degraded realm of animals: “I am really not my body but the soul that inhabits my body, and there really is no beginning or end, only eternity, which means that my soul is eternal, which means even when my body dies, I will not, not the thing humming inside this organic costume, sitting in the dirt, looking out at these grasslands” (283). Instead of being tied *to* the world, Richard is now *of* the world, simultaneously expressing both eternity and the brief instant here on the grasslands.

Like Las Vegas, the space of Africa contrasts with the restrictive, disciplinary spaces we saw in Huxley’s *Island* and Garland’s *The Beach*. With its Crocodile-Men telling the characters where to go and its stampeding elephants telling them what they think of their safari vans, it evinces what Lefebvre might call “multifarious and overlapping instructions” (142) and what Soja, in *Postmodern Geographies*, would refer to as the difficulties of “too many auteurs” (247). Richard perceives Africa’s difficulties

and multiplicities and expresses them using the icon of the spiral.¹⁰⁹ In doing so, the novel offers a conception of selfhood whose boundaries have been extended, whose corporeal manifestation is a disorganized Deleuzian body-without-organs, and who glimpses eternity. Holding that self together – either while traveling or through metaphors of travel that fix a stable self and set it in motion – is no longer relevant. The immobility of travel, like the biological imperative that liberates the animal at the same time that it enchains it, provides a degree of creative freedom in constructing the identity of the “tripper.”

Such freedom, however, comes at the expense of the “organic costume[s]” of his parents. Richard wakes up after a fitful night spent outside and finds that his mother, her madness peaking, has left her clothing in a pile next to the campfire and disappeared. Scanning the savannah with binoculars, Richard spots her “walking buck naked through the tall grass” (290). Richard and his father tear off after her, but she sees them coming and also starts to run. Richard, winded and out of shape, falls far behind and can only watch as his mother runs straight into a pride of lions. His father follows, trying (Richard assumes) to protect her, but the result is inevitable: “It was morning after all – feeding time. And they were hungry. The pride moved in quickly and forcefully” (293). Richard sees a “whirlpool of blood and teeth and claws. A vortex” (294). He wants to join them, “to dive into that vortex and feel the waves of that shuddering mystery consume” (294) him, but he stops and instead watches the lions eat his parents. In this scene, the lions have transformed themselves from objects that are consumed by the eyes, checklists, and cameras of tourists to subjects that consume. This inversion undermines

¹⁰⁹ As a heterotopic space, Africa in this novel resembles Foucault’s writing itself, which Jean Baudrillard characterizes as “a coil and strophe without origin (without catastrophe either)” (*Forget Foucault* 9).

the touristic paradigm's orthodox regime of commodification. In upending the hierarchy that authorizes their commodification, the lions assert the existence of their own subjectivity and, at least momentarily, displace androcentrism from the text.

Sedlack expresses multiplicity in this climactic scene in the form of a whirlpool or a vortex. While the vortex in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, represented by the nauseating, spinning bar of the Circus-Circus casino, underscored the futility of idealistic revolution and the hegemonic exigencies of mobility, the vortex in *The African Safari Papers*, the whirlwind of lion claws and jaws, more positively symbolizes eternity and oneness. The lions that eat, the vortex that consumes, reflect Sara Guyer's contention that "[i]ncorporation ... is the situation of a secret lodged in the unconscious (a false unconscious) as a monument to the dead, which at the same time keeps the dead alive" (67). Entering the African food chain (which Richard's focus on the spiral suggests is a wholly inaccurate metaphor) ensures Richard's parents will remain alive forever. "Becomings-animal," as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, "are basically of another power, since their reality resides not in an animal one imitates or to which one corresponds but in themselves, in that which suddenly sweeps us up and makes us become" (279). The futility of the vortex, what Hunter S. Thompson might depict as "acting like an animal," becomes, through Richard's reterritorialization, the immortality of a perpetual ecosystem. For Richard, becoming is the perception of what Aldous Huxley calls "[t]he totality ... present even in the broken pieces" (*Doors* 33). He finds in the shattered remains of his family the ego-loosening infinitude of the spiral.

It is also significant that the Clark parents are eaten by *several* lions. Deleuze and Guattari focus on the multiplicity of animals in their articulation of becoming-animal ("A

becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity” [239]) to emphasize the presence of multiple subjectivities within one ostensibly individual subject. Like the “vast crustaceans” (44) William S. Burroughs’ *yagé*-intoxicated traveler becomes, Richard’s parents reveal the “multiplicity dwelling within” (Deleuze and Guattari 240) by becoming lions. They provide their son with the means to move beyond his single-minded, “narcissistic contemplation” (240).¹¹⁰

Richard wants to walk after seeing his parents eaten: “I would have to start walking and keep walking until I passed out. Then, when I woke up I could start walking again. I couldn’t think about stopping” (299). He has entered the abject realms Julia Kristeva refers to as the “fragile states where man wanders in the territories of the *animal*” (12). Compelled into endless motion, pushed into the vortex that in the cave paintings takes the shape of a spiral animal soul, Richard apprehends the reality of the space through which he has been traveling: “A place in between. A place that didn’t pretend to have any hand-me-down answers but also a place that didn’t ask any questions. A place that didn’t necessarily offer truth but a place that didn’t tell any lies either” (308). In this combinatory Thirdspace, Richard loses himself but finally finds freedom. “Mom and dad have shown me that true freedom is not found in the lotus position,” he writes as the novel comes to a close, “and certainly not in the revelation of dark, buried secrets, but in the jaws of a lion. And even that freedom doesn’t lead to

¹¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari’s resistant multiplicities and the revelations such multiplicities grant Sedlack’s protagonist resemble Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s articulations of the disruptive possibilities of the multitude in their influential book *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000). Where the latter version of multiplicity purports to subvert imperial politics, the former, in the case of Sedlack’s novel, attempts to tackle the colonization of psyche engendered by conventional anti-tourist attitudes and practices. Unlike Hardt and Negri’s formulation, which Timothy Brennan claims “posits a monism – the theology of the body-in-things (Spinozan immanence) – while heralding the rhizomatic decentering of the multitude, as if both structures could coexist” (359), Deleuze and Guattari propose a multiplicity discovered by dissolving the boundaries of the body and obviating immanent, binarized identities such as “tourist” and “traveler.”

much. Just piles of dung in the grasslands” (309). Eating and then fertilizing the grasslands that will produce more to eat – what Richard sees as the endlessly cyclical nature of nature itself – turns the immobility of travel into a timeless escape of bodily limits. The space in which he finds himself is more than its empirical dimensions, of course, but it is also more than its conceptual dimensions. Richard has moved beyond seeing Africa as a place of ““elephants on the highway”” (11) and natives with spears. Africa, in Richard’s moments of transcendence, remains “radically open and openly radicalizable” (Soja 70). He finds himself both located firmly within its spaces and within positions more flexibly relational to other spaces.

The African Safari Papers allows us, in the words of Lynda Birke and Lucianna Parisi, to glimpse the interrelations between human animals and non-human animals “by insisting on connections and flows rather than on individual entities, and by insisting on transformation and change rather than essence” (67). Richard’s drug use remains self-destructive throughout the novel but resembles the positive valence of ego-dissolution Deleuze and Guattari outline: “If the experimentation with drugs has left its mark on everyone, even nonusers, it is because it changed the perceptive coordinates of space-time and introduced us to a universe of micro-perceptions” (248). Such cosmic dispersal, rather than a threat to subjectivity, becomes a way of evading what Richard sees as the confines of human biology – a way of becoming. His becoming occurs through the multiplicity of animals and the multiplicity of “micro-perceptions”: “becoming and multiplicity,” according to Birke and Parisi, “are the same thing” (249). In a process analogous to shifting the valence of travel’s circuitousness from endless immobility to the

eternal persistence of the soul, he encounters infinity and undergoes the “spiritual quest” (33) he could allude to previously only with tongue in cheek.

These notions do, however, remain problematic in *The African Safari Papers*. For one, the climax of the novel does little to question Richard’s masculinist integrity. Richard realizes, for instance, that before she walked into the lions his mother laid a photograph of him as an infant (taken before the surgeries to correct his cleft lip) on his lap while he slept so that he could see not how *he* looked “[b]ut how she looked. That her eyes were not afraid. They were not ashamed. They were not disgusted. They were glowing with love” (288). At that instant, his mother becomes a real person in his eyes, not simply a surface that reflects his own mental problems, and he sees himself as a part of *her* life. She becomes more than an actor in his own narcissistic drama. But when she runs toward her death, the novel confirms the need to dramatize becoming-animal by dramatizing the death of a newly-empowered, newly-integral female character at the precise moment she rises above her role thus far as a source of shame and anxiety for Richard. By destroying Janet Clark’s body, the novel in fact elides Derek Gregory’s desire (and Lefebvre’s before him) for a gesture that “recognizes the *corporeality of vision* and reaches out, *from one body to another*, not in a mood of arrogance, aggression, and conquest but in a spirit of humility, understanding, and care” (416 – Gregory’s italics). While becoming-animal, especially in being consumed *by* animals, helps instantiate the space of Africa in the novel as one where transformation and transcendence are possible, such alterations of perception and subjectivity are reserved for the male protagonist. His second-hand experiences seem to trump his mother’s first-hand ones. While she was undergoing shamanic healing, he was escaping into cannabis;

while she was watching the zebra being eaten by the lionesses (crucially rewritten as “lions” by Richard), he was escaping into nausea. Yet Richard is the one who reaches a higher plane of consciousness, an achievement which helps reinforce the masculinity that activates “tripping” in this novel.

Sedlack’s affirmation of this gendered privilege resembles some of the moves he makes toward the end of the novel, even as Richard is discovering that Africa is a “place in between” (308), to recuperate orthodox tourism as the dominant mode in which to travel in Africa. After the death of his parents, Richard makes his way back to Nairobi, meeting safari company representatives, local authorities, and a member of the Canadian High Commission at the Norfolk Hotel. As a colonial hotel and well-known starting point for African safaris, the Norfolk undermines many of the reformulations of travel Richard has accomplished. Sedlack then depicts the representatives from “Wimpole Tours,” the safari company, as fawning lackeys desperate to absolve themselves of liability. They treat Richard like a celebrity, getting him an ashtray in his non-smoking room, as the authorities take his statement: “There were several follow-up questions, which I answered coldly and quickly, including the fact that the crashing of the van was not Gabriel’s fault, it was mine. Wimpole Tours wanted to hear that part twice” (302). When the interview ends, “Wimpole Tours took off to make arrangements. I think I could have asked them to wash my underwear by hand and they would have done it” (302). Their obsequious behavior is a cynical gesture on Sedlack’s part, an acknowledgement of the fraudulence of the tourist fantasy that allows anyone with cash to be treated like “Elvis Aaron Presley” (301), but it bookends Richard’s trip in a formative way. In the end, the novel confirms the pervasiveness of tourism as an

epistemological and practical mode when the tour company books a midnight flight for Richard back to Canada. Richard hesitates over the two connections he will have to make, learns that there is a more direct flight leaving the next morning, but decides, “No, it has to be tonight. Book me for tonight. Done. Gone” (304). He has lost interest in Africa again, reverting to the tourist he was on his first night when he could barely bring himself to eat African food, and like William Burroughs’ Lee persona who wants to bail out of South America after his ayahuasca experience, Richard cannot wait to move on from the place that has ostensibly given him so much. He is through with inhabiting this space, through with practicing it into existence.

He has gotten rid of the pain of being a man, taking on instead the pain (and the subjectivities) of animals to transcend bodily limits, but notably occluded from this process, however, is the pain of women – of his mother’s suicidal run toward the lions in the service of granting her son cosmic insight. “Tripping” as a primarily masculinist pursuit reminds us that Richard’s consciousness expansion occurs vicariously. When he stops on the savannah to watch his parents get eaten, he experiences expansion within his conveniently intact body but only at the cost of their bodily destruction.

Conclusion

In this study, I have employed “tripping” to juxtapose several opposing processes and concepts: the liberating, mind-expanding, subversive qualities of drugs versus their narcotizing, addicting, paralyzing effects; and beneficial, enlightening, ethically-engaged travel versus superficial, self-destructive, exploitative travel. The word “versus,” however, belies the way in which these opposing terms are bound up in one another to produce a conflicting figural terrain of drugs and travel. “Drugs” are unspeakably proscribed, but pharmaceuticals are enthusiastically prescribed. Travel is both a dubiously self-indulgent and dangerous encounter with otherness that threatens the integrity of the self and a means of apprehending the world and its destabilizations more clearly. My opposed yet mutually dependent two-pronged analyses are intended to open up creative and imaginative spaces in these conceptions, to introduce the kind of conceptual mobility Jason Snart identifies in Michel Foucault’s work: “The mobility he calls for is to be part of any critical project, for it keeps such projects from falling into dogmatic kinds of closure (at which point they operate to flatten difference, not to explore it)” (2).

The process of spatializing intoxication, which as we have seen in Aldous Huxley’s *Island* and Alex Garland’s *The Beach*, frequently has the conservative effect of domesticating the radical alterations of the psychedelic experience and of offering space Henri Lefebvre says “serves to define reification, as also false consciousness” (22). The “trippers” in *Island* and *The Beach* use certain assumptions about space (its enclosedness, its carcerality, its utopian potential, its stability) to structure the bewildering vicissitudes

of intoxicated consciousness. As I have been discussing in Part III, however, a different type of spatialization provides in Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Robert Sedlack's *The African Safari Papers* alternative subversive possibilities. Thompson and Sedlack continue to treat drugs with a degree of conservative caution: Thompson indicts them as one element in the destruction of countercultural possibility, and Sedlack depicts his narrator's most profound insights as occurring *without* drugs. Nevertheless, travelers in *Fear and Loathing* and *The African Safari Papers* deploy assumptions about drugs (their illogic, their progressive or radical dimensions, the transformative power of their excesses) to understand the openness and Lefebvrian nature of space and travel.

Casting this point into Edward Soja's terms once again, we can see the relationship "tripping" shares with spatiality. Secondspace – Soja's term for Lefebvre's conceived space – sounds like pure hallucination: "Secondspace is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world from conceived or imagined geographies" (79) – almost like Huxleyan antipodes of the mind. However, "tripping" illustrates, as I argue in Part II, that the material, empirical world Soja calls Firstspace can be marshaled into the service of "domesticating" Secondspace. "Tripping" also illustrates, as I point out in Part III, how to exceed Secondspace and discover the creative and combinatory powers of Thirdspace. At the same time, we need to be cautious about the power of Thirdspace. Soja overstates his case somewhat when he claims, in emphatic italics, that "*the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality ... directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking*" (163). Can Thirdspace really be so revolutionary? While he is adamant that such spaces

“are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortably poured back into old containers” (163), the ambivalence of travel and drugs suggests (perhaps most insistently in Garland and Sedlack) that the domestication or deactivation of Thirdspace iconoclasm is always possible. Thirdspace erupts and emerges messily, yes, but it is also subsumed and hides (or is hidden).

These processes help indicate some of the consequences of this study. One such consequence, related to its spatialization of states of mind, has to do with the power of irrationality. Such irrationality can offer important textures to complex, conceived space, as Lefebvre and Soja articulate it. The lived spaces of “trippers” are produced, in part, out of the material realm of drug phenomenology and, in part, out of the hallucinatory conceptual realm Avital Ronell calls “being-on-drugs.” Such realms (and the irrationality that contributes to their composition) help us locate, as Soja urges us to do, the possibility of apprehending simultaneity and the “constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (2). Because our understanding of the world is nonetheless intimately bound up with our understanding of our own minds, drugs and travel constitute a vital space in which to explore these shifts and these broader cultural phenomena.

One final consequence of this study has to do with its broader implications. Understanding the connections between drugs and travel in a complex narrative, as I have attempted to do, puts into perspective the remarkable conceptual interchanges that take place between these two seemingly disparate entities. As the themes of a given text play themselves out, the demonization inherent in drug discourse, for instance, can frequently balance out the deceptively self-congratulatory connotations of travel, while the

dislocating and disorienting dangers of travel – threats to selfhood, challenges to cultural supremacy, and so on – can temper the often romanticizing and celebratory rhetoric of drug use. This interchange also helps us understand the divergences between what travel and drugs do and what they are *supposed* to do. Drugs supposedly facilitate the inward search for further reaches of consciousness, while travel ostensibly puts the subject in touch with the external grandeur of the world, but these poles have a tendency to collapse. Drugs can reach out to the world and change the way it looks and sounds, while travel can just as readily facilitate inner journeys. In the modern subject's contention with a world where pluralities and limitations compete more than ever, where illegal drugs are at once increasingly part of the global economy and getting recognized more often as a crucial part of human subjectivity, and where tourism is continually expanding yet constantly circumscribed and surveilled, "tripping" is flexible enough to provide additional complexities and, at the same time, a map – however provisional – of the territory.

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