

show what human speech is really made of?

Visible Language

gardening, adjustment to the West Coast, and six months of regular DMT use. While the music was playing, I noticed increased allergic symptoms. This is unusual on MDA, which, as Andrew Weil, author of *The Natural Mind*, points out, is one of the most powerful allergy suppressors around, and it had always affected me that way previously.

Along with the allergic response, I began to note the familiar "Goddess-possession" phenomenon that we had first encountered on MDA-LSD trips, and which led us to our first profound trips and contact experiences. This time Her presence was subtle, perhaps because no LSD was involved. At the same time, a series of flashes, "false memories," or "past life" reminiscences occurred, having to do with rivers and my riverine ancestry, triggered by the content of the music. This is a characteristic of MDA experience that contrasts with MDMA, where memories are more personal and less archetypal or symbolic. With MDA memories, one can become caught up in an associative web of ancestral material. These "memories" have the intense emotional immediacy of real memories or of a well-crafted movie.

During this time I had continuing allergic symptoms. Zarkov felt fine and was having a great time. This was odd, since Zarkov is usually the one with allergy problems. I showered off and washed my face but still felt uncomfortable and uneasy. We had noted before that allergic reactions had preceded profound contact trips.

About hour four, I decided to try smoking some DMT. My blood pressure and pulse were only slightly elevated, but I still felt restless and uneasy. The week before I had "reset" an MDMA trip with DMT. The DMT seemed to have had a calming and healing effect.

I smoked about 40 mg of DMT in four or five tokes. As it came on, I asked the DMT entities for help and guidance. I kept my eyes open until the visual changes became overwhelming. The whole room was being transformed into the characteristic DMT "chrysanthemum" pattern. I closed my eyes and fell back into the trance.

The first thing I saw was unmistakably the "visible language"! The words, the shapes, the DMT-music (that is, the DMT's auditory effects, not music in this reality; the stereo was off during this part of the trip) and the elfin voices all carried the same message: "Strong, safe, strong, safe; help, OK, OK, help; safe, safe, all right," the "elves" sang/I saw/read/felt/heard. They are "made out" of the

visible language. The message is conveyed by the medium itself in several simultaneous sensory modalities. Heard speech, read language, music, song, images, and pictures all happen at once, so that the meaning is multidimensional.

For example, one's perception of a cat in this state would be communicated in many ways at once: one would see a picture or cartoon of a cat, made out of writhing, multidimensional, colorful strips or segments which are words: "cat, cat, cat, pussy, kitty, pussy, meow, tail, ears, cat, cat, kitty . . ." and the picture would be accompanied by a musical description of the cat (as in *Peter and the Wolf*, only more evocative and precise) and by voices singing "cat, cat, kitty, kitty, meow, puss, kittycat . . ." which would match the text.

This time I saw the "elves" as multidimensional creatures formed by strands of visible language. At the same time, they were more creaturely than I had ever seen them before. The message was changing from the initial "OK, OK, safe, safe . . ." I must add that while the word "changing" suggests that this was a time-linear process, I don't think this is the case. I believe that during the trance the whole message and its variations were there at once, from the start. There is a different meaning to time in the DMT state, and the notion of linear temporal order that we usually believe in is not valid or useful. *All* the information is always immediately there; the idea of linearity comes from our linear habits of attention and the fact that we do not know how to see/hear/perceive several messages simultaneously and consciously, so we string them out for perceptual convenience.

The elves were dancing in and out of the multidimensional visible language matrix, "waving" their "limbs/hands/fingers" and "smiling" or "laughing," although I saw no faces as such. The elves were "telling" me (or I was understanding them to say) that I had seen them before, in early childhood. Memories were flooding back of seeing the elves: they looked just as they do now: ever-shifting, folding, multidimensional, multicolored (and what colors!), always laughing, weaving/waving, showing me things, showing me the visible language they are created of, *teaching me to speak and read*. Are these elves my innate linguistic programs made manifest and personified? This throws an entirely new light on Terence



JUST WHAT ARE THESE DRUGS ANYWAY?

A few words about the drugs mentioned in this article. "Psychedelic" means "mind-manifesting," and is generally used to describe chemicals which produce profoundly different mental states from normal waking or sleeping consciousness.

There are two major families of psychedelic drugs. The indoles include LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, bufotenin (toad venom), and the dimethyltryptamines: N,N, DMT and 5-MEO DMT. The indoles seem to act on serotonin pathways in the brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter involved in mood and sleep. Antidepressants like Prozac act to increase the levels of serotonin in the nervous system.

N,N, DMT has a chemical structure that is almost identical to serotonin, but it produces the most profoundly different hallucinogenic state known. DMT is the active ingredient in ayahuasca, where it is combined with beta-carboline alkaloids to make the DMT orally active. In pure synthetic form, DMT must be injected or smoked to manifest its effects. When smoked, it comes on within seconds, and the trip lasts for 4-30 minutes, depending on dose. One distinctive characteristic of the tryptamines is their tendency to produce visions of or encounters with non-human entities. Terence McKenna has written and spoken extensively on the extraordinary phenomenology of the DMT experience. Our experiences, plus reports we have had from others, corroborate McKenna's descriptions of "elf" contacts. Mc-

Kenna was also the first to report on a phenomenon he called "visible language," or, as he puts it, "three-dimensional colored modalities that have linguistic content."

The other major chemical family, the phenethylamines, includes mescaline, methamphetamine, MDA, MDMA (Ecstasy), 2CB and other methoxylated amphetamines. These drugs affect norepinephrine and serotonin pathways. They are all "uppers" but vary in their psychedelic effects. MDMA (3-methoxy-4,5-methylenedioxyamphetamine), first synthesized in 1912, is probably the most famous at the present. It is the Ecstasy of the rave scene, and was much in the news when it was made illegal in 1985. MDA (3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine) was first synthesized in 1910, and enjoyed some vogue as the "love drug" of the late '60s and as a sex party drug in the early '80s.

All of these substances (except LSD and psilocybin) stress the cardiovascular system and should be avoided by those with such problems. Contaminants abound in street drugs that can do far more harm than the pure chemicals; they should not be ingested if from a source of unknown purity. Combinations of powerful psychoactive substances are particularly risky. Do not attempt them without careful previous research into their chemistry and effects. The beta-carbolines are MAO-inhibitors and should never be combined with phenethylamines, since such combinations can be lethal.

—Gracie & Zarkov

McKenna's remark about language being the "most alien artifact" we have!

Following is a paraphrase of their message, all of which was conveyed in the multimedia "visible language" described earlier:

They "read-protect" their contact with children. "No-no, bye-bye, uh-uh, don't tell," is the phrase they used to keep me from remembering or telling the grownups. They come to you when you are a child. My younger brother and I saw them when we were very young. They lived under the bed, they played with us, but they only came out when our parents weren't around. They showed us things; they showed us meaning and language. My brother saw them more clearly than I did (perhaps because he was younger). They taught us words; I read earlier than usual because of their help.

When I was frightened or anxious, I would crawl under the bed to where it was safe, because the "elves" were there. "Bye-bye, uh-uh, don't tell, we'll be back," they used to sing.

"I've been seeing it all along," I thought. "The chrysanthemum pattern is the elves is the visible language is the message." (However, true visions seen on DMT, like those seen on mushrooms, are different from these patterns. They are realistic, like seeing with "normal" vision; more like a movie or a very vivid dream than like the pattern/cartoon/visible language.)

The encounter felt profound, exhilarating, and filled with warmth, excitement and protection. I was not afraid, but was comforted by the experience. And after the encounter ended ten minutes later, I found my allergic symptoms had disappeared. I was no longer agitated, but felt calm and happy.

The personal reality of these creatures seems indisputable during the contact, but that interpretation runs into my normal skepticism when I am out of contact. Is the notion that these are beings merely the obvious interpretation of these phenomena by the human mind? Is this a gnosis of the *logos*? Or is something else going on that we can only understand by interpreting it as an encounter with an alien being?

The visible language and the multidimensional nature of the forms seemed clear, but the relationship of these phenomena to me as an individual and to the human race as a species is less clear. I want to avoid repeating the errors of misplaced concreteness (thinking the "creatures" are "real") and the dogmatic fallacy (thinking that I *know* what I saw). The most honest answer is that I don't know what I saw (do we ever?), but that the description above is my attempt to communicate some of what I thought I saw.

The visible language phenomenon was most interest-

ing — I felt curious, excited, and peculiarly self-confident while experiencing it — a childlike delight and a consuming desire to see and know more. I only saw part of what was going on, I only remember part of what I saw, and I can communicate only a little of what I remember.

When, dear reader, you have similar experiences, try to see/perceive as much as you can, remember as much as you are able (take notes or talk into a recorder), and attempt to write down your trip. It is extraordinarily hard to describe these phenomena, the results are always less than you hope, but we must try to express and communicate these experiences if we are ever to build a descriptive consensus or even a start at understanding! ■

Gracie & Zarkov write on sex, drugs, music, science, and politics for Mondo 2000 and other publications. Their book in progress, Notes from Underground, from which this article is excerpted, is available through Flashback Books, 906 Samuel Dr., Petaluma, CA 94952.

FURTHER READING

Terence McKenna's taped lectures, available from Sound Photosynthesis (P.O. Box 2111, Mill Valley, CA 94942), and *True Hallucinations*, his taped book, are among the best work on tryptamine phenomenology available.
 Peter Stafford. *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*. Berkeley, Calif.: And/Or Press, 1977; second edition, Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1983; third edition, Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 1992. A user's guide and connoisseur's manual. Contains an excellent chapter on phenethylamines.
 Andrew Weil. *The Marriage of the Sun and the Moon: A Quest for Unity in Consciousness* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton-Mifflin, 1980) contains good descriptions of MDA chemistry and phenomenology.



LOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ELF KIND

While preparing this article we heard from another person who has had several experiences with elf-like beings while using psychedelics. In the following account she refers to them as "Self-Transforming Elf Machines" or STEMs. — Ed.

My first encounter with one of them was during an LSD experience. She appeared to me in a place I often go called the Hall of Colors. The Hall of Colors is a place (or state of being) that seems to embody the essence of the STEMs, i.e., the ability to manifest reality using thoughts, words and colors. In the Hall of Colors I speak and think in color, and the color is creation. Each color that I speak/think expresses a gestalt — not just the bits and pieces of something, but everything about it.

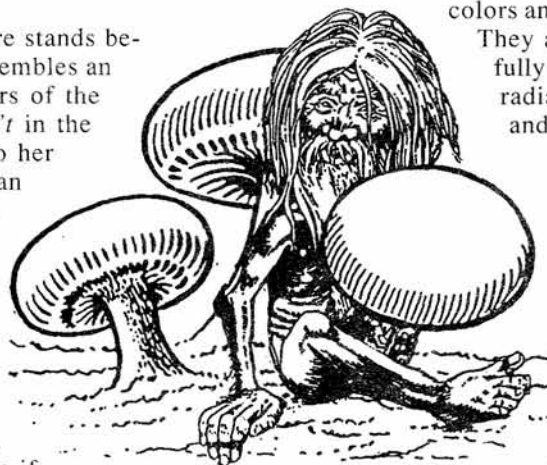
The STEM that I meet here stands behind a counter, and at first resembles an amoeba made of all the colors of the spectrum and some that aren't in the spectrum. When I come up to her she transforms into "Hanna," an overweight female cartoon character gaudily dressed in metallic clothing who speaks in a squeaky voice. She continually asks me questions without waiting for me to answer. "Do you want to go for a ride? Do you want to see what I can do? Do you want to know what you can do if you listen to me? Do you want to know what you can do if you follow me?" etc., etc.

When I agree to follow her, she transforms into a stream of metallic color, and we enter a space that is like a water slide or tube whose sides are made of flowing, fluxing bands of color. As I slide/fly through this tube, she tells me to change my thoughts, and when I do the colors change and express what I am thinking in ways impossible in normal human language.

Hanna is a very happy being and she is always laughing. She shows me the magic of color and how to speak/think in color. She is forever a child at play and has come to me several different times.

My encounters with the STEMs with mushrooms are visually and subjectively different from my LSD experiences. They appear only during the beginning of the experience. Prior to their appearance come swirling geometric patterns whose colors vary from experience to experience. These colors set or foreshadow the mood of each particular experience.

Soon these patterns begin to transform into STEMs. There are generally three to five of them, and they are always at the periphery of my vision. Their initial appearance reminds me somewhat of the cartoon character "Gumby" but as they speak the colors and shapes of their bodies change. They all speak at once, and are playfully competitive with each other. They radiate a feeling of great happiness and love.



They have so many things to show and tell me and they don't want me to miss anything. "Look at this, come on, you can do this!" "No, look at this, try this!" They tell me I can go anywhere and do anything — all I have to do is make a choice. Some of the choices they offer me are flying all over the universe, somersaulting through the evening stars, or becoming part of the earth.

On a recent journey I chose to become part of the earth. They were very excited by this choice, and showed me how to melt into Mother Earth and become her. The STEMs disappeared and I experienced being the Earth and all the life growing in and on her. At first I experienced the different life there as distinct entities, but soon I could sense the web of all life on Earth as a whole.

—Diane McCloud